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**African Politics in the Digital Age: A Study of Political Party-
Social Media Campaign Strategies in Ghana**

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UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER
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THESIS TITLE

African Politics in the Digital Age:
A Study of Political Party-Social Media Campaign Strategies in Ghana

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Westminster for
the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Supervisor: Dr. Winston Mano

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ABSTRACT

Digital media is transforming politics. It has made it imperative for political stakeholders to come up with new strategies that respond to challenges triggered by the new digital communication platforms. Equally, the technological developments have affected communication processes and strategies in transitional political contexts, with varying impacts on democratic governance, political participation and forms of deliberation for citizens. However, the actual impact of social media on political processes remains debatable. Many issues emerge including not only how communications technologies revitalise campaign techniques but also how they influence actors, organisations and reorient political campaigning environments. In Africa, it is important to ask in specific contexts how the new technologies are reconfiguring the relationship between the rulers and the ruled, between politicians and the electorate. In particular, how has digital media facilitated new forms of political communications to individuals and groups? Has it gone beyond geography, class, gender, language or race? What has been the specific impact on campaign strategies, and their process and impact on electoral politics in countries such as Ghana, an emerging democracy? Through a case study, this research has explored the changing dynamics of election campaigning in Ghana in the context of social media. By examining the influence of Facebook, Twitter Instagram and other Social Network Sites (SNSs) for political campaigning, the research produces an original analysis of digital political communication, organization and mobilization, among others, as they are deployed by the main political parties, namely, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), with a focus on the 2012 and 2016 elections. The study has adopted a qualitative research methodology, based on in-depth interviews (formal and informal), focus group discussions, as well as informal observation techniques, which were applied to gather original evidence. The main findings are that social media is implicated in political campaigns in multiple ways, with its ability to change, and are dependent on the availability of resources and policy frameworks that regulate and streamline their usages. The study shows how the campaign process is also implicated by political organizations, actors and voters, rather than just by the technologies. The research has uncovered the role of offline/digital ‘serial callers’, those quasi political communicators hired by political parties to influence political campaigning. Challenges and limitations notwithstanding, the research provides an invaluable insight into the relationship between the use of social media for political communication and its ramifications for democratization in Ghana. It contributes original insights on the shifts and impact of political communication within the African context.

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PREFACE

It has been my dream to research Ghana's media, politics and democratization. I was curious to investigate and document social media's impact on political communication. I especially wanted to contribute original research on the role of political communication in the country's changing democratic process, including the fascinating issue of 'serial callers' in Ghanaian politics. In navigating the intersections in this topic, I very much wanted to share my experience as a professional media practitioner, academic and politician.

I have in excess of twenty years' experience in frontline journalism, media communication practices-including with print on the *Ghanaian Times*, one of Ghana's public service newspaper. At *TV3*, the first privately-owned free-to-air television station, I was a Presidential correspondent and Head of the Political Desk. I also briefly worked for the Ghana News Agency (*GNA*), the state-owned news service. At one point, I was an intern at the *Daily Graphic*, also state-owned.

My experience in the field not only exposed me to high profile media engagements, but also generated crucial insights into the behavior and structure of Ghana's media systems. I learned more about the relationship between media and governance, both in democratic and undemocratic regimes in the country's political history. These compelled my decision to conduct this research together with direct experiences gained from my position as a Communications Director of the National Democratic Congress (*NDC*). The Party communications job allowed me to play a leading role in the publicity and communications of the Party between 2010 and 2018. I reflected on the media jobs as an academic in broadcast journalism at the Ghana Institute of Journalism (*GIJ*), Ghana's journalism institution, which was founded by Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah in 1959.

The multifaceted roles and experiences provided background and nuance on the role of communications in political campaigns, particularly in the social media. Not much research has been focused on the role of social media in Ghana's electoral system. The findings are different but also similar to those which obtain in other parts of Africa. I dedicate the study to the cause of media and democratisation in Africa.

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I reserve special gratitude for the government of Ghana and the Ghana Institute of Journalism for their material support.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work, and as far as I know, all references used for the study have been duly acknowledged.

ACRONYMS

APC	All People’s Council
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CODEO	Coalition of Domestic Election Observers
CPI	Committee on Public Information
CPP	Convention People’s Party
CCP	Chinese Communists Party
CNN	Cable News Network
CSL	Consolidated Solutions Limited
CSOPTAG	Civil Society Platform on Transparency and Accountability in Governance
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECG	Electoral Commission of Ghana
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EMB	Election Management Bodies
EP	Egle Party
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBC	Ghana Broadcasting Corporation
GIJ	Ghana Institute of Journalism
GINKS	Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing
GJA	Ghana Journalists Association
GNA	Ghana News Agency
GSMR	Ghana Social Media Ranking

GICT	Information and Communication Technology
IICD	International Institute for Communication and Development
IPAC	Inter Party Advisory Committee
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
ITR	Interviewees' Transcript Review
MFWA	Media Foundation for West Africa
MP	Member of Parliament
NCCE	National Commission for Civic Education
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NEC	National Executive Committee
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPC	National Peace Council
NPP	New Patriotic Party
PAC	Political Action Committee
PFP	Popular Front Party
PNC	Peoples' National Convention
PNDC	Provincial National Defence Council
PNP	People's National Party
PDG	Policy Development Grants
PPP	Progressive People's Party
PPERA	Political Parties, Elections Referendum Act
SHS	Senior High School
SMI	Social Media Index
SNS	Social Network Sites
UK	United Kingdom
UG	University of Ghana
UNC	United National Convention

UNICEF	United Nations International Children Education Fund
UGCC	United Gold Coast Convention
US	United States of America
WACSOF	West Africa Civil Society Forum

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

Political campaigning forms an important element in democratic practices. Campaigns, and how they are communicated, are key processes and vehicles for the execution of political strategies. Political campaigns provide a dynamic platform on which political actors and organisations in any political election interact with the citizenry. Different strategies are used by political actors in the campaign process, and these enable them to effectively interact and disseminate information (Ndlela and Mano, 2020). For instance, political campaigning in much of Africa is conducted through different strategies in an attempt to reach out to the electorate. The multiple strategies include traditional structures, such as door-to-door canvassing, poster advertising, mass rallies, as well as messages in the mass media, even though they offer limited distribution in the African context. The problem is that messages hardly go beyond urban centers. Rural audiences, and those who are poor have limited access to the mass media. For Kam (2006), political campaigns and elections offer the electorate, and citizens in general, the opportunity for leadership and government. Political elections bring in their wake mixed fortunes for both political actors and the governed, because:

... Campaigns are often viewed as necessary evils that both strengthen and undermine democracy. Campaigns strengthen democracy by holding the elected accountable to the electors. At the same time, campaigns undermine democracy (Kam 2006, p.931).

The above positions, to a large extent, confirm that political campaigns are mixed but indispensable tools, irrespective of the environment in which democracy thrives and, therefore, it must be practicably evidenced in any multi-party oriented society, including Ghana-which is considered the beacon of democracy in Africa, with two peaceful changes of power and no experience of widespread electoral violence (Bob-Milliar and Paller, 2016).

Besides, democracy is a process, and its questioning should be continuous (Everts, 2002). It is thus expedient to thoroughly interrogate the evolution of campaigns in transitional countries. For example, in Ghana, questions arise from the country's checkered political history, vis-à-vis, the transition from colonialism to independence in 1957, and the nature of post-independence political

campaigns that were interrupted by military regimes amidst intermittent military coup d'états, prior to a return to electoral democracy in 1992. Effectively, the end of these coups marked another era in Ghana's democratic history; ushered in the current Fourth Republic, which has spanned more than 18 years of uninterrupted democratic dispensation. Some political scientists argue that Ghana's success story could also be credited to the recognition given to other democratic pillars, like the media and Civil Society Organizations (CSOS), whose watchdog roles have influenced the conduct of various players in the country's electoral system:

Successive democratic elections in Ghana in 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008 resulted in two peaceful transfers of power between the major political parties (in 2000 and 2008), as well as in continuing improvements in the performance of Ghana's formal institutions, notably the Electoral Commission (EC), the judiciary and security forces. There was also a demonstrable increase in the oversight function of civil society organisations and the media (Jockers et al., 2010, p.96)

The above view suggests that by sustaining the invaluable efforts of the key democratic pillars, campaigns have improved Ghana's political transformation gains. For instance, Ghanaian media, in exercising the free expression that is explicitly guaranteed by the 1992 Constitution, and guided by 'expectant responsibilities', kept an 'eagle eye' on political actors, and this has helped to shape the form and direction of political campaigns, e.g., interviews, press conferences, rallies, etc. Effectively, political campaigning, irrespective of the environment, is bound to change, in view of continuous transformation emanating from the changing dynamics in the concepts and other social -economic and political factors. This ties in with Ndlela and Mano's (2020) assertion that the emergence of independent media occasioned by the media liberation boom of the late '80s and early'90s, with the advent of the Internet, and in the 21st century, has rapidly changed the political communication and campaign landscapes in Africa.

This chapter attempts to explore how political campaigns are influenced, with special emphasis on political campaigning tools, some factors that influence political campaigns and the impact of campaigns on electoral systems, especially in the era of digitalization and its ramifications for democratic participation. These concerns warrant urgent interrogation in the context of Ghana. Besides the urgency for this research, I have also argued briefly around my motivation for executing this project, as key arguments that shape the objectives and rationale for this study.

1.2 How are Political Campaigns Being Influenced?

Political campaigns are a key part of modern societies. Organizations and individuals seeking the power to govern, irrespective of society or environment, go through some electoral processes. The political campaign is an engagement in order to elicit support from the electorate, particularly in a democratic society. Campaigns become an appropriate option because they create the platform and space from which political players can convey their aspirations and their vision to the electorate. In contemporary democracies, political campaigns have become the most important component in the political process (Schmitt-Beck, 2007; Berzina, 2016).

Brady et al. (2010) define campaigns in the context of the conditions that are deemed to be conducive for effective campaign execution, from preparations to implementation and conclusion. They posit that:

... campaigns must be considered effective based on the readiness or availability of date of the election, the identity of the candidates is known, availability of candidates to spend virtually all of their time getting (re)elected and whether certain actions that are normally unregulated and, in some cases, forbidden, -for example, fund raising and spending (2010, p.4).

The above expectations suggest that certain necessary arrangements, in terms of resources, logistics and personnel, are considered in the overall campaign process. The scholars stress that the definition of campaigns must also consider the environment, the intensity of the electoral period, intensity of the media, and that all the conditions are not meant to be met in their entirety (ibid, p5). Other scholars believe campaigns must be organization-centered, so as to ensure effective and efficient co-ordination, taking into consideration various elements and the stakeholders' contributions. For example, Kavanagh (1995) posits that a 'campaign' conveys an impression of a single-purpose organization engaged in a concentrated activity in which candidates, party workers and party officials work together towards agreed goals (p228). Consequently, political campaigns become organized and well-coordinated vehicles and platforms that must be effectively utilized in order to influence decision-making processes within a specific group. Political Campaigns can also be considered to be electoral campaigns in some jurisdictions, for example, in Britain and the US, through which representatives are chosen, or referenda are used, so as to settle on candidates at all levels in a competitive manner.

Political campaigns put grave responsibilities on political actors, especially on political parties and political leadership. They are burdened with the responsibility of managing every aspect of political campaigns to ensure the success of the electoral process. Kavanagh agrees with this and acknowledges, in his account of electioneering campaigns, that:

There is certainly a greater concern now by parties to manage the campaign agenda, exploit more professional methods of publicity, use polls to track the mood of voters and insists on spokesmen adhering to the strategy, to 'plan' (1995, p228).

The position above highlights the efforts expected from stakeholders for the success of political campaigns. Trent et al. (2000:3), see the political campaign as a core element of politics within the remit of democracy, because political election campaigns play a vital role at all levels of contest in the determination and choice of leadership. According to these scholars:

... all the fanfare and excitement of the political campaign, be it bands and parades, buttons and billboards, speeches and rallies, television ads and debates, or Internet chat rooms and homepages, is important for the reinforcement provided about the rightness of what we do and the way we do it (ibid, p4).

These features, irrespective of the mix, will facilitate the efforts of politicians to execute their vision through campaign platforms, depending on the type or form of campaigning. This underscores the key goals of most political actors in campaigns: to ensure that their efforts are enough to meet the expectations of electorates, in terms of choice, needs and concerns, among other expectations.

However, the success of a campaign may result from several factors, depending on the choice of tools that are adopted in order to execute the process. And, as far as whether political campaigns have any effects on electorates and the whole electoral process, this remains debatable, and, thus, it is necessary to research campaigns in different contexts as experiences differ. This research responds to such a challenge, by exploring the impact of political party campaigns and other engagements in regard to the social media strategies of political parties in Ghana.

1.3 Effects of Political Campaigns

In a *Study of Political Campaigns*, Brady et.al (2006: p.4) note that the prevailing scholarly consensus on campaigns presupposes that campaigns lack the maximum push in terms of persuasion, because of voters' perceptions of election campaigns, which are that campaigns rarely change voters' minds. Although initial studies sought to confirm this perception, 'this simple fact in no way encapsulates the findings', because early deciders have benefited from the reinforcing effect of campaign discourse; 'political communication served the important purposes of preserving prior decisions instead of initiating new ideas, it reduced defection from the ranks and activates preferences' (Leased, Berelson, and Gaudet, 1948, p87). The assertions above presuppose that, the desire for thorough investigations into the impact of political campaigns must be encouraged, the mixed nature of the dividend accruing from the process cannot be ruled out.

For instance, Campbell's (2000) study, *American Presidential Campaigns*, confirmed the findings of an earlier study by Holbrook (1996) on campaign effects, it sought to suggest that the success of campaigns can be identified through effects pertaining to the processes in terms of execution and evaluation. This ties in with Brady et al.'s opinion that, 'perhaps the best characterisation of campaign effects is that they are neither large nor minimal in an absolute sense, but are sometimes large enough to be politically important' (2006, p.188). Campbell, among other objectives, examined the deviation between the actual outcome and an outcome predicted by a forecasting model. The findings of the study, according to Brady et al., revealed that, in thirty - three presidential election since 1868, an estimated four to six were likely to have been decided by unsystematic factors. His argument was that presidential campaigns, by and large, had predictable effects because of several systematic conditions, like the influence of an election economy, incumbency electoral advantages, and the impact of a front-runner's margin of victory on campaign development (ibid, pp.7-8).

Again, Johann et al. (2017) have explored the impact of media and party communication on intra-campaign changes in voting preferences, with the aim of finding whether, and to what extent, voters' party preferences are volatile and how they are affected by citizens' individual information environments in electoral campaigns. Their findings indicated that party campaigns matter and, in fact, they were very influential on those citizens who were personally approached

by a political party. Such voters were more likely to change their voting preferences in favor of another party. According to these scholars, their findings confirmed claims about the effectiveness of party campaigning that had been made by previous researchers, (Fisher et al., 2015; Górecki and Marsh, 2012; Green and Gerber, 2015; Johann (2017).

The above arguments and case studies provide an empirical basis from which to suggest that campaigns have an immense influence on the electorate, irrespective of the strategies adopted to execute the campaign. There is every indication that some clearly identified features that are associated with the campaign's processes play a critical role in determining its successes or failures, possibly influencing political stakeholders at all levels and stages. In most instances, the influence has had a great impact on the electorate's voting behaviors, choice of party and choice of leadership, depending on the tools and strategies that were designed for specified contexts.

1.4 Tools for Political Campaign

Several methods and strategies are used by political actors to execute political campaigns. Berzina (2016) identifies the media as being one of the key tools, in view of their impact on information dissemination. It is certain that the impact may be mixed in order to provide potentials that are related to the tools and strategies. For example, a comparative analysis of the media's role in the political activities of the West and Russia, revealed that the media could be used for both positive and negative purposes (ibid). These findings, to some extent, confirm the media's role in the development of negative political campaigns, notably, in an environment where the practices of political communication differ. Typical examples can be found in Britain and Russia, where the relationships between the governments and the media differ. The media's role in campaigning is remarkably visible in political advertising, since, unlike commercial advertising, political advertising mostly attracts journalistic attention and becomes a part of the media agenda. Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995) note that negative advertisements are particularly interesting for journalists, because:

... they contain information that can be obtained at a low cost and lead to large interest in an audience. The negative TV advertising spots that are saturated with slogans, effective visuals, and sensational attacks are easily and quickly transformable into a news story or publication in the

newspaper. Thus, by using negative ads, political campaigners can get free publicity (cited in Berzina, 2016, p202).

The assertion above is an indication that negative Public Relations (PR) persists as an integral part of political campaigning, but its impact on political campaigning, in most instances, may be determined by the nature of the political environment within which it operates. The most important difference is that, for example, the media in the West is free, but in Russia it is not (Freedom House 2013a), and this situation becomes worse in democracies in which the media are polarised. Similarly, a lack of capacity, resources, professionalism, and firm policies influences the media's performances, thereby adversely affecting the trends and natures of campaigns in an electoral democracy. In Lilleker's (2006, p.194) opinion, such a scenario results in 'spin', obviously, in view of the vertical nature in which information is disseminated, and in contrast to adhering to the basic norms and canons that are expected to ensure fairness, objectivity, and balance, among other values, in dealing with audiences (Ahuja, 2008). Such a situation has the tendency to deny the electorate accurate information that would enable them to make informed decisions, as Berzina (2016) posits:

...this creates problems for journalists to access all necessary information, because spin doctors are intermediaries between the media and politicians and the purpose of their activity is to influence public opinion by presenting information in a way that is favourable to politicians (pp. 202-203).

Arguably, there is the possibility of electorates losing the rights to actively participate and deliberate on issues because they are denied the necessary information, and they are thus a very powerful tool with which political actors can influence electorates in the decision-making process in any democratic environment.

Strategically, political actors will court the media to their advantage, as political campaign platforms offer a very convenient space within which they can communicate their aspirations to electorates. Irrespective of the audience, the message is bound to have an impact on voter behavior, in that media negativity may induce less trust in government, thus resulting in a weakened sense of political efficacy, which, in turn, decreases turnout (Ansolabehere et al., 1994). This assertion is empirically evidenced in campaigns in most democracies, as confirmed by scholars, 'because a

lot of empirical evidence through several studies have attested to the impact political campaign messages have on the electorate' (Lin, 2014, p.136).

Similarly, the choices of media designated for political campaigns are normally tied to the strategies of actors. Politicians rely on the media to execute their agenda by ensuring that the media communicate their message to the electorates and audiences by influencing the coverage through a mixture of accommodation, persuasion and pressure (Kavanagh, 1995, p.197). This strategy is comprised of the use of both traditional and new media so as to accommodate all audience categories. Kavanagh maintains that the political party campaign managers' objective is to manage the party's communications output such that the media will have little choice but to carry what the party wants (ibid, p. 191), because political actors set the agenda depending on the party's vision, ideology and manifestos, in order to sway the electorates to their advantage. What is crucial, therefore, in the execution of campaigns, is the choice and designation of the appropriate tools of communication, which are being determined by rapid developments in technology.

Arguably, the advent of digital communication technology has influenced the nature of political campaigns in global politics in diverse ways. For example, the British and the US campaigns systems in the premodern and modern eras lacked more effective campaign techniques. The current dispensation is occasioned by modern communications technology because the success of contemporary campaign techniques is contingent on advanced technology. In the opinion of Kavanagh:

Today, by contrast, the national leaders are supported by research and professional help, fight media-oriented, particularly television oriented, campaigns, 'target' groups of voters, 'pace' the campaign and fight on the agenda. Parties at the centre self-consciously adopt campaign strategies and employ professional communications advisors to help them (1995, p25-26).

The above assertion indicates that technology has pushed political campaigns to a more advanced level, a post-modern political campaign era that is profoundly influenced by other salient factors, especially by the social media, which are mediated by the Internet and digital technology. This era, although complex and sophisticated, has invariably rendered participation more effective. For example, developments in American political campaigns during which the Republican Senator

George Allen lost his bid for re-election in Virginia, was the result of derogatory remarks on his Indian ancestry which went viral online (Panagopoulos, 2009, p. 1).

More impactful for campaigning in the digital media is its centralized nature and form, this has empowered individual politicians to disseminate information on a centralized basis through the digital media. Karlsen and Enjolras (2016) confirm that Internet technology provides individual candidates with new opportunities to reach out to voters more independently within a central party, and this confirms 'technology as a growing dominance political tool' (MacAskill, 2007), whose impact is further influencing political campaigning in the contemporary electoral system. Panagopoulos (2009) also confirms these developments, for example, with reference to his analysis of the impact of digital media in the 2008 American elections. For him, advances in technology have expedited the processes to inform, target and mobilize voters. That is, apart from political strategists' increasing reliance on technology to manage data and web tools, to identify, monitor, and communicate with voters (ibid p.1). These developments have served as sources of motivation and as guides to political actors, in the context of political organizations, mobilization and, to some extent, as some of the factors for campaign formation.

1.5 Factors that Influence Campaigns

Scholars have suggested that there are several motivations for campaigns. For example, in *The Influence of Initiative Signature- Gathering Campaigns on Political Participation*, Boehmke and Alvarez (2014, p. 179) concluded that founders of the campaign initiative process were motivated by the urge to create institutions that would give citizens the ability to be more directly involved in the affairs of government. In that instance, they expected the citizenry to generate interest in active participation, in terms of decisions on public policy. The success of such an initiative would create the necessary public sphere within which to generate debates capable of informing them on their participation in issues pertaining to adjudication, when placed as ballots on which citizens could decide. This reflects the basis for campaigning and, thus, the creation of a platform from which to disseminate information that has the tendency to encourage participation in the electoral process.

Similarly, the creation of Political Action Committees (PAC), which Trent and Friedenber (2000) also describe as ‘single-issue groups’, is related to elements that have influenced the way political campaigns are waged. These elements are mainly pressure and civil society organizations whose influence on representative governance has matured from early political formations dating back to the pre-modern democracy era. Trent and Friedenber confirm the role of such independent groups, which have operated with the aim of putting pressure on governments and the overall political system, through lobbying, sponsorship, fundraising, advertising, etc., so as to realize their expectations of influencing parties and candidates’ choices at all levels, and on socio-economic policies that they deem relevant to the electorates (ibid, p9). They say: ‘it would make little sense to discuss contemporary political campaigns without acknowledging the effect of political action committees’ (ibid, p.11). Citing the American political system as a key example, they argue that factors like the ‘decline of political parties’ in the 1970s, financial reforms and technological advancements, have all contributed to changing contemporary political campaigns (2002, pp5-15). They posit that reform rules adopted by the Democratic Party, during which the presidential nomination system was changed by transferring power from party officials to delegates at primaries, resulted in a shift of power to the grassroots at all levels (p6). This reform largely comes with the challenges of disaffection, apathy in party activities, unwillingness to provide resources and, eventually, to a loss of interest in the formation of political parties, to the detriment of political institutions and programs like political campaigns. The narration above establishes the crucial role of independent groups in political organization and mobilization, suggesting the possible influence of these groups on electorates’ choices.

Equally influential in political campaigns development, according to these authors, is the plethora of Acts and Statutes that have posed many challenges which have placed a lot of restrictions on party financing and on political campaign management, in general. ‘Closely related are the reforms in finance which, although initially affecting presidential candidates, have had some effect at all levels’ (ibid).

There is every indication that the advent of technology is adding to various drivers for the recognition of political campaigns. New technology has brought in its wake the need for political strategists, political communicators and other actors to adapt their strategies to meet the exigencies

of the time. Trent and Friedenber (2002) note that the merits of new technological advances on political campaigning go beyond helping candidates and parties reach large numbers of people in a short time. Their assertion is evident in interactive features, like instant feedback and the linkage of electorates to political actors and parties through the web and the SNSs. These have increased representation and participation. In effect:

...advances in technology as well as the advent of the single-issue group, the election law reforms, and the decline in the influence of political parties, have combined to transform the nature and manner of our electoral system. Whether you like it or not, one significant result of these changes has been that we can scarcely avoid taking part in the campaign process (2000, p. 13).

Arguably, these factors have influenced the trend in, and the nature of, campaigns, to some extent. The impacts transcend not only the American periphery, but also other national political arenas, with more revealing reasons being visible in representative democracies. Scammell (1995), re-echoes that political and technological changes in the inter-war decades revolutionized the craft of political persuasion. According to her, the impact of war and the need for conscription, the mass franchise, class conflict and developments in communication technology, among other reasons, pushed political leaders to utilize propaganda in their interaction with the masses, and in the space to swing public opinion, with a view to persuading local and international politicians' support for the world war (p 26). For example:

The swing in American public opinion towards support for the war was attributed in large measure to the success of the CPI's (Committee on Public Information) efforts. Market and audience research techniques were at this time relatively underdeveloped, and in their absence a belief in the potential omnipotence of propaganda took root (ibid, p27).

Scammell's position is a clear manifestation of propaganda's impact, particularly in an environment in which a typical vertical communication element persists, it creates opportunities for propagandists and political actors to feast on vulnerable electorates with 'needed and available' information, to the detriment of true participation and deliberation, thereby confirming propaganda as a communication tool that potentially influences every aspect of politics, most significantly in political campaigning. In effect, political actors, specifically those parading as spokespersons attempt to deliberately influence the political narrative in such a way that it conveys the biased message that one prefers to a targeted audience (Braun and Rogers, 2016)

In the wake of propaganda, there is a new wave of communication in political communication whose influence portends a significant contribution to the drive behind contemporary political campaigning. These may be a mix of communication and advertising communication tools powered by expertise in public relations, advertising, marketing and communications, as confirmed by some scholars (e.g., Lilleker, 2006). This goes in tandem with the argument that introducing professionalism into political campaigning would potentially facilitate innovation towards the maximization of the use of digital campaigning as new ways to provide campaigning ‘within an ongoing trend to professionalization’ (Štětka et al., 2014). These expectations should be a motivation for further interrogation into the new trend for political campaigning that is occasioned by digitalization.

1.6 Motivation for this Thesis

Ghana has a checkered political history, having emerged from intermittent military rule a few years after gaining independence from British colonial rule on March 6, 1957, under the leadership of the country’s first constitutionally elected President, Osaagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. According to Abugre (2015), Ghana has experienced more military dictatorship than civilian democratic rule since her independence (p. 22). Historically, Nkrumah’s government, under the umbrella of the Convention Peoples’ Party (CPP), was overthrown by soldiers, led by General Emmanuel Kwasi Kotoka, in 1966. Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia’s Progress Party government, which later was handed power by the military government, was also ousted by soldiers, led by General Ignatius Kutu Acheampong. There was also the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings who overthrew another military government in 1979 after Gen. Acheampong was ousted in an in-house coup by Gen F.W.K. Akuffo. Two years after handing over the country’s governance to another constitutionally elected government, that of the Peoples’ National Party (PNP), led by Dr. Hila Liman, Flt. Lt. Rawlings stage his second coup and formed the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC). What role did the media play in those eras?

It is instructive to indicate that the media were equally affected by these developments, and were correspondingly influenced by unstable political development events. In most instances, the military took control of the media, and thus consciously or unconsciously stifling the press freedom which formed one of key tenets of democracy. The media thus had no choice but to accommodate

military regimes until 1992, by adapting to several political changes (Abugre, 2017, p23). Although the nation was under military dictatorship, the wind of democratic change that was blowing across the globe, especially, across Africa south of the Sahara, had raised the awareness and consciousness of the average Ghanaian on democracy and a multi-party system of governance. With pressure from the West mounting continually on the PNDC government, the military leadership eventually succumbed to the citizens' wishes and Ghana returned to constitutional rule in 1992, after eleven years of a military regime. This ushered in the country's Fourth Republican Constitution, pioneered by the NDC, led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings. The NPP, the NDC's closest contestant, boycotted the 1992 elections, which were also contested by the National Convention Party (NCP) and The EAGLE Party (EP), for alleged electoral malpractices. The NPP captured power in 2000, and lost power to the NDC under the leadership of Professor John Evans Atta Mills, after a close contest. Mill passed on four months before completing his four years' leadership term in 2012. His deputy, John Dramani Mahama, who, by the Ghanaian Constitution, completed Professor Mills' term, won the subsequent election in 2012, but lost to the NPP in the 2016 elections, under the leadership of Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo Addo.

All these elections were characterized by robust local and national political campaign activities by all the political parties and leaderships. Activities included press conferences, rallies, occasional political talks and walks under the guise of keep fit clubs, social clubs, games and sports debates. They pursued these activities amidst the distribution of leaflets and brochures containing party literature and information on manifestos vision and ideology, all to win 'new souls', to ignite enthusiasm among members and ensure party visibility. A member of the electorate, Hakeem Adam, sums up the nature of Ghana's political parties' campaigns and preparations for Presidential and Parliamentary elections, which are held in December:

There are symptoms of an election all over Accra. From the giant billboards, to the flags of various political parties extending from trees like prosthetic branches, to the general angst in the air as every news program on the radio, Internet and television offers updates on the road to Ghana's December 7 General Elections. And it's not just Accra; from Keep Fit the largest regional capital to the smallest village, the tinge of expectation is as clear as day. Ghanaians are set to utilize their democracy, freedom and liberty to shape and influence the decisions that will govern our lives over the next four years (Adam, 2016, p.1).

The quotation above reflects the most important political activities that form the key features of political campaigns in Ghana, mostly carried out by political actors, political parties, the leadership and the electorates in general, that herald elections. The media's role in all these activities cannot be underestimated. 'In fact, the renewal of the Ghanaian mass media culture has become an integral and indispensable part of the process of democratisation' (Tettey, 2001, cited in Mensah, 2017). The media's role in the electoral process fits into Bezina's description of media and democracy in Latvia, in that the combination of the media system, political parties and political culture were the core element that determined the local framework of the political campaigning environment (Berzina, 2016, p.196). This is an indication that democracy thrives in a very conducive atmosphere in which all these structures are in a harmonious relationship, especially when they are in an environment which is conducive to the media's operation.

The media, particularly the traditional media, become the visible channel for these political campaign activities. They offer their platforms for discussions, interviews, rallies, and for various promotional political material, in order to help to project the electoral process. It is on record that the media, through their watchdog role, assumed the role of opposition parties in parliament when the major opposition party, the NPP, boycotted the first parliament of the Fourth Republic in 1992 (Gyimah-Boadi, 2001). On the blind side of the media's vibrancy there is also an equally robust politicking on the Internet and on Social Networking Sites/platforms, like WhatsApp, Facebook, You Tube, Twitter and Instagram, which caught the attention of the Ghanaian political stakeholders around 2010. Although not much empirical evidence can be adduced to the digital media's potentials in Ghana's electoral system, the electorates believe that the use of social media played a significant role in Ghana's political campaigning, especially in that in the 2012 and 2016 campaigns, ahead of the elections in December (Dzisah, 2018; Gyampoh, 2017). A Social Media Index (SMI) report reveals that;

With close to 27 million mobile phone subscribers, eight million Internet users and nearly 3.5 million Ghanaians on Facebook alone and with data penetration standing at about 40% of the total population, it is of little wonder how platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have become critical aggregators of news for consumers, journalists and their organizations as well (Penplusbytes, 2016, p.1).

The information, above, reflects a possible reliance on the Internet and SNSs, like Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter, for information on political activities, specifically political campaigns by

social media influencers, political actors and the electorates in general. As to whether users of digital devices actively depend on the Internet and the SNSs as sources of news and information, this becomes questionable. This question becomes relevant in relation to the authenticity and validity of the data, in the Penplusbytes report (valid October 5, 2016), which ‘measures how media entities utilize their online platforms to reach out and engage their target audience by employing a quantitative research module’ (ibid). The report concludes:

Social media, now widely seen as an extension of our social lives, has come under intense scrutiny; having been at the centre of many public, media and even political discourse about its use, impact and general role in Ghana’s upcoming 2016 general elections. For this reason and significant others, traditional news sources-radio, TV and newspaper-have stricken an almost inseparable connection with new media techniques of which social media is key (2016, p.11).

The report above suggests that the new media have become an indispensable complementary tool to improve the socio-economic and political agenda, as in some other countries, mediated by changes in Africa’s new communication landscape (Ndlela and Mano, 2020). These scholars argue that SNSs and, specifically, the increasing use of smartphones and the increasing adoption of mobile Internet in Africa, are fundamentally altering the media ecology for election campaigns (ibid). Arguably, the new media have become a key item whose potential must be rigorously explored so as to unearth more of its impact on political campaigns in Ghana.

As a professional journalist, I have witnessed developments in Ghana’s political and media landscape since the country re-embraced multiparty rule in 1992. I am inclined to argue that an account of my experience may also be considered relevant in the quest for empirical data on the use of digital media (social media) in political campaigning in Ghana’s electoral system.

1.7 Personal Motivation

For the past twenty years, I have been actively involved in journalism, media and communications practices-with print on the *Ghanaian Times*, one of Ghana’s premier state-owned newspapers, on *TV3*, the first private television station, as a presidential correspondent and head of the political desk. I also had months of internship at the *Ghana News Agency* (GNA), the state wire service, and the *Daily Graphic*, which is state-owned and is the leader in terms of circulation. Again, I

covered high profile assignments, including Ghana's Presidency (1995 -2001), plus major international and national political events involving political parties' programs and activities, such as political campaigns, national delegates' conferences and rallies. Similarly, I served as the Director of Communications of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), one of Ghana's two leading political parties, between 2008 and 2016, during which, I played a role in the publicity and communications of the party. My experience as a lecturer in broadcast journalism at the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ), equally, prepared me academically to execute this project.

The above experiences serve as a motivation to contribute to the works of scholars in exploring the nuances in political campaigns and the media, particularly the social media, in the context of political communication and its role in Ghana's electoral system.

The motivation for this project is therefore based on knowledge of Ghana's political campaign and media systems, the nature of Ghana's multiparty and electoral system, plus the developments in political campaigns, as outlined above, which make it imperative to explore the consequent impact of political campaigning and their relationships with contemporary political communication in the wake of digitalization in order to determine its impact on Ghana's electoral democracy. The influence of the military in governance makes the urge to research political party social media strategies compelling, judging from their interruption in multi-party rule in Ghana and in most of the countries in Sub Saharan Africa. In most instances, the military junta exercised an illegal dominance on the ruled, which partially derailed democratic rule in Africa.

According to Staffan (2006), the dominance of authoritarian regimes in the political landscape of Africa until the 1980's, the creation of an air of 'demo-optimism' in political science circles, emanating from political changes in the early 1990s, and the sudden acceptance of political liberalization in Africa, among other reasons, have attracted debate within academia, resulting in the creation of a huge vacuum in knowledge which calls for a 'theoretical specification, methodological rigor, and, perhaps most of all, sufficient collection of data suitable for comparative analysis (pp.3-4). In my opinion, Staffan's position reflects the concerns of contemporary scholarships in political communication and, equally, provokes more debate around, and interrogation of, democratic qualities, including the role of campaigns and their influence on efforts of political actors to transform politics in Africa.

It is also my view that although Africa needs to nurture and consolidate democracy, the attainment of this vision and these expectations will be far from being reached if key democratic pillars, like the media and the systems associated with them, are not rigorously monitored through research. Conducting thorough research has the potential to produce more specific and accurate data. ‘One strategy for addressing this is to conceptualize and collect comparative data on partial regimes, rather than on overarching concepts like democracy and neopatrimonialism’ (ibid, p5-6).

Overcoming the challenges associated with regime changes and their influence on democratic governance, as espoused in the arguments above, must go together with effective media and political communications strategies that potentially address the challenges that impede the success of political campaigns. Researching political campaigning in the digital era therefore becomes relevant because, over the past two decades, the growing adoption of the Internet by political actors, and its influence on election campaigning, has been the subject of numerous studies (e.g., Kampitaki et al, 2008). This makes the debate on the rationale for this study critical, since it consolidates the key arguments that outline the study.

1.8 The Rationale for this Research

The study is intended to test and contribute original knowledge and insights about the role of social media in political campaigning in Ghana. The key arguments focus on the challenges that impede the consolidation of Ghana’s democracy, notably, dealing with the changing dynamics in political communication and their influence on political campaigning, as mediated by rapid technological developments. Although the debate on the relationship between political campaigning and media, especially the social media, is still under rigorous interrogation, some scholars see mixed benefits emanating from that interrelationship; ones that potentially enhance the quest for empirical data in establishing the impact of that symbiotic relationship. For example, the ‘majority of research into e-campaigning has been conducted on political campaigns in the United States (US), where citizens and politicians adopted the Internet earlier on’ (Vergeer, 2011), and prior research shows that political parties and candidates have increased their web presence considerably (Gulati and Williams, 2007).

These notions portend a positive impact, in terms of the transformation in political campaigns in a modern electoral system. However, the impact of the web and SNSs, like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram, on campaigns, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, still need thorough studies in order to determine their influence on representation, participation and voter behavior in the digital era.

Even if digital media are impacting on political campaigns, with reference to an empirical basis, there remain still some unanswered questions on the possibilities and potentials. For example, what will be their extent? What will be the impact? With an interest in the complementary role of the digital media, how are political actors or patrons of the digital media maximizing the use of these tools? How has the political leadership used digital media, in terms of power contestation, amongst other issues?

Additionally, there are not many studies, for example, on digital media strategies that have been carried out in Africa, in order to determine their impact on political campaigns, this generates further debate on the availability of data in order to establish empirical evidence. Arguably, factors such as contextual, historical and cultural ones, etc., may vary among campaign environments (Karlsen, 2010 in Ndlela, 2020), and may influence the verdict on the impact, for example, of political communication, in terms of deployment for democracy and the related practices in developed and developing democracies, thereby generating more debate on the concept and its uses for the African, as in other societal endeavors.

Effectively, failure to utilize a tool like political communication has slowed down democratic growth and developments in Africa (Mazrui, 2006), meaning that challenges like the digital divide and literacy, the exorbitant cost of bandwidth, illiteracy, the lack of the availability of resources, especially communication facilities and Internet penetration, and even the functionality of websites, may limit the use of most of the digital facilities (especially in developing countries), which are crucial for the enhancement of communication in any democratic setting.

These challenges have a mixed impact on representation and participation in a modern electoral environment. In Michaelsen's opinion, in a situation like this, the maximization of digital facilities becomes the preserve of a certain class of the electorate, e.g.:

... the educated and urban layers of society, for the spreading of political information and debate in developing and transitioning countries,

although these classes of beneficiaries are sometimes politically excluded in some democracies for their active role in influencing change through the creation of [an] 'awareness of existing grievances and formulating demands for change they influence public opinion' (2011, p.16).

It thus becomes imperative to explore why and how political actors use the digital media as complementary tools with which to enhance the political situation. The arguments above reflect the Ghanaian situation and, to some extent, the story of most African countries where electoral democracy is being actively pursued. For example, Ghana's population of about 30 million:

...has close to 27 million mobile phone subscribers, eight million Internet users and nearly 3.5 million Ghanaians on Facebook alone, and, with data penetration standing at about 40% of the total population, it is of little wonder how platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have become critical aggregators of news for consumers, journalists and their organizations as well' (Penplusbytes, 2016).

Arguably, it is inaccurate to conclude that all Facebook and Twitter patrons, as indicated by those statistics, are using digital devices, especially the Internet, for political purposes, as political news sources for participation, etc.

However, some scholars maintain that the Ghanaian electorates were likely to benefit from the merits of social media, irrespective of these doubts. According to Mensah (2017), the social media were identified as being a key communication tool in campaigns and other political activities before, during and after the 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections. He posits that:

The increasing engagement of politicians and political parties in Ghana on social media earned them entry into the Ghana Social Media Ranking (GSMR) in 2015, with President John Mahama leading as the most influential political brand. In the ranking, President John Mahama had GSMR score of 1, 623, 212.10, and Nana Akufo-Addo had GSMR score of 1, 194, 485 .60. In this score the Facebook and Twitter followings for John Mahama were 642, 601 and 162,911 respectively, while those of Nana Akufo-Addo were 556,871 and 73,462, respectively (GSMR 2015) in Mensah (2017, p9).

The ranking above points to possible connections between the social media and the electorate, and suggests that social media made an impact in the campaign programs of two key contestants and their political parties in Ghanaian politics. The statistics also underline the point that Ghanaian politicians are patronizing the digital media, to some extent, but as to whether they are effectively

and efficiently using it to realize its benefits to the fullest, this becomes another issue of interest that should attract the attention of any researcher. For example, Avle (2017) notes that although the availability of digital devices has empowered the average Ghanaian to effectively participate in discourses of interest, and studies by scholars (Burrell 2012a, 2012b; Fair et al 2009; Slater and Kwami, 2005) maintain that ‘users tend to see the Internet as a means for chatting, for personal socio-economic gain through often labelled questionable practices with foreigners online’ (Mensah, 2017).

In Liberia, too, a study by Wring et al. (2011) on the usage of the Internet revealed that:

... those who used the Internet to get election information were strongly concentrated on the youngest third of the population (aged under 35), they were much more likely to be middle-class than working class. According to the study these groups were also the strongest source of Liberal Democrat support, both nationally and in the marginal constituencies. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Lib Dem supporters were the most likely to have visited the official websites of political parties, and to have visited other websites to get information about the election (30 per cent had done so, compared with 17 per cent of intending Labour voters and 14 per cent of Conservatives). But it is nevertheless, at odds with the expectation that the Internet might play an especial role in promoting tactical voting and furnishing the information necessary to do so intelligently: these respondents were all still intending to vote Liberal Democrat a week before polling day, in constituencies that the party had no chance of winning’ (2011, p.115).

It thus becomes relevant to explore whether political actors have any mechanism with which to verify whether patrons are influenced, or in touch with, their messages posted on the Internet or SNSs. Besides, the media strategies, particularly, the social media strategies used by political stakeholders, must be interrogated to establish their impact on political campaigns in the wake of digitization in Ghana.

1.9 The Case of Ghana

Political campaigning in emerging democracies worldwide is arguably taking on a different dimension following the advent of digitization. The digitization phenomenon has influenced all aspects of political campaigning, for example, strategies, organizations and features. Duggan and

Smith (2016) argue that more than one-third of social media users are worn out by the amount of political content they encounter, and more than half describe their online interactions with those they disagree with politically as stressful and frustrating, thus indicating the pervasive nature of digital media in political engagements.

Africa is no exception to these developments in political communication. Studies in some parts of Africa, for example, from Kenya to Somalia, South Africa to Tanzania, indicate that social media use is reshaping political engagement in Africa, particularly judging from the background of Africa's democratic practices (Dwyer and Molony, 2019). According to these scholars, although some African states have increasingly sought to clamp down on the technology by introducing restrictive laws or shutting down networks altogether, smartphones and social media have transformed Africa, allowing people across the continent to share ideas, to organize and to participate in politics like never before (ibid).

Africa's political campaigning in the digital age, as indicated earlier, thus provides some difficulty in terms of research due to a myriad of challenges, such as problems of connectivity, illiteracy, and inadequate Internet penetration, the lack of adequate human resources, the lack of funding, poverty, lack of accessibility and the lack of infrastructure. For, while the Internet is the resource that facilitates the increasing use of social media, it is still being seen as an urban phenomenon in most of Africa, and in the Sub-Saharan region, including Ghana (Internet World Statistics, 2017).

The abovementioned challenges notwithstanding, African politicians are gradually maximizing digitization through the new media as a complement to those traditional media which have been used for centuries. The mad rush for digitization may be attributed to several reasons, including the professionalization of political communication, changes in campaign strategies and the emergence of a new generation of targets/audience, who are fixated with technology and the complexities that are associated with contemporary political activities (McFadden Allen, 2008)

Ghana seeks to consolidate her fledgling democracy, whose origin dates from as far back as the early 1940s, until 1957, when she gained independence from British Colonial rule. The road to consolidation, as mentioned earlier, was marked by intermittent military intervention until 1992, when she re-embraced democratic rule. She has since forged ahead towards firming up the democratic system. The dream of consolidation must be mediated by strong democratic pillars,

including the media, indeed, a very vibrant and preferably a mixed media strategy because, in political campaigns, political actors and their parties use a variety of media, including social media, to reach the masses in modern-day politics (Ndavula and Mueni, 2014).

Arguably, the new media are gradually transforming political campaigns in view of their impact on political communication, organization and mobilization, amongst other facets, in an emerging Ghanaian democratic context. As Dzisah (2017) argues, the use of social media by the supporters of the NPP and NDC, who had continuously engaged in political campaigns on Facebook and Twitter, even when official campaigning activities had ended, explains the utmost importance that Ghanaian political actors attach to social media. This finds space in Naim's assertion that 'the same information technologies that empower average citizens have ushered in avenues for surveillance, repression and corporate control' (2013, p. 14), and they have also played a critical role in social change, an indication that while the social media are often hailed as a liberating tool, they have invariably served to reinforce existing power dynamics, rather than to challenge them. However, 'the increased use of social media to promote democratic participation is a reflection of the urgent need for political actors to design alternative channels of communication to satisfy the young voters' (Dzisah, 2017, p56). This suggests that the social media, in spite of the challenges, play a very critical role in serving participatory needs, and not only as tools of empowerment for leadership, but as a convenient and easily accessible platform for both the youth and those ordinary citizens who form the majority of Ghana's population.

Ghana's situation is compelling to research, given the increased media freedom that is occasioned by new democratic governance structures which have allowed the citizenry more opportunities to influence and interact with competing political parties, following military rule from 1979-1992 (Gyimah-Boadi, 2002). As Koomson (1997) puts it, Ghanaian journalists, taking advantage of a more liberal political mood and a deepening media pluralism, have become singularly outspoken in their publications, and more professionally determined in their practice. The question is: to what extent are the new media's behavior and conduct performing as required in an emerging democracy? Additionally, recorded incidents of the abuse of media freedom mean that media democracy is needed. Thus, in eliciting answers, there should be no fixed answers, and the media must also be put to task (Jay, 2003).

The arguments above, among others, therefore, motivate the urge to analyze the complexities of political campaigns, as they relate to political communications and media, especially of the social media strategies of the political parties and their impact on political campaigning in the context of Ghana. For example, how have the Ghanaian political stakeholders adapted to the changing dynamics of the media that are occasioned by technological development, (and their attendant challenges), and their impact on political communications and political campaigning in contemporary democracy. Additionally, how are political stakeholders managing the technology (ICT policies) and its implications for the new media (social media), particularly in their contest for power. The attempt to search for answers that can validate the analysis that is generated by the challenges in Ghana hinges on the availability of well-grounded research objectives, as stated below.

1.10 Research Objectives

The study's focus on Ghana's electoral democracy, with special attention to how political campaigning is changing in the digital era, this investigation is carried out within the context of Africa, and how political actors are becoming habituated to the use of modern technology as a complement to the traditional media, in order to maximize the impact of 'political communication' for successful political campaigning.

The Ghanaian situation, like that in other developing democracies in Africa, is motivated by the need to explore the impact that the digital media are making on campaign activities, while being cognizant of issues like literacy (the Literacy rate is 71.5% of the total population, Male: 78.3% Female: 65.3%) and inequity, as reflected in the economic and social status of the country's estimated 31 million population (World Population Prospects, 2019).

Ghana's political communication space is also characterized by a phenomenon of 'serial callers', who are reminiscent of the surrogates, or spin doctors, who are used as political spokespersons or directors of communications in most developed democracies. The operations of

‘serial callers’ often attract public reactions, in view of the style and nature of their contributions to political debate, notably in their choice of diction. Sometimes, the issue of language becomes debatable, suggesting that these ‘serial callers’ are abusing the latitudinal space offered by social media and other SNSs by flouting basic journalistic ethics. Major reasons for looking at media language are that language forms an essential part of the content of what the media purvey to us, and also that language is a tool and expression of media messages (Bell, 1999).

The ‘serial callers’ may also be likened to the ‘Veranda Boys’ in the Ghanaian political context. The old practice (in the era of multi-party practice in Ghana) in which leading political parties hired enforcers (Veranda Boys) to rough up the public on behalf of the parties. So-called ‘Veranda Boys’ could also educate and defend on behalf of the party. Today, the ‘Veranda Boys’ may be considered ‘serial callers’, gaining recognition in Ghanaian politics, in view of their contribution to political communication and participation. ‘Serial Callers’ operate on a partisan basis and are very loyal to the course of the ideologies and policies in which they believe. ‘Serial callers’ are easily identified by their vertical mode of communications, mostly on radio, and they execute this with utmost oratory skills, which are capable of convincing audiences. This description finds space in Cowan’s (2012) argument that effective performance, both as oratory and in print, may be central to the success and persuasiveness of that speech that is akin to contemporary spin. This underscores the multi-faceted nature of the skills needed for spin, which are not only limited to ‘skilled oratory’, and that ‘to distinguish between form and content only obscures the purpose, the effectiveness and, indeed, the meaning of speech for audiences (ibid). Besides, the angle of argument by ‘serial callers’, their language and partisan nature, make them noticeable in the communication space in the Ghanaian political communication context, particularly in the Fourth Republican Constitutional Democratic dispensation. These features clearly confirm the role of ‘serial callers’ as communicators whose prime duty requires that they maintain loyalty to their parties. Similarly, the responsibility of ‘serial callers’ include supplying a diversionary story in the hope of taking the headlines away (Geber, 2001).

Consequently, it becomes relevant to discover how political campaign strategists and communicators are managing these challenges and developments in the digital era. This question makes the Ghanaian situation relevant also for interrogation, especially since digitization has become the prime mover in global political, social and economic endeavors. Of equal importance

and interest to Ghanaian researchers must be an assessment of new forms of media practices, especially the trends in journalism, and the reactions of various players, including political spokespersons and affiliated surrogates' (including serial callers) adaptations and manipulations of the digital platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and the Internet, etc., in order to advance their political agenda. Similarly, how the youth (who form the key voting population) and the elderly respond to the digital era in political campaigning becomes relevant to this study, because young people are increasingly using the Internet, digital interaction and the transmission of 'signs' when they want to become involved in social life, politics and democracy (Bang and Smirk, 2007; Dzisah, 2017). These challenges require clearly defined objectives, as outlined below, in order to solve the problems.

1.10 Objectives

The arguments above have linked this research to many objectives so as to help to elicit the right questions in order to generate the right answers and solutions to those problems that have motivated this study. Effectively, the following objectives provide the right direction for finding solutions to the research questions. Consequently, the research seeks:

To critically investigate how digital media tools (social media platforms) influence political campaigning, and politics in general, in Ghana. This objective is motivated by the need to ascertain the impact that social media, and digital technology in general, have had on political activities in the Ghanaian context.

In tracking the impact of the digital platforms, the research sought also to critically determine the appropriation and uses of digital media, including the social media strategies of political parties and their leadership, especially the leading political parties (NPP and NDC), whose campaigns and other political activities form the basis of the study.

The research has additionally explored the role of quasi-political party communicators (serial callers) in political participation and deliberation in the digital era.

This objective inherently took consideration of the role of 'serial calling', a phenomenon with antecedents dating back to the inception of multi-party democracy in the early stages of

Ghana's democracy. The assumption that most 'serial callers' are radio savvy and not technologically friendly sought to question their role, therefore attracting a need to explore how digital media have influenced and shaped political communication towards the enhancement of participation and deliberation in Ghana, since they (the 'serial callers') form an aggregate in the political strategies of most of the political parties.

In assessing the influence of digital platforms in political party's contests, the research explored the possibility and validity of analyzing how digital tools are influencing the way political parties contest power, as well as comparing the practices and strategies of leading political forces in Ghana.

Crucial to the study was a projection of the prospects of social media strategies and their uses in Ghana's future political party campaigning, hence, the rationale to ascertain the implications pertaining to the adoption of digital tools for party political communication in the 2012 and 2016 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections.

The objectives above presented a herculean task of developing appropriate research questions through which to rationalize the basis for the investigation into social media use in Ghana's future political parties' campaigning, in the midst of rapid technological advancement.

1.11 Research Questions

The study, as indicated earlier, is based within the context of Africa. It deals with how political actors are becoming habituated to the use of modern technology as a complement to the traditional media, so as to maximize the impact of political communication in campaign processes. For Farrugia et al., 'a well-defined and specific research question is more likely to help guide us in making decisions about study design and population and subsequently what data will be collected and analysed' (2010, p278). Effectively, it becomes critical to design questions that have the potential to generate responses that will validate investigations into how digital media (platforms) are influencing political campaigns in Ghana, especially in the context of the 2012 and 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections. The research questions have provided in-depth knowledge and cognizance of the objectives, about the extent to which social media were used, both by political actors and the electorate, to enable the study to generate the relevant data.

The study has therefore asked the following questions:

1. How has digital connectivity impacted on political party campaigns in democratic elections?
2. How have political party campaigns been influenced by social media use in Ghana for electoral campaigning?
3. To what extent are the variations in political communication strategies and the technological evolution occasioned by new media key determinants of the choice of candidates and of voting behavior, and,
4. How have the social media had an impact upon Ghana's 2012 and 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections?

The questions are interrelated and this is shown through how they were addressed in the thesis.

1.12 Outline of chapters

Chapter 1 offered an introduction to the thesis. It highlights factors and tools relating to campaigning, how they are influencing political campaigns, and their impact on the contemporary political environment. The motivation, including my personal motivation for the thesis, and its urgency, the justification for taking Ghana as a case study, as well as the objectives and the corresponding questions that direct the research's focus, have been outlined. Chapter 2 addresses scholarly research on the concepts of political campaigning and digital media (social media) and their relationship with the traditional media in a contemporary democratic environment. It also explores the production and dissemination of news with interests in the sources and messages as they relate to political communication, political audiences, and the matrix of the interrelations that provide some useful dilemmas. Various theories underpin the study, with due consideration of the literature and a framework of participatory democracy and its relationship with deliberation, social media and political campaign. These have been discussed in Chapter 3, and are also outlined in this chapter, offering a review of, and the gaps identified, in the literature. Chapter 4 provides insights into the roles of the old and new media in political campaigns from a global perspective, while Chapter 5 focuses on Africa, with an emphasis on how social media are impacting on political campaigning. Chapter 6 discusses political campaigning in Ghana, by highlighting her

political history, political campaigns both before and after independence, strategies, the incumbency, and their impact on the electoral processes. In Chapter 7, the methodology and the various methods that direct and shape the course of the research are discussed, with Chapter 8 providing the findings and discussions. Chapter 9, concludes the thesis and makes recommendations for further research, in addition to an outline of the contributions that the study has made to knowledge, and the theory behind participation and political campaigns.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the concepts of political campaigning and digital media (social media) and their relationships with the traditional media in a contemporary democratic environment. It also explores the production and dissemination of news, with an interest in sources and messages as they relate to political communication, political audiences and the matrix of interrelations, which provides some dilemmas that it would be useful to solve. In the context of conceptual formulations and theoretical reasoning, these interrelationships provide the study with insights into Participatory Democracy and Deliberation, two key theories of democracy, and they explore the extent of influence, in terms of the use of digital and traditional media in political communication, as they relate to contemporary political campaigning.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

This literature review discusses democracy, political campaigning, political communication and digitization in terms of their relevance to the study. Specifically, the issues fall under five thematic areas: Political Campaigning, Digital Media, Democracy and Political Participation, Democracy and Power and News as Weapons of Persuasion. The themes have been chosen in view of their interrelationships and their impact on politics, participation, democracy political communications and media.

2.1.1 Political Campaigning in Perspective

Political campaigning is an indispensable tool in the context of the electoral process in any democratic environment, Political campaigns provide an opportunity by creating a platform from which political actors can connect with the electorate. Kam (2006) notes that electoral campaigns play an immense role in society by pulling citizens into open-minded thinking, as well as by shaping the electoral choices that citizens make. For Kam, there had been concern among scholars

in relation to the virtual relevance of campaigns (e.g., Ansolabehere et al., 1993; Bennett 1996; Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Patterson 1993). Campaigns strengthen democracy by holding the elected accountable to the electors. At the same time, campaigns undermine democracy, critics argue, by inducing cynicism, undermining trust in government, depressing turnout, and by otherwise frustrating attempts to engage the citizenry (2006, p931).

The reactions above establish the notion that campaigns offer mixed benefits and ignite the debate on their role in contemporary political elections. That notwithstanding, the relevance of campaigns cannot be overlooked, in view of the fact that they create invaluable channels and opportunities through which processes of persuasion by candidates convince voters to share their ideas are made. The processes of the inception of campaigns for individual candidates for example, where announcements of candidature and participation are determined by a strings of strategic decisions adopted by aspirants, or a political entity, at all levels of participation within a democratic setting. According to Rider (2016 p. 1), these processes have evolved over time, in part due to the emergence and evolution of the new media in the last few decades. The processes suggest that campaigns are possibly associated with a series of activities that are aimed at achieving a specific result, and that such processes, including political campaigns, must primarily focus on persuading the audience or respondents, and must be based on ideologies and the expectations of citizens. Besides, in a typical democratic setting, political campaigns will seek to educate and raise awareness concerning issues of interest for the socio-economic and political developments of the citizenry.

Trent and Friedenber (2000), in a prologue to political campaign communication, have underscored the need for campaigns to validate the relevance of elections in any democratic system. Arguably, elections provide electoral opportunities, including, allowing stakeholders, particularly the citizens, to actively participate in selecting leaders and broadening the levels of participation. 'Elections also provide the opportunity to determine how our own interest can best be served' (ibid, p.3). These interests, as indicated by Trent and Friedenber, will depend on the nature and needs of the targets, with a focus on the overall interests of the citizenry, in anticipation of the imminent benefits from every campaign process. Rogers and Storey confirm this assertion, arguing that, the benefits of political campaigns 'range from creating literacy to getting votes, from preventing drug abuse to advertising cosmetics, from changing nutritional intake to that are

transforming the social structure' (1987, p818, in Trent and Friedenberg, 2000). However, the overall concept and definition of a political campaign must be dependent on the key features associated with an electoral campaign process, because the features identified with the campaign processes potentially bring out the specific identities and uniqueness that endorse the real description of a campaign.

2.1.2 Identity of Political campaigns

Every political campaign must have an identity (Windahl et al. (1992), quoting Rogers and Storey (1987)). In most cases, campaigns are identified via four basic elements. Campaigns must not only be identified as having a purpose, but must be in a given time frame and must involve an organized set of communication activities, or, at least, should consider the inclusion of the messages' production and distribution (Ibid, 1992). The acquisition of these elements requires a holistic and comprehensive structure in order to facilitate the designation and execution of an effective political campaign strategy. Effectively, campaigns should encompass the thoughts and expectations of the electorates, taking cognizance of the socio-economic and political needs and the aspirations of possibly all the stakeholders on the political spectrum, clearly spelt out in the diction, messages, channels of communication, with specific reference to the targeted audiences and the environment. These arrangements establish plans that are capable of making the campaign not only 'target focused, but also encourage[ing] broader consultation, a sense of belonging, and provid[ing] assurance to the electorates and stakeholders of an available sphere for deliberation and participation. Subsequently, some of the challenges that could be associated with political campaigns might be dealt with. For example, in practice, campaigns can generally unfold to give a specific focus, such as executing a well-organized plan in order to persuade the electorate to vote for particular parties and their leadership, so as to achieve success.

The success of campaigns may be determined by several factors, for example, the success of a campaign may be arrived at through the effective utilization of the roles of the mass media and interpersonal communication, the characteristics of sources, in terms of a chosen medium, and formative evaluation. Other elements, like compatibility, timeliness, and the nature of appeals, amongst others, could possibly ensure the success of a campaign (Rice and Atkins, 1989 in Trent

and Friedenberg, 2000), bearing in mind the campaign's objectives and the content of messages. Some campaign scholars, however, caution that:

Campaign objectives and criteria for success should be reasonable; not only is it difficult to pass through all the individual's information processing stages and to overcome constraints on resources, beliefs, and behaviour, but many public communication campaigns have typically set higher standards for success than the most successful commercial campaigns (Ibid.1989, p. 10, in Windahl et al.,1992, p. 102).

The concerns above are indications that political campaigns are dynamic, in terms of their features, and they are evolving phenomena that are occasioned by the complexities and continuous developments in technology, models, and concepts, amongst others, that are associated with the changing democratic practices across the globe. It becomes expedient, therefore, to understand the genesis of the campaign processes so as to determine the way forward as the use of digital media becomes imminent in global electoral practices. The U.S. 2008 presidential campaign is a classic example that scholars of media and communication (Dzisah, 2018) assert endorses the imminence of media usage in political campaign, in that, in this election, digital media became a key communication tool of convenience for candidates. Aronson (2012) confirms this, with the emphasis, that, 'this was especially the case in the 2008 presidential elections with the candidates embracing Internet technologies to market their campaigns, and that political campaigns have always seized upon new modes of communication to reach voters' (2012, p. 148). The U.S experience has become a common phenomenon in African political campaign scenes, and was very visible in Ghana's 2012 electioneering process, as witnessed in various political campaign strategies (Dzisah, 2018). As predicted by Castells (2009), the phenomenon signifies the construction of a new public sphere in the network society. It is imperative, therefore, to investigate if similar realities occur in the African context, especially in the context of evolution and future prospects, as political stakeholders attempt to reshape the trajectory of political campaigns in Africa.

2.1.3 Evolution of Political Campaigns

Political campaigning has evolved over the centuries, obviously improving after years of electoral activities, especially in most democratically oriented societies. It stands to reason that the changes can be determined based on the extent of development at a particular time, or developments in the conduct of electoral processes. In fact, changes in overall political campaign systems and activities may be reflected in the ways in which they are organized and strategized, their channels of communications, their electoral systems, and the message mode, the message transmission and their technology, amongst others. For example, it will be of immense value to consider, or understand, how political campaigning has developed over time if it becomes necessary to contextualize the utilization of the newest Web 2.0 applications in today's campaigns (Vergeer et al, 2011). This means the evolution of political campaign has been occasioned by a combination of factors, so it becomes necessary to explore and identify the extent of that transformation, taking cognizance of the basic indicators that drive the campaign process.

Arguably, the: 'political campaign has undergone such a radical transformation that those principles and practices accepted by practitioners and theorists even 15 years ago are largely irrelevant today' (Trent and Friedenber, 2000, p4). They argue, further, that certain legitimate factors: the decline in the influence of political parties; electoral financing legislation; political action committees and technological advancements, have combined to change contemporary political campaigns (ibid, p.5) in the context of the American political parties' campaign system. Underlying these assertions is the possibility that the transformation will be reflected in every aspect of the campaign processes and activities, hence the need to pursue the scholarly argument in the context of features that characterize the changes in political campaigns, especially in an evolving democracy like Ghana. As indicated earlier, the transformation of the Ghanaian political campaign process and democracy since independence has been influenced by a long history of military intervention, and these developments have not only guided the campaign process, but have served as a motivation for stakeholders across the political spectrum, especially in the contexts of organization, administration, structure and communication, amongst others. It is obvious that the long history of military dictatorship has made the media and some political parties' bitter opponents of the NDC, which has its antecedents in the Provincial National Defence Council (PNDC), the last military backed administration, which ushered in Ghana's Fourth Republican

Democratic rule in 1992. This bitterness is reflected in the level of acrimony, vilification and vindictiveness displayed among political opponents on campaign platforms.

Norris (2000) believes that the evolution of campaigns can be determined based on three different models that are mediated by a distinct use of communications; pre-modern or direct campaign, the modern, and the post-modern campaign. She argues that all the models have individual features that distinguish them in their campaign era from one another;

In the pre-modern campaign, newspapers and direct face-to-face communication at rallies and meetings were dominant. Modern campaigning is characterized by the increased use of national television and advertising. The postmodern campaign, introduced in the early 1990s, is characterized by the introduction of information and communication technology (ICT), especially the Internet (Karlsen, 2009; Stromback 2007, in Vergeer et al., 2011, p480).

The ‘campaign seasons’ above confirm that campaigns had been influenced by technological development, specifically, by communications tools and platforms, and that has directly or indirectly lead to the transformation of information dissemination in campaigns, dependent, especially, on the emerging communications tools of the century, as evidenced in the emergence of Social Networking Sites (SNS), like Facebook, Twitter, etc., in the 21st century. Arguably, SNSs have taken campaigns to a different level in contemporary political campaigning by providing candidates with a personal platform on which people who are interested in those candidates can link up, become a member of the candidate’s online social circle and, by doing so, interact with candidates more closely (Lilleker and Malagon, 2010). The interactive features embedded in SNSs not only promote quality in representation, but also enhance participation by creating more space in the modern public sphere. That notwithstanding, there is the possibility that new technology could equally create some deficit in political campaigning and the electoral system.

The adoption of new methods of political communications has, to some extent, contributed to factors that continue to influence electoral campaigning. These are a mix of communication and advertising communication tools that are powered by expertise in public relations, advertising, marketing and communications. This is described by experts as the ‘professionalization or Americanization’ of campaigns, and it signals the introduction of skills and specialization in their planning and execution, and this has taken the campaign process to a more effective level, probably

for the better (Farrell, 1996; Mancini and Swanson, 1996). These scholars contend that political campaign management has changed fundamentally over two decades, describing the trend as a process of modernization, professionalization and a trend away from being labor-intensive to having capital-intensive campaigns.

Similarly, campaigning has been influenced by intelligence, especially political and market intelligence. This strategy transforms the skills in the design, testing, and redesign of campaign messages, suggesting that political campaigning has taken a new approach. In measuring the professionalization of political campaigning, Gibson and Römmele (2012, p2) confirm that ‘over the past two decades, a new style of political campaigning has been identified by a range of scholars working in the parties, elections and communication field’. They argue, for example, that although the new forms of campaign are identified with different names and labels in the US and UK, there is basic agreement among scholars about the essential ingredients of the new approach, which can be summarized as increasing professionalization (ibid, in Norris 2000; Swanson and Mancini, 1996).

This development, which requires skills to ensure efficiency, as confirmed by Farrell et al., (2011, p. 18), ‘modern campaigns will require skills, the fact that there has been modernization in the contemporary political campaign activities’, and also that ‘if we consider that political parties were formed to make mass mobilization of voters occur efficiently for several levels of officeholders; (Aldrich 1995; Farrell et al, 2001, p. 12). Effectively, political campaigning has seen major transformation at different political and electoral dispensations and the agent of transformation has largely been technological advancement. The developments have equally brought in their wake a new wave of political communications that requires professionals with the right skills to deal with the challenges associated with them.

2.1.4 Political Campaigning and Advancement in Technology

Over the years, society had relied on the traditional media to communicate campaign messages to audiences. Politicians’ craze for the electronic media, particularly television, in the past, and even in contemporary political campaigns, cannot be underestimated. However, technology seems to have revolutionized contemporary political campaigning, ushering in unimaginable transformation

in terms of political communication in all type of governance. Trent and Friedenberg (2000) opine that the most obvious transformation in political campaigns has been in technology. This is evident

in the adoption of digital tools by political actors and institutions in contemporary political campaigns. According to Stromer-Galley (2011), political campaigns have historically used the affordances of a system, or the medium of a system's interactivity, in which people can interact with tools, click on pools, watch videos, and forward messages from campaigns to others, thus promoting interactivity which had hitherto not existed. Although restricted, to some extent, it was an improvement over the 'pre-digital technology era'. These developments have no doubt affected nearly every facet of life, including how we interact with the political process. Beneficiaries, mostly candidates, interest groups, political parties and civic organizations, are maximizing the benefits of the digital era by increasingly relying on the Internet, and especially on Social Media, to reach out to citizens (Howard, 2005; Negrine and Lilleker, 2012, Trammell, William and Postelnicu, 2006, in Androniciuc (2016, p52). Arguably, these benefits are indications of the indispensability of technology, in view of the extent of patronage by political stakeholders, and by society in general. Ndlela and Mano (2020), quoting Scheklenz and Schopp (2018), posit that much has been done in various countries to advance digitalization. They argue that digitalization has advanced with improved telecommunications, electricity provision, integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and major innovations in cloud computing, communication tools, electronic record systems and mobile banking (Ndlela and Mano, 2020). The situation may vary, if we note the variations in the environment, with specific reference to Africa.

Africa has a checkered narrative when it comes digitalization, in fact, it has a mixed fortune in terms of availability and accessibility. According to statistics, for instance, Internet penetration varies across the continent: 'Southern Africa, (51%), North Africa (49%), Western Africa (39%), and the Middle East (12%), although Africa has seen a 20% year-on-year growth in the number of Internet users. However, some of the world's lowest Internet penetration can be located in parts of Africa: Eritrea (1%), Niger (4%), Burundi (6%), and DRC (6%) Chad (5%)' (Scheklenz and Schopp, 2018; in Ndlela and Mano, 2020, p. 2).

In terms of penetration, (Majama, 2018) argues that while Internet penetration is still low, Africa is greatly patronizing digital media devices, with around 82% of the population in Africa connected

through a mobile phone in 2018. There were also about 204 million Facebook subscribers in Africa in December, 2017, with higher penetration in countries like Egypt, Angola, Algeria, Nigeria,

South Africa and Morocco, and lower penetration in countries like Togo, Swaziland, Malawi, Guinea Bissau and Lesotho (Internet World Stats, 2019). However, statistics show that some African countries, e.g., Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and Morocco (2hours 24 minutes) are ahead of most Western European countries, and even the USA, in terms of the time spent daily on social media (ibid, 2019)

The above statistics and developments show that the trends in political campaigns which are occasioned by technological changes have transformed campaign processes overall. This development has invariably prompted the adoption of strategies and platforms by political actors so as to meet the demands of political campaigns in the digital era. Effective strategies have become necessary in view of the challenges, posed by SNSs, to campaigning in contemporary politics, political communications, electoral systems and processes.

2.1.5 Key Highlights

This chapter has so far shown that political campaigning is key and, in fact, it can be described as the main engine that drives political activities and programs in any electoral process within a democratic environment. Political stakeholders, especially political parties, had relied on political campaigning over the years because it provides an appropriate platform from which they can communicate with the citizenry; political party manifestos, party education and other programs that seek to win the loyalty and support of the electorate. Political campaigns have evolved since the beginning of politics up to the postmodern campaign, which was introduced in the 1990's. Each era is identified by specific features which, in most cases, indicate a massive transformation in organization and management that is engineered by technological developments. These developments impact on political campaign strategies and have, over the years, both compelled and challenged political communicators and stakeholders to evolve pragmatic strategies to deal with the challenges posed by technological development. The next chapter will focus on social media within the broader context of digital media.

2.2. DIGITAL MEDIA IN PERSPECTIVE

2.2.0 Introduction

This section unpacks the concept of digital media. It recognizes the complexity of the term, as it may refer to the digitized content that can be transmitted, as well as the actual infrastructure, e.g., the Internet or computer networks. The role of digital media in political campaigning makes it relevant to examine their key features and their impact on political communication in the electoral processes of a multi-party democratic environment by exploring the definition of the concept plus the media, so as to provide an outline in terms of media relationship with politics and communication in the digital era. The chapter considers other definitions and provides a nuanced approach.

2.2.1 Digital Media: A Definition

The term 'digital media; indicates the use of computer technology to combine various forms of media for communication. The term is sometimes used interchangeably with Multimedia, but it specifically refers to electronic media that work by using digital codes, rather than analogue signals. Digital media use digital codes to create digital audio, digital video, or other digital content. This is a contrast to analogue media, which are described as older technology and which use a continuous signal (ExplorerNet Career, 2018)

Owen (2017) likens digital media to a new medium and emphasizes that it is a 20th Century phenomenon which has transformed human life in many ways. She notes that the new media campaign environment is characterized by the introduction of novel election communication platforms that have been made possible by technological innovations. Her position underscores the philosophy behind the key features of digital media, as new technologies which have not only made new forms of culture and communications, but which rely greatly on software, computations, informatics and algorithms. A consideration of the features and their impact indicates that digital media potentially influence the transformation of the communication technology on which various SNSs thrive. These developments have altered the socio-economic and political endeavors of mankind, including political campaigning and other political activities. For example, for 21st century politicians : ...'the American elections at all levels saw parties and candidates managing websites incorporating interactive elements, including features that allowed users to engage in

discussions, donate to candidates and to volunteer became standard in the 2004 election' (ibid, 2017, p3). This can be compared with the pre-digital era, when messages were distributed via one source to an audience, and thus sources, through a certain form of distribution e.g., newspapers, magazines, radio, or television. Effectively, the communication process then lacked interactivity, which potentially allowed the citizens the opportunity to actively deliberate and participate in the democratic process of political campaigning, and in other political party engagements.

Arguably, the digital media influence campaign processes, in that they have introduced certain novelties to electoral campaigns, because they offer new tools for political communication. For example, institutional political actors who have incorporated digital media into their communication strategies have engaged in a rapid process of adaption, as Lilleker et al., (2015, (cited in Vegeer et al., 2011, p 479) confirm. Their uses have been various, ranging across fund mobilization, the live streaming of political programs and the organization of party supporters, etc. Della Porta and Rucht (2002) argue that, similarly, a digital campaign offers innumerable interactions among political stakeholders, as they are connected to each other thematically and are oriented to a common aim based on their interest in a subject. This process largely negates the vertical form of communication and provides citizens with the necessary platforms that encourage alternative views to broaden the political discourse in the public sphere. This demonstrates a massive shift from the pre-modern and modern eras of campaign to the post - modern political campaign era, an era which is marked by the Internet and digital platforms.

2.2.2 Overview of Political Campaigning in the Digital Era

There is no doubt that digitalization has added a new dimension to the overall concept of contemporary political campaigning within the frame of political communication, as is evident in the massive use of new social media portals, such as Facebook, WhatsApp and SNSs, Twitter, blogs and Instagram, amongst others. Farrell et. al. (2001, p. 12), recount that election campaigns worldwide have been going through some dramatic changes during the past thirty to forty years. Referring to the campaign style of George Bush Snr. in the late 1980s (use of candidate Web sites), they argued that the campaign process in general has passed through three main stages of development: the newspaper age, the television age and the digital age (Farrell 1996; Farrell and

Webb 2000; Norris 2000). This argument runs counter to the position of other scholars, e.g., Panagopoulos (2009), who thinks that:

...prior research on the use of digital tools had focused on a single campaign and either offers a rich description of the technologies used on a small group of sites or focuses on a specific feature found across a wider sample of online.

Much of the debate on political campaigns in the digital era has also been centered on Western democracies, especially the K. and America, although there are some important exceptions to the rule of an Anglo-American bias in the study of political campaigning, (Lilleker and Lees-Marshment, 2005; Negrine et al., 2007; Plasser and Plasser, 2002; Swanson and Mancini, 1996). This presupposes that more research needs to be conducted, not only to help appreciate the empirical characteristics of political campaign so as to determine their impact in various eras, but also in order to fully understand the style and character of political campaigning and the degree to which political campaigning has become modernized in order to meet the exigencies of its role in the development of governance systems, particularly in the consolidation of democracy. The narration and arguments, above, not only put digital media into a technological development transition, they also establish digital devices as post-modern channels that continue to create an immense possibility to enhance the profile of political campaign and political activities, in the context of political communication, in modern democratic practices.

In the African context, the digital media are becoming a key communication tool for mobilization and organization in contemporary politics, and they are very prominent, even in some non-democratic political environments. Tufekci and Wilson (2001, p365), argue that Facebook, for example, provided new sources of information for activists during the Arab Spring protests, which the regime could not easily control. They contend, however, that the social media are just one part of a new system of political communication that has evolved in North Africa and the Middle East. Besides, Dzisah (2018) has argued that, although social media are a phenomenon that has changed the way individuals interact and communicate worldwide recently, this phenomenon is not a novel concept and, for that matter, has been evolving since human interactions began (Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011). This agreement ties admission in with the argument that other factors equally complement digital platforms to ensure the device's potency. To fully maximize digital media, more research is required, as indicated earlier, in order to determine reliable data as a guide to effectively strategizing for the future use of digital platforms, particularly in view of the

potentials they offer for political campaigning. The positions of some scholars agree with me on this, e.g., that:

These warrant the exploration of a mixed approach to campaigning in the digital era, contesting the argument that the use of traditional media in political campaigning cannot be totally ignored in its relevance in modern political communication (Farrell et al, 2001).

The arguments above indicate the potentials of the new media for political campaign activities in the wake of developments in digital media use, and the fact the traditional media are still in contention, as far as channels of communication are concerned. Possibly, the environment and culture appreciate a blend of the two (new and old media), as posited by Dzisah (2018) in the Ghanaian context, when he says that the nature and form of Ghana's political discourse blends both traditional and new media technologies.

However, these prospects face serious challenges that could possibly hinder efforts to tap into the full potentials of digital media for political engagements in Africa, e.g., the cost of monthly Internet subscriptions' average cost in Africa for approximately five hours of access is US\$60, a very high amount to pay in comparison to charges in North America or Europe (Akoh and Ahiagbenu II, 2012). Although, the general quality of access, in terms of speed and reliability, has increased, thus pointing to the possibility of a decrease in access due to the rapid deployment of telecommunications infrastructure across the continent, the comparatively exorbitant costs of communications will continue to pose a barrier that will lead to a slow uptake of online news media on the continent (ibid, 350). Bassey (2008), identified infrastructural challenges relating to ICT accessibility, affordability, connectivity and interconnectivity, network failure, low bandwidth, the high cost of connectivity and frequent power outages, as obstacles to Africa's attempts to effectively use digital media. Similarly, Issahaku (2012) maintains that the problems caused by the exorbitant cost of interconnectivity and also of network failure, among other reasons, remain paramount in Ghana's quest to maximize digital media so as to meet socio-economic and political aspirations.

The problem of the digital divide, the 'inequality of access to the Internet' (Castells, 2002, p248), which literally represents: 'the gap between those who do and do not have access to computers and the Internet' (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 178), also presents a major challenge to the prospects for political campaigning in the digital age. According to Fuchs and Horak (2008), although Ghana,

for instance, became the first developing country to introduce privatization and competition in all areas of service, including telecommunications, across the country, the liberalization of the telecommunications markets has not resulted in a significant increase in the numbers of phone and Internet users. Although the situation has improved, to some extent, most users lack the skills and necessary knowledge to unearth such devices' full benefits. This ties in with the argument that, 'the digital divide concerns not only material access, but also skills and usage patterns. Material access is a necessary, but not sufficient pre-condition for skills access and usage access' (Fuchs and Horak, 2008, p.105)

Effectively, as observed from the above arguments, critical questions are needed as far as the use of digital tools in political campaigning and politics in general, in Africa, especially in Ghana, is concerned. Typical concerns, in the Ghanaian context, border on issues that tie in to questions raised by Farrell et.al (2001):

... can parties be reasonably expected to respond fully to the demands of campaigning in a Digital Age? Have the techniques of modern campaigning really been so significant as to force parties to redefine their roles and call for the services of the consulting industry'? (Farrell et al, 2001, p.12).

These are legitimate questions that need answers in relation to Ghana's politics in the digital era.

2.2.3 Digital Media and Politics

Modern technology is transforming all spheres of societal endeavor, and politics is no exception, although there has been a lot of debate and research by scholars pointing out that these developments come with challenges. For example, there are questions about potential abuse by users of digital devices on the flexibility of the space that is created by social media platforms, like Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and other SNSs, like Blogging and Instagram. These questions become relevant in view of the composition of the devices and the natures of their uses by patrons, as Kaid and Holtz-Bacha (2008), argue, in their description of digital platforms in the realm of politics. These new media technologies encompass online tools, such as blogging, podcasting, political party/candidate websites, social networks, and online video-sharing websites. This is an indication that the digital platforms have become very vibrant and relevant tools for information dissemination in political campaigns and politics in general, thus creating the necessary platforms to facilitate the spread of messages via audio and audio/visual channels. This is very typical in

political campaigning, in both democratic and non-democratic environments, as indicated earlier in the U.S., where social media became a key tool in political campaigns, and were massively used by President Obama in the 2008 US elections. Findings by the Pew Research Center confirm that the regular use of the Internet as a campaign tool has almost doubled since the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election (Pew Research Center, 2012).

Effectively, the use of social media for political engagements in the digital age has attracted a lot of academic enquiry, in view of arguments relating to its impact on political campaigning. Wihbey (2005) posits that, in an era in which the public's time and attention are increasingly directed towards platforms, e.g., Facebook and Twitter, scholars are seeking to evaluate the still-emerging relationship between social media use and public engagement. He cites the Obama presidential campaigns in 2008 and 2012, and the Arab Spring in 2011, which catalyzed the amount of interest in networked digital connectivity and political action, but the data remained far from conclusive (ibid). This re-emphasizes the suggestion that there are still questions that must be answered in order to unravel issues related to social media and politics, an indication that the emerging use of social media and new media is not just a vehicle for news, but is a political topic in itself, one which must be explored in order to maximize its influence in society, especially in relation to electoral democracy.

Besides controversies about their uses, social media usage influences political participation and other activities within the framework of political communication and electoral democracy in general. Politicians and political actors generally recognize the dividends resulting from Facebook, Twitter, blogging and other SNSs' use, as being complementary to the traditional media in their political communication strategies. Loader and Mercea (2011) argue that social media have the potential to contribute to the development of democracy:

The openness of social media platforms facilitates the potential of what Charles Leadbeater (2008) called the 'mass-collaboration' of individuals and groups who become the source of new innovations and ideas in democratic practices (p759).

This suggests that, besides 'mass-collaboration', digital media have also become very powerful tools for individual politicians and political actors in their political mobilization and organization. Archer-Lean and Pavit (2011), in a study on the examination of the potentials of Twitter in political activities in Australia, note, for example, that the 'dialogic and conversational aspects of Twitter

have been shown to be the most beneficial functionality of Twitter for politicians, as constituencies are aware of the ‘spin’ inherent in simply using Twitter to broadcast’ (p.4.). Similarly:

...the party control over politicians’ direct communication with their constituency is inhibiting the potential of Twitter to move beyond one-directional and self-promotional communication, creating the impression that ‘mainstream parties are fearful of losing control over debate if the full dialogic capacity of new media is embraced’ (ibid, p5)

The arguments above, further expand the debate on the effect of social media as tools for politics, revealing them to be tools that provide a boundless sphere that creates the opportunity for diversity, in terms of the ideas needed for effective deliberations and participation. These developments, arguably, portray the deficiency in, and loss of, the former dominance of the traditional media and the opportunities created that have influenced effective participation in politics by creating unfettered space for citizens and, indeed, for all political actors. They have provided alternative sources of information, and this gives the citizenry the opportunity to dissect and make individual judgments on the authenticity of information disseminated to the audience in any particular political setting, in that, ‘Communication resources, once in the hands of a centralized and empowered few, such as governments, political parties or mainstream media, are now more broadly available’ (Archer-Lean and Pavit, 2011, p. 3).

Besides the benefits of space for the citizenry in a democracy, is the universality of social media [as] mediated by the upsurge of new technologies? Loader and Mercea (2011, p759), observe that shelving the services and visibility of professional media practitioners, as well as the elimination of the centralized control and the distribution of industrial mass media organizations do not create a vacuum, in terms of space. Certainly, the space is largely occupied by social media generated by the evolution of new technology, whose use in contemporary politics has triggered the need for political stakeholders to diversify their political strategies so as to meet the exigencies associated with political campaigning and managements. Even when advocates of social media and politics advance the notion that citizens are becoming more informed and participatory, because the Internet has become affordable and accessible, especially in developing democracies, Abubakar (2017), confirms that new technologies enable audiences to simultaneously create and consume media content in a more noticeable manner, and even broadcasters capitalize on this to pursue participatory programming and trumpet it as the triumph of freedom of expression. In Ghana, Avle (2017) also points out how the citizenry are actively participating in radio broadcast

programs via the use of Twitter. According to her, a local FM station, Citi973, creates space via the use of Twitter in which the citizenry can contribute to various programs, including political discussions and political talk shows. Abubakar's positions and arguments, together with Avle (2017) endorse the justification for political stakeholders, particularly political communicators and political strategists, to diversify their campaign strategies while taking note of the challenges that are associated with new technologies, because social media, like any other innovation, comes with their own challenges whenever their application is possible:

Whilst allowing people to take full advantage of the new media opportunities to produce their own material, such as movies or blogs, which can be empowering and have a positive impact, there is also a downside, where such instant, public communication can have negative effects or damage other members of society (Archer-Lean and Pavit, 2011, p275)

The assertion by the scholars above underscores the need for the evolution of strategies for the sanctity and sustainability of the core elements that enhance the quality of political campaigns by promoting deliberations and participation in a new sphere of inclusivity. The adverse influences do not negate all the benefits that are to be accrued from the social media. Contemporary democracy, with its universal and participatory tenets, especially free expression, makes it imperative to provide a myriad of information sources and accessibility, not only as checks, but also to provide alternative space for the citizenry in electoral democracies. These make the social media a critical tool for political communication in the contemporary public sphere.

2.2.4 Social Media as an emerging tool for African Political Communication

As indicated earlier, technology is transforming all spheres of societal endeavor, including politics, in spite of concerns around potential abuse and the other challenges that are associated with it. The transformation is reflected in the use of social network platforms, which form a key family in the new media. These new media technologies encompass online tools, such as blogging, podcasting, political party/candidate websites, social networks, and online video-sharing websites (Kaid and Holtz-Bacha, 2008). The use of social media, despite the challenges, has become a key tool in political campaigning since their initial introduction by President Obama during the 2008 US elections. For example, the regular use of the Internet as a source of campaign news has almost doubled since the 2004 presidential election (Pew Research Center, 2012).

Literally, new media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other SNSs, have become indispensable in the current global electoral system, implying that any attempt by political actors, especially by political strategists and political communicators, to underrate or misuse them would negatively influence their fortunes. This finds space in Casero-Ripollés et al (2016), who write that digital media offer new potentials to political communication and electoral campaigns, especially the Social Network Sites (SNS). LaMarre and Housholder (2011) also confirm that YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and other social media websites respond to the needs of political communicators and political strategists, and they have provided political elites with a new way to disseminate information, mobilize engaged citizens, and increase political participation. The implication is that the use of digital network strategy has become an integral part of a campaign, during which its relevance gains recognition from basic planning, beginning from field organization to fund-raising, from branding/messaging to press relations, and from registering people to voting, to getting people out to vote (Michaelsen, 2011:181). Consequently, the use of social media for political engagement has attracted a lot of academic enquiries, in view of arguments relating to its impact on democracy and multi-party governance across the globe.

The arguments on social media are largely influenced by the extent of public attention in the social media era, hence the need for scholars to evaluate the still-emerging relationship between social media use and public engagement, as Wihbey (2005) posits. Arguably, a lot of the time and resources that have been invested in social media have yielded dividends, as indicated earlier, especially the use of platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, thus generating immense interest in their use. The Obama presidential campaigns in 2008 and 2012, and the Arab Spring in 2011, catalyzed interest in networked digital connectivity and political action, but the narration on the events remains far from conclusive (ibid). This re-emphasizes the suggestion that there are questions that must be answered so as to unravel issues related to social media and politics, an indication that the emerging use of social media is not just a vehicle of news, but ;is a political topic which, in itself, must be explored in order to maximize their influence in society, especially in relation to democratic participation.

Social media usage influences political participation and other activities within the framework of political communication and electoral democracy worldwide. This is evident in the extent to which political actors are patronizing the platforms, in that not only are social media uses complementing

the traditional media, but are also an integral part of the strategies adopted by political communicators in their political communication strategies. According to Baldwin-Philippi (2014), the Social Media are tools and a space in which institutional constraints, values, and technical capacities result in barriers to meaningful engagement, including the realm of governance, through which the platforms implicitly open conversations surrounding control within campaigns. For Leadbeater (2008), social media's accessibility, openness and interactive nature make the platforms a key tool that facilitates the 'mass-collaboration' of individuals and groups, as potential sources of new innovations and ideas in democratic practices. The collaboration may possibly broaden the scope of participation and encourage the cross fertilization of ideas for consensus building, which is crucial for democratic development. As Archer -Lean and Pavit (2011) argue, the dialogic and conversational aspects of social media, for example, Twitter, have been shown to be Twitter's most beneficial functionality for politicians, because the electorates become familiar with the nuances that are inherent in simply using twitter to broadcast.

Effectively, the social media platforms have blurred the hitherto dominance of the traditional media in the communication space, and this is influencing participation and deliberation by creating unfettered space, both for the citizenry and for all political actors. Indeed, the phenomenon has provided alternative sources of information to society, thereby giving the citizenry the opportunity to dissect and make individual judgments as to the authenticity of information disseminated to the audience, including the political setting. These developments, concur with Archer-Lean and Pavit's (2011) assertion that communication resources that were once in the hands of a centralized and empowered few, e.g., governments, political parties or mainstream media, are now more broadly available. This suggests that the benefits of space for the citizenry in any democracy lie in the universality of the social media as mediated by the upsurge of new technologies. However, Loader and Mercea (2011) believe that shelving the services and visibility of professional media practitioners, as well as the elimination of centralized control and the distribution of industrial mass media organizations, do not create a vacuum in terms of space but, rather, social media are seen to be technologically, financially and (generally) legally accessible to most citizens living in advanced societies. However, it can be argued that the social media may be free from the key challenges that are associated with the traditional media that serve as a drawback to free speech and free media. This is reflected in Blumler and Kavanagh, 1999; Norris's (2003) argument that the new media, notwithstanding their impact, which emanates from its

characteristics, have had to contend with the old media with their core challenges of the top-down, centralized mode of communication that is synonymous with the third, or postmodern, age of political communication. This suggests that the social media, like any other innovation, may come with their own challenges wherever their application become possible, for example:

Whilst allowing people to take full advantage of the new media opportunities to produce their own material, such as movies or blogs, which can be empowering and have a positive impact, there is also a downside where such instant, public communication can have negative effects or damage other members of society. It is important to ensure that democracy and equality are sustained in this new collective space (Archer-Lean and Pavit, 2011)

The quote above suggests that the downsides of social media do not thus negate all of the dividends that are to be accrued from the social media in contemporary democracy, with its universal and participatory tenets, especially free expression, and this makes it imperative to provide a myriad of information sources and accessibility so as to provide alternative space for the citizenry. As Smyth and Best (2013) reaffirm, these platforms are increasingly being used for political purposes, but without the question of how, if at all, these new media actually perturb the political landscape. These questions have featured prominently in Western contexts, but remain relatively underexplored in developing regions, especially in Africa, where traditional media are often scarcer, democracies are younger, and the effect of social media on politics has the potential to be quite distinct (ibid).

2.2.5 Social media Politics - The Case of Africa

Advocates of social media and politics advance the view that the citizens of Africa are making the best of social media, in spite of socio-economic and political challenges, particularly poverty, digital literacy and the digital divide, and the inimical ICT policies that are being used by African leaders to intimidate the citizenry;

The social media are winning more people to politics through a unique blend of audio, visuals and other information types that permit the close monitoring of those seeking votes. It is

bringing new agency, tactics and strategies to the evolving relationship between politicians and citizens (Ndlela and Mano, 2020, p. 2).

This partly accounts for the social media use among people of diverse backgrounds, especially by political actors in Africa, meaning that more people are becoming more informed and participatory, because the Internet has become affordable and accessible in developing democracies. The Arab revolutions in Spring, 2011, and thus popular uprisings, were partly enhanced by social network communication (Kneissel, 2011). Consequently, the Arab world has witnessed the rise of an independent vibrant social media and steadily increasing citizen engagement on the Internet, by equipping individuals with the skills and abilities needed to make, plan, discuss and work together, even if they are away from each other, as well as collaborating to create audio-visual materials for communications via social network platforms (Keser, Uzunboylu and Ozdamli, 2011, Poorkarimi and Hasani, 2012).

Abubakar (2017), in *Audience Participation and BBC's Digital Quest in Nigeria*, confirms that new technologies enable audiences to simultaneously create and consume media content in a more a more noticeable manner, to the extent that even broadcasters capitalize on the advantages of social media in pursuing participatory programming, and they trumpet it as the triumph of freedom of expression. Arguably, 'these social networks inform, mobilize, entertain, create communities, increase transparency, and seek to hold governments accountable' (Ghannam, 2011: 4). According to Caglar and Demirok (2010), the usage of social media is not a privilege, but is an obligation and an advantage for mankind in reaching knowledge through information technology, and this has culminated in their utilization as tools of communication among millions of young people, for example, to start the Arab revolutions, although the platforms were not their creators. Effectively, social media function as a springboard, as well as representing public opinion and awareness, with the potential to defy the decisions of those authorities that seek to control or regulate through policies for their own selfish purposes, because, the platforms' universality and flexibility imbibe users, especially the younger generation, with the expertise, skills and technology that enable social networking or allows them to mobilize themselves, such as Virtual Private Networks (VPN) (Danju et al (2013).

Besides, the value of the social media has been questioned by scholars, for example, as not being impactful on participation and deliberation. In the opinion of Bode et al., ‘While many have heralded the rise of social networking sites as a location of social and political interaction, little is yet known about the factors that promote their use in a more political sense’ (2014, p 416). The assumption, for Arnett, (1995) and McLeod, (2000), is that the mass media have long been recognized for their socializing influence, and therefore it is invalid to ignore their relevance, especially in regard to the complementary nature of other platforms. The implication is that exposure to the mass media influences all categories of audiences and contributes to political knowledge and opinion formation in a democratic environment.

2.2.6 Key Highlights

This part of the chapter has highlighted the definition and key features of digital media, encompassing the transmission of digitized content, notably, text, audio, video, and graphics, via the Internet or computer networks. It identifies SNSs, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Instagram, Blogs, etc., as major channels of transmission and these are based on the translation of analogue into digital data. These channels have become options for political stakeholders, especially political communicators and political parties, in the dissemination of information to the electorates. The role of digital media in contemporary political campaigns makes it relevant to examine its features and impact on political communication in the electoral processes of a multi-party democratic environment. The examples from the developed democracies, particularly in the West, have been the motivation for African democracies’ adoption of digital media, in view of its advantages, notably its openness, interactivity and universality. These benefits warrant thorough studies as guides to ascertaining their relevance in future political campaigning. The next section introduces the important nexus between democratization and political communication.

2.3 DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Democracy thrives largely on communication, in that the populace need information as a guide in organizing, mobilizing and directing the course of any entity that manages members. Effectively, communication by stakeholders in any democratic environment must have a focus, preferably with the key objective of transmitting information or messages that seek not only to educate the electorate, but also to convince them to make the right decisions in terms of political party and political leadership at all levels. This concurs with McNair's assertion that all forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors have the purpose of achieving specific objectives (2010, p4). This assertion evokes debates on the rationale for communication in democracy and multiparty systems: that political actors must evolve pragmatic policies and strategies that are 'party-supporters inclined', if they are to be successful in their bid to win followers.

This section therefore discusses the concept of political communication and its evolution, political communication and democracy, political participation, the political economy of the media and, citizenship and participation as key issues that are related to political communication and democracy, with a view to providing insight into some of the literature relating to these topics that has been advanced by political scholars. Also discussed is political communication in Africa, as baseline from which to project African perspectives, in terms of practice in a typical developing democracy.

2.3.1 Political Communication

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), political communication is linked with media practices and systems, and this requires that studies give close attention to the roles of journalism and the media, in the development and functioning of the various forms of liberal democracy. This statement suggests that political communicators and political stakeholders have the responsibility to forge links with the media as conduits to their audiences, in that the media amplify issues by offering platforms for debates that are generated by political stakeholders and the ramifications of such debates for political campaigning and organization are felt heavily in any digital media space.

This makes the definition of political communication flexible and more closely related to media systems. McNair (2003) indicates that:

... literature about political communication should begin by acknowledging that the term has proved to be notoriously difficult to define with any precision, simply because both components of the phrase are themselves open to a variety of definitions (p.1).

However, the definition and identification of the concept becomes clearer if it is based on its role and objectives within the context of usage and application, effectively, the objectives inherently give further clarification to the intentions and the focus of the communicator. This ties in with McNair's argument about what constitutes political communication. He asserts that the 'description of the term should consider the intentions of communicators to influence the political environment, an indication that the crucial factor that makes communication 'political' is not the source of message but its content and purpose' (ibid, p. 11) more relevant in the quest to understand political communication. This assertion contrasts with Lilleker's (2011) position. He opines that the focus of the definitions of political communication on the source and the motivation is inappropriate, in view of the nature and role of the media in modern states, in that it ignores the role of the public sphere, audiences and the media systems. This underscores the arguments that the media, irrespective of their setting or environment and the nature of their political activities, have the herculean task of providing space in which actors can operate (Lilleker, 2011). Arguably, political communications should enjoin political stakeholders to evolve strategies that factor media activism and management, and such media, preferably new media, must be adequately equipped to complement the space and enhance the electoral processes for democratic governance.

Some scholars contend that the understanding of political communication can be contextualized, depending on the subject and the forms of participation. For example, Wolton (1991) describes political communication as a forum for the exchange of the views of key actors such as politicians, journalists and civil society activists who have the privilege to express themselves publicly on politics via opinion polls. This context, therefore, identifies three players in the communication process-politicians, journalists and public opinion, whose role is crucial in political communication. However, the most reported form of public political communication is the opinion polls (Moon, 1999), which are used to gauge support for causes, political parties, groups and polities, as well as to predict election results. They may also be used by politicians to

determine which courses of action can be pursued and which cannot. McNair, again, agrees with other scholars that political communication must emphasize;

...‘intentionality’, signifying ‘purposeful communication’ about politics. Political communication should encompass both verbal or written statements and non-verbal cues such as dress, make-up, hairstyle, logo design, and all those elements of communication which might be said to constitute a political ‘image’ or identity’ (2003, p2).

In effect, successful political communication must encompass all the elements in the political environment, taking cognizance of the needs of the audience in relation to the objectives and goals of the communication process. The consideration of messages, as they relate to channels with which the audience identify, must be of interest, in that the media space becomes necessary, since elements of political communication require that it creates opportunities for all actors to contribute to debates in the democratic process.

Similarly, McNair (2010) identifies political organizations, the audience and the media as the three key elements within which political action is conceived and realized. Arguably, these three elements become very relevant in any contemporary electoral process, because in an electoral campaign, and in elections, all these actors will be expected to be identified by these key features through individual, organizational and institutional entities that will seek to influence the decision-making process. They are expected to facilitate the political communication process in their respective functions by creating and managing both the traditional and digital spaces that are available. This requires that political communicators maximize their various communication skills, communicate their political ideologies and philosophies, with a view to winning the support of the electorates. This ties in with Windisch’s (2005) argument that political activity is inexorably bound up with communication.

The expectation is that political communicators must, in practical and strategic terms, maximize the media (both traditional and new media) through effective content management, by crafting messages that meet their aims and aspirations and that are targeted at the expectations of their audiences. These tasks are immensely challenging, especially in many states where governments often do not control the system, let alone own the media, especially in societies in which most of the media are privately owned and relatively free, and, media content is primarily determined by profit seeking (or at least by survival) and for other motives. Arguably, the

challenges would be expected to be more pronounced in a contemporary democratic electoral environment, and this has been gradually complicated by the emergence of digital and new media, which are exposing society to all forms of information.

The complexities and challenges posed by modern communication technology warrant the need for actors and political communication experts, especially political communicators, to find ways of modifying the old communication systems and strategies in relation to the electorates. According to Keena Lipsitz et al. (2005), sometimes voters expect political contestants and actors to communicate precise content, devoid of propaganda, and from a preferred standpoint. This expectation stands to benefit the electorate by countering a myriad of loaded content that is occasioned by the advent of social media, citizen journalism and digitalization. This trend clearly demonstrates that the flow of political communication tends mainly to be initiated outside traditional news media. In Lowrey's (2006) opinion, the contemporary mass media are constrained by an array of bloggers and citizen-journalists, and contributors of user-generated content and professional journalists, and this has put them increasingly on the defensive

Some scholars argue that the new trend to professionalization in political campaigning in the electoral system may offer relief from the challenges posed to political communication in the digital era, but this has become contentious among scholars, since the challenges transcend the expertise available. The alternative should be a mix of factors, as Kiss (2005) argued, that a highly professionalized political communication requires major changes in party and campaign organization and in political human resources, together with a centralized decision-making process, a prominent role for campaign consultants, and a strong focus on the leader's personality and integrity. In effect, modern political campaigns should explore the potential of a mix of technology and human resources to meet the exigencies in contemporary democracy, in that a mix has the tendency to make available expertise from different backgrounds and with different strategies and resources. The quest to identify the antecedents of the concept of political communication may help to evaluate how it has evolved, in anticipation of its contribution to political campaigning in a contemporary democracy.

2.3.2 The Evolution of Political Communication

The concept of political communication has evolved over the centuries and dates back to the inception of democracy. Scholars argue that Grecian democracy, for example, unconsciously used political communication in interaction with the citizen under the term ‘rhetoric’. Yunis (2004) confirms that the use of rhetoric was a dominant form of communication adopted by politicians, especially in a competitive democratic environment, and that, for practical purposes, rhetorical skills became a prerequisite for any individual contemplating an active role in Athenian politics. ‘Rhetorical skill requires training and, in addition to talent and training in rhetoric, a form of higher education and costs’, the concept is thus not only an instrument of communication, then, but is also a vindication of the arguments that those who used rhetorical communication skills had to be strategically equipped with the necessary education and skills to enhance efficiency in the execution of their role as political communicators. Effectively, the focus of political communication practices resonated with contemporary political communication, which was fundamentally aimed at persuading citizens to vote for the leadership and the political entities that sounded convincing in ideology and deeds, as Yunis argues:

Since it was the politician’s job to present his citizens with cogent advice that would serve their interests, the politician was responsible to the audience for the content of his message. When a politician won approval for his policies and the policies were successful, the politician was likely to reap rewards. When the policies failed, a politician not only lost influence but was liable to prosecution under a variety of indictments for irresponsible, harmful behaviour (2004) in Hansen (1999: p205–240).

This argument further establishes the role of political communicators and their responsibility as scheduled communication officers, charged with the responsibility of the oversight of directing and implementing key tools for information dissemination, especially in public space interaction. Additionally, the argument underlines the genesis of political communication and the elements that have transformed the practice, alongside developments in democracy.

Robinson (2011), argues that, evidence from the democratic credentials of Greece indicate that political rhetoric, as an aspect of political communication, traversed the city State of Athens, thus suggesting that it was a common practice adopted by political stakeholders due to its impact

on political campaigning and mobilization. Besides, the evidence is possibly a confirmation of normative and empirical studies, which suggest that other cities witnessed the use of political rhetoric across the political spectrum. For Lilleker (2011), political communication is as old as political activity, and featured prominently in Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire, as well as across diverse political systems, in the modern age. In his opinion, it would be unthinkable if, under any political system, political leaders did not have a requirement to communicate with other societal groups, or had not had to persuade the people to support them, often against rivals for their power and position (ibid). This reinforces not only the need for political communication aspirants to imbibe some of the basics in the area of expertise, but also there is an assertion that political communication should be viewed as an area that requires recognition, in terms of training and qualification, to enable practitioners to exhibit the correct skills for of their profession (Pardo et al., 2019)

To a large extent, contemporary political communication is executed with skills based on strategies that accommodate modern technology, with its benefits of interactivity and universality. Arguably, post-modern political communication practices show a vast improvement over those in premodern and modern democratic political campaigns, which lacked the sophistication to meet the exigencies of contemporary political campaigns. The form of political communication then might be described as undeveloped, compared to modern political communication, and it ties into Lilleker's assertion that, political communication then was deficient since, to some extent, it lacked the necessary elements of sophistication, e.g., strategy, structures and the medium of interactions that facilitated the relationship with the audiences that pertained to the origin of every situation and all systems (ibid). Moreover, it is likely that the processes, forms and channels of communications used to mediate may have changed with the advancement of technology, motivated by the desires of political actors and society in general, as society confronts sophistications occasioned by changes in the overall socio-political and economic dynamics.

What needs re-emphasizing in regard to the origin and evolution of political communication is the impact of persuasion, which has been a cardinal element in its application to political campaigning. According to Pluta (2013), although there have been varied opinions on the rationale behind the mediation of the evolution of political communication, scholars' common

position is that politicians, especially, those in leadership, used political communication skills in their strategies to win the electorate in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, and this establishes the genesis of the concept and its ramifications for politics. As he puts it:

Any disagreement on political communication mediation could be distilled to two essential arguments, through changes in presidential rhetorical behaviour as a product of a changing set of cultural norms and ideas, or, the result of the presidents taking advantage of the emergence of new strategic opportunities provided by technology and changes in the structure of political parties (Pluta, 2013, p88).

Political communication, then, has been influenced by various socio-cultural, economic and political considerations, as warranted by the environment and the era of practice. It is likely that its evolution had been consonant with the various stages of media development, from the reliance on the traditional media, notably the print and electronic media (radio and television), and had maximized the various elements of mass communication in the electoral democratic system. This, possibly, has transformed participatory democracy and politics in general, and has changed the dynamics in political communications, and this is reflected in the developments of the contemporary political organization and participation, especially in the dynamism displayed by political actors through various strategies and media use, the latest being the Internet and SNSs.

Social media have emerged as an important element in contemporary political communication. Gaber (2011), in a comparative analysis of the transformation of campaign reporting in the UK's 1979 and 2010 elections, confirms that there is evidence of evolution in political communication from the media systems, especially in relation to the maximization of the technology and media used by political actors and media practitioners in the political campaigns. Gaber notes:

The first comes from the 2010 election, and it would show a tweeting, blogging, web-posting political reporter struggling to keep up with all the news coming at him or her during the hectic days, and nights, of the campaign and struggling to disseminate it. The second is the reporter, leading a more ordered, almost sepia-like, existence during the 1979 campaign, the last time Labour was ejected from office. This was a time when there was no breakfast-time television, no twenty-four-hour TV and radio news, and no mobile phones, and the Internet was no more than a twinkle in the eye of military planners and IT enthusiasts (2011, p262).

This suggests that the old media systems and processes of production have been improved, judging from the gradual shift emanating from the adoption of new technology, and culminating in the modernization of political communication. Modern political communication has thus been further revolutionized by the era of digitalization, which is portrayed in various political activities. A typical example can be seen in the evolution of political leadership, which has influenced the changes in the communication function of elections and, consequently, has helped to build effective interaction amongst the various leaderships in political party systems (Turska -Kawa and Wojtasik 2010). And, with the unending crusade for a 'democratic world', though this is debatable, it is inevitable that more strategies will be evolved by political actors in democratic governance so as to ensure effective political communication. This development, according to Swanson, is mediated by factors such as an increase in the number of democratic institutions, like civil society groups, the media, and voluntary organizations, whose objects have been to use advocacy and dialogue in their crusade for the establishment of democracies across the globe (2010, p410). Similarly, opportunities and incentives generated by changes in the functioning of political parties, technological innovation, and the commercialization and professionalization of journalism and the press, had not only transformed democratic politics, but had also introduced dynamism and enthusiasm, which potentially encourage political communicators and political leadership to evolve the concept of political communication so as to realize the full political benefits (Korzi, 2004), Klinghard, 2005, 2010) for the development of democracy.

2.3.3 Political Communication in Africa

Democracy in Africa has equally benefitted from the incentives and motivation that have seemingly transformed political communication, notably, the ripple effects of technology, in view of its influence on socio-economic and political endeavors worldwide. Ndlela (2020) concurs with this development, and maintains that Africa is no exception to the phenomenon. The multifaceted processes of globalization, in the wake of changing stratifications in information technologies, such as the Internet, mobile telephones and tablets, are inevitably shaping contemporary forms of political communication on the political communication landscape in Sub-Saharan African countries. These changes are visible in contemporary political campaigns, mobilization, participation, monitoring and civic engagement, amongst other forms of participation (ibid).

Also of interest to scholars is the interplay between the electorate and other political stakeholders, because the positive outcome may enrich the political communication with ‘a system of dynamic interaction between political actors, the media and audience members, each of whom is involved in producing, receiving and interpreting political messages’ (Votmer, 2006:6).

However, the interrelationships and their corresponding benefits to political communication and multi-party democracy will not be justification enough to generalize on the impact of the concept, especially when the comparison involves Africa, in view of variations in environment and other socio-economic and political variables that tend to influence the citizenry in a typical democratic setting. These variables have enormous influence on developing countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, and therefore invalidate the generalization of the impact of political communication in a multi-party environment. Consequently, political communication must be contextualized, taking the setting into consideration, especially from the perspective of Africa.

2.3.4 Political Communication - The African Lens

According to Mazrui (2006), effective use of political communication has the potential to accelerate the democratic growth and development of Africa. However, the socio-cultural and economic uniqueness of the continent, as indicated earlier, put Africa in a disadvantaged position in efforts to reap the full benefits of political communication, in spite of the long years of political struggle for independence. This challenge gives meaning to Mazrui’s position, considering the invaluable contribution of communication to the development of multi-party democracy, especially in the developing world. These concerns, vis-à-vis the variations in factors, influence the verdict on the impact of political communication in terms of deployment for democracy and related practices, thereby generating more debate on the African perspective on political communication, its uses and impact on participatory democracy, and other societal endeavours. For example, the impact of new technology is affected by contextual, historical and cultural factors, which vary between campaign environments (Karlsen, 2010, in Ndlela, 2020). Effectively, political communication in Africa may equally be influenced by changing dynamics in technology and the environment worldwide, because ‘political communication is an emerging phenomena on

the global landscape, yet the world has for centuries been driven by political activities, both on the local and international scenes (Eweka et al. (2017, 1-3). This assumption is compounded by the misconception that political communication, within the African political context, is often believed to be a foreign import, because of the popular association with colonial influences and western democracies (Okibo, 2017). This re-affirms the suggestion that the African understanding of political communication has been influenced by a myriad of factors, judging from various socio-economic and political standpoints and orientations that have been advanced in arguments by political communication scholars. Effectively, contemporary African communication may cover a wide spectrum, including traditional methods, the modern mass media, and the new social media, all of which have important roles in the purposive uses of communication in politics (ibid).

Similarly, political communication in Africa may be predisposed to contemporary media systems, which largely determine or facilitate the outcome and impact of political communication in their application. Possibly, the assumption, for example, that the political systems potentially influence the media systems in the environment in which the systems operate may imply that the various African political communication systems may be influenced by different kinds of media systems, with various interpretations, all directed towards the enhancement of communication. In the opinion of Windeck:

Political communication not only serves as a political means, it is effectively the motor in the decision-making process and thus ‘... itself also politics.’ As a result, the media represent a permanent process that continually influences politics-not only during the election period, but generally, at all times and everywhere (2006, p.17).

Windeck’s position again re-emphasizes the relationship and inter-dependency that exist between the media and various political stakeholders in the political communication processes, to enhance the dissemination of information and participation, and the deliberation in a typical democratic setting. The co-existence gives credence to the argument that the ‘media is dependent on the supply of information while politicians are dependent on the media conveying their message to the electorate’ (ibid). The impact of these symbiotic relations, arguably, may also be dependent on the type of political communication strategy to be deployed, because using communication to achieve political objectives requires astute strategies that are best realized through the purposive planning, careful implementation, and systematic evaluation which are the hallmarks of strategic communication (Okibo, 2017).

The transformation in political communication in the developed democracies, as occasioned by technological developments, reinforces the assumption that the trend is catching on in Africa, hence the need for innovations and more pragmatic ICT/Media and communication policies and strategies to meet the exigencies posed by their progress. As indicated by Diedong (2018), this situation requires the nurturing of a conducive political culture to ensure political tolerance as being fundamental in communication processes within a democratic dispensation, suggesting that, in a polarized political climate, for example, in Ghana, building synergies among stakeholders is paramount, because that can engender democratic participant communication processes to promote public interest and national unity.

Mudhai's (2017) argument around the professionalization of political publicity, in the wake of the media's changing role in contemporary European party systems, ties in with the trend to transformation in political communication, in that, as with most other cultures and practices, certain political communication trends that started, and were popularized in Western democracies, especially the USA and the UK, have recently gained entry and popularity in Africa through homogenization and globalization processes. These trends are manifest in the various political activities in most African countries, notably, political campaigning, mobilization, fundraising and all forms of participation in the realm of democracy. For example, social media platforms embedded in these new technologies create complex dynamics in various forms of citizen engagement and participation in the political process, and this situation provides political actors, citizens and civic organizations in Sub-Saharan African countries with the urge to maximize their political communication by adopting new information and communication technological spaces, including social media platforms (Ndlela, 2020).

Arguably, inherent in the craze for the adoption of a new technology are the potential benefits that are predisposed to political communication, which has attracted huge patronage by political stakeholders in Africa, and in society in general. This is the result of improved digitization, emanating from advancement in telecommunications, electricity provision, the integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and major innovations in cloud computing, communication tools, electronic record systems and mobile banking (Scheklenz and Schopp, 2018). Obviously, most democracies in Africa are reaping the benefits of digitization, although having to contend with variations, cognizance of the complexities occasioned by

differences in the socio-economic and political environments in which they operate. Invariably, new media uses in political party activities like campaigns and rallies, for example, in contemporary political communications in the African context, are beset with a new wave of challenges, in view of Africa's peculiar situation.

Africa's peculiarity, in terms of political communication, as indicated earlier, is manifest in problems associated with various communication systems that are associated with political activities, notably, political campaigns, mobilization, political rallies, ineffective policies and regulations for the use of media, unfriendly or anti-communication laws legislated by governments, etc. For example, political communicators in Africa have had to grapple with challenges such as an inadequate infrastructure for digitization, the digital divide, the inequality of access to the Internet, a lack of policies to regulate the media, low Internet penetration, expensive Internet subscription and buying of bandwidth, amongst others, in their attempt to communicate politics to the electorate.

In terms of penetration, (Majama, 2018) argues that while Internet penetration is still low, 'the digital face of Africa is mobile', with around 82% of the population in Africa having a mobile phone connection, in 2018. Besides, there were around 204 million Facebook subscribers in Africa as of December, 2017, with higher penetration in countries like Egypt, Angola, Algeria, Nigeria, South Africa and Morocco, and lower penetration in countries like Togo, Swaziland, Malawi, Guinea Bissau and Lesotho (Internet World Stats, 2019). However, statistics show that some African countries like Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria Kenya South Africa and Morocco (2hours 24 minutes) are ahead of most Western European countries and USA in time spent on social media (ibid, 2019). Besides, the cost of monthly Internet subscription, on average this costs, in Africa, for approximately five hours of access, US\$60, a very high amount to pay in comparison to charges in North America or Europe (Akoh and Ahiabenu II, 2012).

Although the general quality of access, in terms of speed and reliability, has increased, pointing to the possibility of a decrease in access due to the rapid deployment of telecommunications infrastructure across the continent, the comparatively exorbitant costs of communications will continue to pose a barrier that will lead to a slow uptake of online news media on the continent (ibid, 350). Bassey (2008) in *Digital Money in a Digitally Divided World*, identified infrastructural challenges relating to ICT accessibility, affordability, connectivity and

interconnectivity, network failure, low bandwidth, the high cost of connectivity, and frequent power outages as obstacles to Africa's attempt to have effective digital media usage.

Similarly, Fuchs and Horak (2008) argue that although Ghana, for instance, became the first developing country to introduce privatization and competition in all areas of service, including telecommunications across the country, the liberalization of the telecommunications markets has not resulted in a significant increase in the number of phone and Internet users. Although the situation has improved, to some extent, most users lack the skills and necessary knowledge to unearth the full benefits of the devices. This ties in with argument that, 'the digital divide concerns not only material access, but also skills and usage patterns. Material access is a necessary, but not sufficient, pre-condition for skills access and usage access' (Fuchs and Horak, 2008:105)

It is thus pertinent to point out that the success of Africa's democracy is being partially stalled by a combination of factors that are embedded in the continent's socio-economic and political systems, and these rob the continent of the needed environment, logistics, resources and effective communication systema, amongst other things that are needed to lubricate political communication, which is considered to be a key driver for the consolidation of participatory democracy. As Deutch maintains, 'democracy is communication' (1963:35; in Mazrui, 2006), however, not much attention has been devoted to communication. which could be used to promote the realization of the lofty goals of democracy. This is a disturbing scenario in Sub-Saharan Africa and potentially inhibits efforts to nurture and consolidate multi-party democracy. Mazrui (2006), concurs with this position in his argument on Nigeria, saying that successive governments, for lack of political will, have failed to recognize that democracy cannot exist without effective political communication. These challenges disadvantage Africa in the quest to maximize the full benefits of political communication, which potentially enhance not only electoral education, but also create the right public sphere for effective participatory democracy, because 'political communication not only serves as a political means, it is effectively the motor in the decision-making process and thus is ... itself also politics' (Winseck, 2006, p. 18).

2.3.5 Political Communication and Democracy

The role of political communication in a multi-party democratic environment cannot be glossed over, as communication forms the key bridge between the leadership and the electorate. Norris (2004) acknowledged the synergy underlying communication and democracy, an indication that

there can be no democracy without communication. She argues that activities and programs of various structures, features and players in a democracy need to be communicated within a certain space. Effectively, dealing with the electorate in contemporary democracy calls for an efficient and effective political communication strategy as a key feature in promoting good governance in any serious democratic environment, and this underscores the relevance of the marriage between communication and democracy. Kriesi (2011) confirms this synergy in his arguments on *Political Communication in a Democratic Polity*. He posits that political communication is at the heart of the democratic process because the process suggests, among other things, that citizens have an ‘enlightened understanding’ of the choices at stake. Citing Dahl (1989, p.112), Kriese further argues that, in a democratic polity, each citizen ought to have adequate and equal opportunities to discover and validate the choice on a matter that is to be decided and that would best serve his or her interest. Effective political communication strategies therefore become the best option for executing the objects of both political stakeholders and electorates with such expectations, because democracy is not about an individual, it is about the collective will and expectation of the entire citizenry. The concept of participation, and its relevance in democracy, becomes relevant in this context, in consonance with Rawnsley’s (2006) argument that communication in any democratic setting must create adequate space for actors, particularly the media, civil society, spin doctors, and all of the stakeholders, to enable them to contribute to the process of democratization.

In an article Gary Rawnsley and Qian Gong (2011), note that the lack of proper coordination between journalists and politicians, as two of the key political actors in democratic governance, has created a democratic knowledge deficit. This situation is creating a vicious cycle in the practice of political communication, and could largely account for the ‘brisk deterioration of expectations about democracy in Taiwan’ (ibid). The positions of these scholars confirm that inactive media adversely affect participation and a free press in a modern democracy, there is therefore a need for synergy between political communication and democracy to be nurtured so as to enhance participation in a multi-party environment. There is a suggestion that sound and stable democracy will also largely depend on effective political communication as a complement to the invaluable role of the media.

The genesis of political communication was also influenced by the need to promote free media, as Voltmer (2006) agrees. He recounts that the demand for free speech and free media were

advocated by political philosophers from the early years of the eighteenth century, in view of the crucial role of uninhibited public debate and free speech. This re-affirms the argument that political communication and democracy are inseparable, and the effective utilization of such synergy may be a contributory element to the development of the democratic process, as ‘we live in a democratic age’ (Fared Zakaria, 2004 p.13). This implication is a validation that democracy has become the preferred, if not the dominant, system of government across the globe, and its consolidation must be adhered to. Arguably, democratic arrangements are seen as the single most legitimate form for managing society’s affairs, hence, there is a need for political communication to ensure effective communicative action so as to sustain the functioning of these democratic arrangements. As political organizations develop, the quality of communications thus correspondingly requires effective tools and strategies to deal with its exigencies.

Lee (2009) cites normative theorists, and, maintains that:

...central to democracy is not the aggregation of individual opinions but a process of public deliberation, which articulates common concerns, transforms preferences, and generates reasoned public opinion, even when agreement is not achieved, deliberation can still promote tolerance and mutual respect (Chambers, 1996; Fishkin, 1991, 1995; Guttman and Thompson, 1996; Habermas, 1996).

Lee’s argument reveals one of the salient benefits and the relationships between communication and democracy: its deliberative role, as projected through discussions occasioned by media space. This deliberative role requires an effective political communication strategy to ensure its successful execution. In a study on the impact of political discussions on deliberative democracy in Hong Kong, Lee, again, recognized that ‘citizens with different political ideologies and beliefs, including undemocratic ones, would all engage in political discussion’. This reaffirms the value of participation, that it makes citizens knowledgeable and equips them with the requisite confidence and the facts needed to contribute to debates on issues of political organizations, ideologies and participation, etc., in the democratic process. Essentially, participation broadens the debate by encouraging diversity, in terms of the opinion that is needed to shape the thinking of the electorate in their attempts to make political decisions and choices, because political knowledge can also lead to discussion (Moy and Gastil, 2006; Southwell and Torres, 2006).

Communication’s relationship with democracy has been complicated by contemporary media development, invariably, this relationship demands modern innovations and well-crafted

strategies in order to make an impact on the electoral system. Arguably, this complication is compounded by profound change in the media landscape, which has inevitably influenced society's understanding of civic engagement (Ward and de Vreese, 2010) and socialization processes. For example, the use of Internet and SNSs has transformed communication at all levels of human endeavor, and this renders communication a pre-requisite for bridging the gap that is occasioned by the rise of modern digital tools of communication. These technologies are creating a lot of space in which to give citizens alternative platforms on which to actively participate by freely expressing themselves as is required in a modern democracy. Kelly et al, (2010) confirm this in a study on *Journalism and its Role for Political Knowledge and Participation*, saying that today's digital environment provides a more interactive realm in which audiences may also become news producers. This indicates that the monopoly or power that are inherent in the 'vertical' form of communication that has characterized the leadership of most democratic environments, regardless of its impact and, especially in Africa, it is being questioned in modern democracies. This system is a potential disincentive to democratic norms, as it undermines free expression and free media, especially in a growing democratic environment with a youthful population, like Ghana.

From this perspective, political communication and the media's influence should not be regarded as outside forces. Rather, media use would better be understood as a conscious choice that has an impact on political attitudes and behavior (Buckingham, 1997), and, it must be available and accessible to all citizens so as to enhance participation.

2.3.6 Political Participation

Political participation is a key element in modern democratic environments as it impacts immensely on any political system. The system requires the active involvement of all political stakeholders in deliberations in order to ensure diversity in thoughts and opinions so as to facilitate an effective decision-making process. This ties in with White's (2005) understanding of political participation as one's participation in the political process through making one's opinions and beliefs known. This suggests that opinions and beliefs that are shared through deliberations and participation may form the basis of one's choice of leadership and political entities, because such opinions are possibly persuasive enough to convince the citizenry, taking cognizance of the

available platforms and the socio-economic and political environment. For example, the essence of political participation, citing the American political cultural system, expects decisions or actions from stakeholders to influence politics in some way.

Shields and Goidel (1997) confirm the essence of political participation, arguing that it also influences the distribution of social goods and values, and offers varied forms of qualifications. According to them, participants, for example, may vote for representatives who make policies that will determine how much they have to pay in taxes, and who will benefit from social programs. Their argument raises issues about the qualifications of participants, but it is an indication that participants can equally partake in organizations that work to directly influence the policies made by government officials. This also raises debates on the effectiveness and relevance of deliberations and participation, in terms of the contribution from participants. However, as Verba et al. (1995) posit, the contribution of the least of citizens, in terms of their societal level and intelligence, is worth considering, provided that the citizenry can communicate their interests, preferences and needs to the government by engaging in public debate. Effectively, the electorate's ability and their opportunity to participate in any electoral system become sacred in any civilized democracy, and this contributes immensely to the decision-making and the development of any given society. The implication is that the electorate are indirectly contributing to policies that shape their destiny. As qualified citizens, they derive their democratic strength from actively involving themselves in expressing their opinions so as to influence policies in the political process in diverse forms. This includes, among other things, the opportunity to vote, to participate in party activities, like rallies, campaigning, protests, public consultation, as civic duties, and to contribute their human and financial resources to the upkeep of their preferred political parties.

Studies by scholars point to a gradual change in the forms of political participation, due to the changing dynamics in political communication that are occasioned by the advent of digital tools in communication. For instance, Gibson and Cantijoch (2013) posit that political participation now covers an array of forms, which include traditional forms, such as voting, petitioning governments, contacting elected representatives, and taking part in demonstrations, as well as non-conventional acts that are performed using digital technologies, which are geared more toward expressing a view, supportive or otherwise, than to influencing decisions. All these

participatory elements are driven by factors, an indication that there has been variation in the form of contemporary political engagement and participation.

Lilleker and Koc- Michalska (2017) identify motivation and mobilization as two of the key drivers of participation, and argue that most conventional forms of participation can be performed using digital platforms. This suggests that they acknowledge the potency of digital media as a key complement to the elements enhancing participation by providing platforms from which users can create or join communities which transcend state boundaries. These categories of users are expected to participate through contributing to discussions, advertising support for causes, and promoting the work of a range of national and global political organizations and campaigns. Digital technologies thus have the potential to offer a range of new means for engaging in civically oriented forms of behavior (Lilleker, 2017). These arguments not only warrant the rationale for more of these forms of participation that seem to be changing the dynamics in the democratic electoral process, but that also question the value of predictors of participation in the electoral processes, and their impact on political communication.

Additionally, the electorate's desire to participate in the electoral process may be driven by overriding benefits accruing from the vision and aspirations of rulers, particularly when electorates identify with policies that meet their expectations, or vehemently kick against policies and decisions that may be considered retrogressive to the development of society. Tolbert and Franko (2014) quoting Downs, (1957), Riker and Ordeshook, (1968), confirm that a common starting point for scholars who examine the causes of participation is the idea that individuals face a number of 'costs and benefits' that are related to their decision to become involved in the political process. The need to unravel the mystery behind the cost and benefits is likely to generate active deliberation by participants with diverse backgrounds, who are likely going to be affected by the outcome of the deliberations. The process, in this context, would potentially attract some socio-economic challenges, depending on the political environments, and may be a challenge to participation, because the more affluent individuals have the money, time, education, and capacity, to effectively participate in the political system, as against the under-resourced citizens, as Tolbert and Franko (2014) argue. These challenges are very typical of participation in developing countries, where poverty and a lack of resources, especially inequities in status, prevail. According to Verba and Nie (1972), the socio-economic imbalances may also be related to attitudes to

politics, and has the tendency to influence interest in participation, in that the higher levels of interest, psychological involvement in politics, and political efficacy, are associated with individuals who tend to be higher up on the socio-economic scale.

The advent of technology, especially of the Internet and various SNS, e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc., have added a new dimension, creating more space for electoral participation. Their complementary role to the existing space, which is mediated by the traditional media, has broadened the debate on participation. For example, beyond the context of elections in the United States, a study of the 2010 Swedish election showed that social media use, as well as the visiting of political parties' websites, significantly influenced political participation among voters (Dimitrova et al., 2011). This is an enhancement of the participation process, and the ripple effects may bring with them the possibility of an increased improvement in information flow, with better political education, organization and mobilization among the various political actors. Lilleker and Koc-Michalska endorse the position that:

Social media also facilitates accidental exposure to news and political content and permits all users to publicly show their agreement or disagreement through posting content and commenting. In terms of Facebook's likes and shares or Twitter's retweet function, this can involve nothing more than a single click. However, organizations and peers can also share invitations to demonstrations, to sign petitions, or to get more involved in a campaign (2017, p25).

The quotation above summarizes, to some extent, the impact that SNSs are having on participation, as complementary to the traditional media. Estrom and Dimitrova's contention on the synergy between SNSs and traditional media concurs with the position of some scholars in political communication, who suggest that both traditional and online media affect how people learn about, and engage in, the political process. However, research on the effects of traditional media sources, primarily television, and on political participation, has produced different conclusions. For instance, some scholars such as de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006; Norris, 2000; Pinkleton, Austin, and Fortman, (1998) found that traditional media sources inform and mobilize voters. Others have argued that media use contributes to political cynicism, inefficacy, and disengagement (Dimitrova et al., 2011). Effectively, the two types of media, though very effective and beneficial to contemporary political communication, also present a challenge to the democratic system,

especially when governance is manipulated by political ‘heavyweights’ who use economic power to capture the media.

2.3.7 Political Economy of the Media

The media’s role in contemporary democracy is becoming more compelling, in view of the rapid developments in technology, hence the need for political stakeholders to evolve strategies to maximize to the full the potentials of the corresponding media systems, especially in political communication, taking note of the ever-changing dynamics in the ‘political economy of the media’. Political economy, in terms of media, may relate to socio-economic relations, particularly the power relations that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of communication resources. In essence, the political economy reflects a situation in which the media are politically influenced by the socio-economic environment, in terms of control and power. Fuchs (2015) posits that assertions on politics, economy and the media present a serious dichotomy in relation to the reality of the debate as to whether the media are politically free, or whether they are determined in terms of operation and control by economic and political power. His position becomes more relevant in view of the continual dominance of the control of the media by political leaders, e.g., Berlusconi, the former Italian Prime Minister, and forces worldwide.

Hardy (2014) argues that a focus on media political economy ostensibly illuminates the forces shaping media institutions and what they produce; and shines a light on the media’s relationship to power, and their wider role in society. This requires an effective, transparent and balanced interplay of factors across and within the overall political spectrum in order to achieve sustainable and successful media, especially in a varied socio-economic environment. The expectation is that every media space in these environments must be craftily executed, bearing in mind the benefits to be accrued in terms of political participation, thus enhancing the electoral system. This underscores the fact that strong media outlets are key to creating this transparency, by critically reporting on every available issue that is of interest in terms of decision-making, thereby granting the electorate, and the public in general, the opportunity to monitor how governance is being executed. This argument fits into Shi and Svensson’s (2006) rationalization of the recognition of voters’ access to media and the overall freedom of the press so as to provide adequate information to citizens (See also Akhmedov and Zhuravskaya, 2004; Vergne, 2009).

However, what seems to thwart these expectations is the lack of resources and political will from a leadership that is willing to perpetuate autocratic rule, especially in most developing democracies. This situation clearly points to the fact that ‘it is not only the freedom of the press, but also it is *de facto* strength, in terms of media pluralism and the independence of ownership, that matters to hold governments accountable’ (Besley and Prat, 2006), but what remains critical is the media’s independence in an environment that is controlled by policies that are autocratically inclined, especially when such policies are very hostile to the privatization that could possibly provide financial muscle to the private media.

In Hardy’s opinion, many of the questions on the political economy of the media that were posed by radical scholars in the twentieth century remain salient, particularly questions about the control of the media, the impact of commercialization, public and private media ownership, inequalities and power relations affecting communications. For example:

How do media relate to power sources in society? Whose interests are represented? Who is represented in media? Who has access to communication resources-and what can they do with them? Political economy argues that to answer such questions we need not only the analysis of texts, or texts and readers, but analysis of the forces and interests shaping media and the conditions of production (Hardy, 2014, p415).

These questions raise a lot of concerns regarding the media’s contribution, especially in their watchdog role of meeting the expectation that they will provide information to the citizens. In most instances, the electorate are likely to suffer democratically when the media are unduly stifled of resources. This situation is very prevalent in both developed and emerging democracies, and more visibly so in ‘semi-democratic environments, as confirmed by Fuchs (2015), in a comparative analysis of the political economy of corporate social media in China and the USA. The situation poses a challenge to free expression, because there is not only state control of the Internet and free speech, but also market control of the Internet and free speech. Fuchs asserts that ‘this has been institutionalized largely by capitalist companies that control power, visibility, attention, reputation and capital in the context of the Internet and thereby deprive others of these resources’ (ibid, p30). He maintains that Internet surveillance, for example, is a political-economic reality that combines state and capitalist control in both China and the West, and also in other parts of the world, and that the state’s surveillance capacities have been used against political activists, as well as in

monitoring the activities of counter-terrorists. Fuchs' position portrays the universality of the culture of 'media impotence' that is occasioned by the dominance of governments and economic forces and, particularly, by organizations with leaders who have political ambitions and who seek to perpetuate their stance on the positions of leadership and status. Arguably, the media in such an environment is rendered impotent, and this adversely affects participation and free media, which are cardinal in nurturing and consolidating democracy.

Research by other scholars also points out that, in some instances, countries had evolved policies to cripple the media. A typical example is the way that media moguls colluded with governments in much of Latin America during the era of the dictatorships, because they had shared agendas and benefited mutually from co-operation (Waisbord, 2000). This practice seems to be widespread in global politics, as the same pattern, according to scholars like Lee (2000) and Carson (2015), has recurred in some East Asian countries, e.g., Taiwan during its quasi-dictatorship. Carson (2015), quoting a study by Raphael et al., (2004), notes that US corporations' targets for investigative reporting effectively deployed legal and public-relations counter-attacks on journalists in order to successfully bury negative news stories. For them, these tactics enabled firms to divert attention from investigative findings, and distracted other media with questions about free speech and media ethics. These examples fit into a political-economic theoretical frame by showing how firms use financial power, propaganda and legal tactics to deflect media attention from their wrong-doing. Besides, economic pressures limit the capacity of print media organizations to satisfy the liberal political tradition which conceives of mass media journalism as an institution to 'shield and protect the individual from the excesses of the state and to facilitate the rights and liberty of the citizenry' (Errington and Miragliotta, 2011, p. 1, in Carson, 2015). These narrations underscore not only the need for policies to deal with these challenges, but also highlight the extent of the intrusion and influence of the socio-economic and political muscle whose influence impacts on the operations of the media's operations.

However, with the increasing changes in contemporary democratic practices, scholars believe that more liberal relations must be explored so as to mutually connect the media and the various political economies and socio-cultural forces operating in any democratic area. Hardy (2015) confirms this, and agrees with Murdoch (1989) that there is a well-established neoliberal

political economy tradition which argues that the free market guarantees the independence, diversity and accountability of commercial media (Murdoch 1989).

Effectively, a neoliberal political economy provides a kind of freedom and independence in which the media can thrive, and the freedom becomes a potential threshold for free media, devoid of state interference, with a potential for diversity in terms of media systems and content. The challenges of the neoliberal political economy system, in this context, is the possibility of inequity in resources, which leads to great disadvantage for some media institutions. This largely renders such media organizations impotent, since media enterprises must respond to their audiences' concerns in a competitive market. What is making the neoliberal prominent in contemporary governance, including non-democratic systems may be attributed to the emergence of new media.

Benkler (2006) argues that the emergence of the neoliberal perspective has received a boost from the advent of the Internet, and this has enabled citizen journalists and users to undermine corporate media power. The implication is that the new media, and, more precisely, the SNSs, have provided the advantage of universality, interactivity and promptness to meet the exigencies that are associated with the traditional media. In the opinion of Smith, however, the neoliberal political economy is highly critical of public broadcasting and therefore it can never be free, since it is dependent on state-sponsored privileges (Hardy, 2015; Smith, 1984). Besides, excessive freedom may lead to the abuse of the free press and irresponsible media, and has the tendency, as posited by Hardy (2015), to allow the free market to actively subvert media independence. This situation often results in collusion between states and the media, as happened in Britain during the Thatcherite era, when right-wing moguls entered an informal coalition with government in order to regenerate, as they saw it, a failed society (Curran and Seaton, 2010), and in Italy, where a long-serving Prime Minister, Berlusconi, was also the country's leading media mogul (Ginsborg, 2004).

These case studies confirm the impact of a free market economy on the media; rendering most media, especially in developing countries, impotent, and disabled in their quest to play their watchdog role so as to nurture and consolidate democratic practices. In Curran's (2011) opinion, the consequences have further ramifications, in that these extreme outcomes are usually the result of two trends, and thus media concentration and media partisanship fuse to subvert media independence. According to him, market concentration and the power of private vested interests

jeopardize the watchdog role of the media and their independence. However, he rejects the argument that the consumer is reflected in the journalism of the mass media, maintaining, instead, that the free exchange of news and ideas may be distorted by the overriding influences of advertising on the media (2002). This is prevalent in what are perceived to be developing economies, which are characterized by traits of dictatorship and poor media policies. Where the media are polarized and become extremely partisan, more proactive media, based on innovation and sacrifice, are needed to act as checks and to bring sanity to the space created for electoral participation. Some scholars view the fragmentation of the mass media that is engendered by the advances of the Internet, digital technologies and the potentiality of a globalized public sphere, to present new opportunities for journalism, beyond traditional media, which allows for ‘dissent, openness and diversity rather than closure, exclusivity and ideological homogeneity’ (McNair 2006, p7). For Herman, new technologies contribute to the political– economic drivers that work against the democratic functions of the mass media. As he puts it:

They permit media firms to shrink staff even as they achieve greater outputs, and they make possible global distribution systems that reduce the number of media entities. Although the new technologies have great potential for democratic communication, there is little reason to expect the Internet to serve democratic ends if it is left to the market (2000, p.109).

The new media are perceived, as indicated above, to have brought in their trail mixed opportunities which attract a lot of exploration. Garnham (2000) argues that the new media should seek to understand the way in which power is structured and differentiated, where it comes from and how it is renewed. This suggests a critical examination of new media to show how the structuring of global networks, digital information flows and their consumption are informed by both predominant and alternative principles, values and power relations. However, for some new media analysts, existing power distributions are simply taken as given, contrary to the belief that a political economy of new media insists on the examination of the circumstances that give rise to any existing distribution of power and of the consequences for consumers and citizens (Mansell et al., 2002; Melody, 1994).

The dependency on organizations by most media institutions, especially in developing countries where media houses survive on advertising from organizations affiliated to political institutions, raises more concerns about the balance between media freedom and economic

survival. Carson (2015), cites the case of Somalia, indicating that the media have reflected and participated in the informal economy as they vie for space, promote the interests of various international actors, clans, transitional authorities and business people. Somalia's case prompts a further investigation into a seemingly politically stable African country like Ghana, in terms of the political economy of the media. This is motivated by the argument that research on the political economy of the media has often remained restricted to stable countries, with the confluence of business, government and societal interests influencing media content (Curran and Seaton, 1997).

2.3.8 Citizenship and Participation

Citizenship is a key element in every democracy, in fact, democracy hinges upon it. Scholars in politics have offered so many interpretations of the concept, and this adds currency to the invaluable role it plays, both in local and international politics. For example, Zilbershats (2001) identifies citizenship as the embodiment of the strongest link between the individual and the State, a link which is reflected by the fact that the citizen is entitled to all the rights the States grant, and is subject to all the duties which it imposes.

According to Basok and Carasco (2010), citizenship was initially conceptualized as a form of protection for individuals against the state's arbitrariness, particularly in relation to private property, however, the notions of citizens' rights have been expanded to include political and social rights. Empirical research indicates that the concept has existed for centuries, it featured in electoral democracy, and was a source of debate when the rights of the ruled and rulers became contentious, especially when there were controversies about who qualifies to be a 'national', and, what privileges went with such qualifications in a recognized society (Basok and Carasco, 2010).

This debate could possibly be motivated by the desire by the ruled to ensure that they gain the legitimacy that will empower them, so that their voices can be heard on issues concerning decision-making, as such decisions directly or indirectly affect them. It stands to reason that the concept has evolved through sustained agitation by the ruled for acceptance on various rights in the decision-making processes. This argument finds space in consensus by Hunter (2013) and Cooper (1997) on the evolution of citizenship and participation. They confirm that the desire for citizenship was a basis for most political argument and action in the late colonial period, though not exclusively in French colonial territories in Africa, where Africans employed a language of

citizenship to demand equality with citizens in France. Arguably, the agitation possibly provided different opinions and understandings of the concept with which to broaden the debate and thus to warrant justification of the rights for the acquisition of citizenship. This assertion concurs with Hunter's argument that:

Far from being a recent discursive innovation, then, a language of citizenship has been part of political discourse in Africa for a long time. The reason for this is that the twentieth century saw fundamental changes in the way in which political society was conceptualized in Africa. The rights and duties of the ruled, often discussed in terms of the rights and duties of citizenship, were of central importance in the remaking of political society (ibid).

The quotation above reinforces the argument that the agitation for citizenship has been a subject of debate for political leadership and governments, but it is obvious that the debate has been devoid of the mode and form of qualification and acquisition, to some extent. It also ties in with Hunter's (2013) suggestion that the whole understanding and idea of citizenship has been redefined to meet the exigencies of modern political dispensations.

Citizenship is acquired in various ways, depending on the laws of the state, mostly by birth in the territory of origin or state in which one lives, or through the process of naturalization. These possibilities, in terms of the acquisition of citizenship, have ostensibly seen transformation in its entirety, both in old and new democracies. Basok and Carasco (2010) identify two criteria that possibly mediate the chances of maximizing to the full citizenship status. They posit that there are two extant frameworks for claiming rights: citizenship and human rights, and the former is generally understood as a legal and social status which confers rights, defines responsibilities, prescribes a collectively shared identity, and bestows political membership through the exercise of democratic rights (ibid). This opportunity presumably empowers one to actively participate in the democratic process, be it campaigning, organization or voting, based on the culture and ideological beliefs prevailing in the political environment. In other words, one imbibes the senses of 'belongingness' and nationalism that are needed to encourage participation.

Possibly, in other jurisdictions, the rights of citizenship, particularly in the developing democracies, can further heighten the debate on acquisition and rights, especially in most developing countries, where the issue of refugees is predominant. Kibreab (2003) confirms, for example, that in most developing societies, like Latin America and the Caribbean, citizenship is

one of the rights for non-nationals, particularly refugees. This is in contrast to practices in Western liberal democracies, where it exists between citizens and denizens in the realm of rights in national elections. This suggests that citizenship and rights have international dimensions, probably as a guideline to enhancing universality and better understanding. This may possibly be occasioned by the argument that most countries are guided by the sovereign nature that is inherent to their constitution, which is seen as a source of power with which to exercise sovereignty.

According to Baso and Carasco (2010) state sovereignty carries with it the power to bestow citizenship, on whatever terms the state deems appropriate and, once acquired, citizenship within a state generally carries with it certain rights, privileges, and responsibilities. However, international human rights law places states under an obligation to guarantee both citizens and non-citizens' equal enjoyment of their civil, political, and economic rights, as recognized under international law and incorporated into international human rights instruments (ibid). These requirements negate the assumption of the absolute authority of states and questions their sovereignty in the context of citizenship and the related rights that citizens are supposed to enjoy. This places enormous responsibilities of compliance and obligations on states, especially where there is democratic governance, to ensure that the citizenry are treated fairly and equally within the confines of international rules and norms. In the opinion of Mazzolari:

... Citizenship may provide greater employment opportunities in different ways. Not only is American citizenship required for certain jobs (for example, in many federal agencies and in the public safety industry), but the act of naturalization may also remove employment barriers other than those stated by the law. Discrimination by employers, or concerns that noncitizens are less committed to jobs, might cause naturalized citizens to be preferred in the hiring process over noncitizens. Employers may also value American citizenship as an easy way to assess legal status (2009, p.186).

The argument above indicates the premium that citizenship places on qualification, irrespective of status, in terms of acquisition. Aspiring citizens enjoy the rights inherent to the status, which equally places responsibilities on them. Acquiring the status empowers them to actively participate in the decision-making process of their preferred country of settlement, because their acquisition renders them beneficiaries of both the assets and liabilities of the country, and is an indication that the acquisition of citizenship status is very impactful in democratic governance.

2.3.9 Key Highlights

This part of the chapter has attempted to establish the link between democracy and communication in the context of politics. The evolution of democracy and the multi-party systems place huge responsibility on political scholars and stakeholders, particularly political communicators, to evolve pragmatic strategies to deal with the challenges that are associated with contemporary democracy. The concepts of the equity, rights and responsibilities of the citizenry, as well as free media and free speech, are very crucial, especially in a capitalist system where there are imbalances in wealth and other resources. Political communication has taken a different trend, greatly transformed to meet the exigencies of the time, in that it has moved from being a direct, personal, face-to-face, activity to being conducted indirectly via the mass media (Lilleker, 2011). Communication is therefore needed to provide the necessary explanation, in terms of concepts like participation, citizenship and the political economy of the media, as they impact heavily on the development of democracy. Effective political communication, backed by a free media environment, is required to encourage participation and to narrow the gaps in democratic socialization. In the Ghanaian context, I argue, democratization can be strengthened by transparent and more participatory political communication, particularly when weaker groups are empowered.

2.4 DEMOCRACY, POWER and ICT

2.4.0 Introduction

Power is the ultimate prize in politics. Most, if not all, democratic elections, have been characterized by struggles for superiority among the key political actors, or political parties, to win against rivals and control power. It is through the acquisition of power that political leaders and their parties gain the legitimacy to pursue their aspirations. In most cases, parties win power through vigorous campaigning, during which they get the opportunity to convince the electorate about why they should be given power. It is also an opportunity to explain their ideologies and manifestos. The rationale for power in democratic practices has been established with an emphasis on the relationship between the two concepts (democracy and power) in this discussion. The interaction between power, politics and ICT policy in African contexts has also been discussed in the section, as this interplay in large part determines the ability of political actors and citizens to participate in democratic processes in digital spaces.

2.4.1 Power and Democracy

Power is the sum game of modern politics. Hobolt and Klemensen (2006) confirm that the key responsibilities of any authority, particularly in democracy, is to meet the people's needs. In their opinion, 'a key characteristic of democracy is the continued responsiveness of the government to the preferences of the people' (in Dahl, 1971, p.1), and that, political institutions mediate the relationships between voters and parties and between government and opposition, thereby shaping the incentives for governments to respond to the public's wishes.

Many political engagements are centered on the control of power, broadly understood as the capacity to make things happen that otherwise would not happen. It is a significant form of causation, but can come in various forms (Stone, 2012). Stone explains that it takes opposing parties to contest power, and it assumes that preferences are set and power is that which determines the outcome in a straightforward instance of clashing wills (ibid). Arguably, democracy partly offers the opportunity for aspirants to contest power in a very formal manner and, in most instances, contests create an atmosphere of tension and confrontation among stakeholders in their quest for the power to control governance. Geiser (2012) argues that the frustration and dissatisfaction of the citizenry and political actors with the performance of an established system of government, or the state, could trigger a contest for power. For example, the emergence of, Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi, a faith-based organization, was the result of state failure, as well as donors' failure to meet the developmental needs of the people in Pakistan's Swat Valley. The group's objective was to use an alternative approach to satisfy citizenry's expectations. The movement adopted a radical confrontational approach against the state through its capacity to establish a parallel form of government and control (ibid). Again, in most instances, contestation was equally influenced by mistrust among nations, especially among nations that shared borders. Empirical studies have confirmed these developments in Asia, e.g., Ebert et al. (2014), contend that the Cold War influenced the hegemonic relations of some countries in Asia. In Asia, the lines of traditional power politics and the spheres of influence that were established during the Cold War shifted remarkably with the (re)emergence of systemic leaders. Ebert et al.(ibid.) confirm this assertion in a comparative analysis of the different types and causes of contestation strategies in East and South-East Asia:

In the case of Japan, China's increasingly assertive regional behavior, combined with a non-transparent military build-up has invoked the most significant strategic shifts, while in the case of Pakistani contestation, an increasing threat perception in the late 1980s led to the return to a pre-1971 revisionist agenda, whereas the overt nuclearization in the late 1990s mitigated India's growing conventional superiority and enabled Islamabad to replace soft balancing with more direct means of hard balancing (Ebert et al., 2014).

The issue of territorial and state hegemony can be considered a key motivation for contests in the context of international politics, as manifested in the quotation above. As Flemms and Lobel (2014) confirm, the urge for recognition of territorial hegemony, and competition among the leadership, raise international tensions and mar international relations. They maintain that territorial contestation is very typical in Africa and Asia, citing the power of contestation in the Indian-Pakistani situation, South America and Sub-Saharan Africa as examples, fuelled by competition and a lack of compromise and co-operation (ibid).

In some cases, actions by states or ruling governments, particularly states with a history of authoritarianism, have formed the basis from which various political forces fiercely contest power. In such circumstances, the leaderships become unnecessarily resilient to change, as they try to maintain the *status quo*, but this, inevitably, is met with the force of resistance by change-oriented forces, especially protagonists of democratic rule. China is a typical example, as Su et al. (2013) argue. They maintain that the rules of the Chinese Communists Party (CCP) since 1949 had, since the late 1980s, been attacked by pro-reformist elements in the country. The impact of the 1989 Tiananmen Square Protest in China is a vivid example. This incident weakened the 'State-Party' administration of the CCP. The ripple effect of the protest was a massive crackdown that allegedly plunged China into a miasma of fear, causing many people to abandon any idea of facing the regime in a posture of contention (ibid). Similarly, a number of groupings emerged from such protests to combat state authorities, suggesting that sometimes excessive application of power may heighten the consciousness of citizens. In the past, Apartheid South Africa experienced decades of white dominated rule, and this attracted fierce resistance from the black Africans, resulting in serious contestation for authority and power between the two groups. Such contestation resulted in socio-economic and political challenges, like riots, economic sanctions and segregation, as well as mistrust and disunity caused by external forces with vested interests. 'But what really held it together was the party-state's domination of politics, the economy, society, and culture, along with

a harsh household-registration system that segregated city and country dwellers and prevented citizens from moving around freely' (Su et al., 2013).

2.4.2 Power, Politics, ICT Policy and Social Media Use in Democracy in Africa

The contest for power in governance has brought in its wake a new wave of searching for more effective and reliable tools of communication, especially among political stakeholders and researchers worldwide, notably, in the developing democracies in Africa. This development is motivated partly by the dividends accruing from the phenomenon, notably the interactive capacity of Digital Communications Technologies (DCTs—the Internet and the many software applications that run through it via computer or smartphone (Stromer-Galley (2014))). The new media offer symbolic and practical opportunities for two-way communication to occur between users, and thus between campaigns and their supporters in the context of politics (ibid). The benefits of ICT are reflected, not only in their usage for politics, but are also manifest in the overall political and media systems, because political stakeholders depend on the media (both traditional and digital) through which news and political education messages are influenced at all the stages of production. As Davis (2010) argues, the new ICTs offer the communicative potential for greater exchange and deliberation between politicians, journalists and citizens, and this has attracted the attention of political science and communication scholars.

A DANIDA study: *Using ICT to Promote Governance*, for example, identified the explosive growth of cell phone penetration and use in Sub-Saharan Africa, the emergence of an entrepreneurial ecosystem in Sub-Saharan Africa, the acceleration of direct overseas investment in Africa's strategic resources and the phenomenon of the Arab Spring, for example, as possible triggers for the exploration of the impact of ICT (DANIDA, 2012). These suggest that the ramifications of ICT transcend politics, and that their impact predominantly includes other socio-economic variables that potentially facilitate the quest for transformation, in the context of Africa. The adoption of ICT in many scenarios, will thus define how Sub-Saharan Africa will emerge from the tumultuous period of transformation (ibid).

This expectation may be feasible, arguably, depending on the effective management of the interrelationships among the various power players and their approaches to policies that define the judicious and responsible use of the channels of communication, especially the new media, with

their complexities of flexibility, interactivity and uncontrolled systems and feedback (Xenos and Moy, 2007; Sweetser and Larisey, 2008), for various political activities, including political campaign. The Internet for example, may serve to offer sources of information, with an added ability to access and transmit information and news outputs over distance, hence, its credentials as an invaluable research and organizational tool.

However, challenges associated with ICTs' usages may serve as an inhibition to Africa's quest to maximize the full potentials of ICTs, to the disadvantage of the participation, deliberation and consolidation of democracy, especially when it comes to the relationship between state authorities and the ruled, in the context of power, policy formulation, and the usages of new media for politics.

2.4.3 ICT and Social Media Usage in African Politics: The 'Power Factor'

Information Communication Technology (ICT), has become a dominant factor in African political communication, judging from the extent of use by stakeholders in the political space, especially with the expansion of communication tools; be it campaigns, mobilization or fundraising, amongst others, in the traditional and digital spaces. These developments are significant traits of the Web.2.0 era, which marked the post-modern political campaign era, because they potentially transformed political communication and broadened participation for the enhancement of deliberation within the public sphere in contemporary democratic settings. As indicated earlier in Chapter Two, unlike the pre- modern and modern campaign eras, which were characterized by the traditional media, the postmodern campaign (introduced in the early 1990s), was identified with the introduction of information and communication technology (ICT), especially the Internet (Karlsen, 2009; Stromback 2007, in Vergeer et al., 2011, p. 480). While acknowledging the importance of traditional media in rallying political support for political parties and their candidates in Ghana, the emergence of the social media are gradually changing the democratic landscape (Dzisah, 2020, p.97), as evidenced in a number of social media campaigns in African democracies.

This is a phenomenon which has resulted in significant transformation in political communication, and the political landscape in general, in democracies worldwide. Effectively, the choice of SNSs powered by ICT has become a preferred choice for political leaders in the contest

for power, as Androniciuc (2016) argues, that, the transformation of social networks into one of the most relevant means of mass communication has not gone unnoticed by specialists in the field of politics, who take advantage of the opportunity to reach out to voters (citing John, 2013; Kaid, 2009; Chadwick, 2010; Cogburn, 2011). This suggests that ICT have become an indispensable communication tool through which stakeholders, including political party leadership, could rely on in their quest for power. Trent and Friedenbergl (2000) confirm that the transformation in political campaigns has been driven by technology, and this is evident in the adoption of digital tools by political actors and institutions in contemporary political campaigns. The situation is no different in African political campaigns and in politics in general, because ICTs ensure that democracy and equality are sustained in this new collective space (Archer-Lean and Pavitt, 2011).

In Africa, many political engagements are centered on the control of power, broadly understood as the capacity to make things happen that otherwise would not happen (Stone, 2012). And, like their counterparts in the West, ICT has become a key communication tool in Africa's political engagements among opposing parties in the contest for power. This situation assumes that preferences are set, and power is that which determines the outcome in a straightforward instance of clashing wills (Stone, 2012). In effect, democracy partly offers the opportunity for aspirants to contest power in a very formal manner and, in most instances, contests create an atmosphere of tension and confrontation among stakeholders in their quest for the power to control governance. Also, this suggests that ICT has the potential to contribute to the development of democracy in Africa, in that, the openness of social media platforms, for example, facilitates the potential for 'mass-collaboration' of those individuals and groups who become the source of new innovations and ideas in democratic practices (Leadbeater, 2008). Consequently, African political actors, especially leaders, may commit to the effective use of digital platforms, especially social media, so as to facilitate their resolve to attain power for a desired purpose, for example, based on the assumption that, 'power with a person is the force emanating from the core of the person who commands the respect of others without the authority or responsibility of a position' (Parse, 2004, p.2014).

Arguably, ICTs empower stakeholders, however, the lack of policies may result in abuse, especially by African despots and leaders, in their quest to retain political power. The implication is that not only is their action defeating Loader and Mercea's (2011) projection of social media as

potential contributors to the development of democracy, but also, it invalidates the advantages of social media by curtailing the sustenance of democracy and equality in the new collective space (Archer-Lean and Pavitt, 2011). This obviously influences Africa's quest for democratic consolidation, as Olaniyi (2018) argues that Africa is moving towards a new stage, where Internet will lead to improved levels of democracy and digital politics. African governments that have frequently imposed restrictions on Internet and social media therefore need to stop doing this. According to him, democracy suffers as Internet usage increases, as a result of the severity of these restrictions (ibid). Effectively, the interactive and unrestrictive nature of social media, for example, encourages free speech and creates more room for participation, which poses a threat to some African leaders, for fear of abuse by the citizenry, the exposure of bad governance, attacks on free speech, etc. Consequently, several governments in Africa have evolved policies on ICT, most of which seek to stifle the free press and freedom of speech, in an attempt to regulate the use of social media.

Developments in Benin, Uganda and Tanzania are evidence of African governments' use of power to influence the use of ICTs, since they imposed taxes on users of social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp. Local and international activists protested against the decree in Benin, arguing that it was a blatant attack on the freedom of expression and net neutrality. Whilst Ugandans had to deal with heavy charges on the use of social media, Tanzania passed a blanket law on online content creators, forcing bloggers to pay up to \$900 for a three year license. In Zambia, the government introduced a levy on Internet calls for WhatsApp, Skype and Viber (Ogola, 2018). Action by these governments also suggests that, historically, African governments have exercised inordinate power over the media, particularly the independent media, in a bid to stifle dissent. They did this by force, and by direct and indirect means. Typical examples are in Ethiopia and Uganda, where governments have shut down media houses with impunity, plus in Kenya and Nigeria, where the leadership controlled media through proxies and withheld advertising revenue (ibid, 2018).

The incidents above indicate the extent to which power can be used to influence the use of social media in Africa, mostly through the use of 'unfriendly policies' for ICTs and for communications policies in general, under the guise of regulations to prevent the abuse of media freedom and to protect the vulnerable in society. For example, inherent in Uganda's President,

Yoweri Museveni's explanation of the levy to increase domestic revenues was a move to muzzle the Ugandans' growing freedoms online (Dahir, 2018). In most instances, such policies have met fierce resistance from the citizenry, especially when the country lacks a clear-cut policy to regulate the digital media, as happened in Ghana¹ prior to the country's 2016 elections.

The Ghanaian situation permeates governments in Sub-Saharan Africa, where ICTs and SMSs are transforming the multi-party system and democracy. It is obvious that ICTs' and social media use are becoming a threat to most leaderships and countries in their attempt to capture power, indeed, ICTs and the social media are 'a game changer' in contemporary politics. Arguably, the dawn of the Internet has complicated matters for such states, given the difficulty of controlling the spread of information, the availability of encryption, the worldwide nature of the Internet, and the difficulty of determining the originator of information which is anonymous or pseudonymous (CIPESA, 2016, p8). What needs to be done is that governments should evolve pragmatic policies to maximize the value of interrelationships and interdependency by ensuring balances amongst power, politics, policy, media and the stakeholders.

2.4.4 Key Highlightys

Power remains the key impetus for leaders of all categories to retain the dominance of the ruled, especially in politics. It has been established that most political engagements are centered on the control of power, broadly understood as the capacity to make things happen that otherwise would not happen (Stone, 2012). It is a significant form of causation, but can come in various forms (ibid). Power becomes a key motivation in any democracy, hence the struggle for legitimacy at all levels of political leadership and in organizations in the context of democracy. Like democracy, the contestation of power has become a major cause of the conflicts that enable nations and leaders to gain control within territories at both the local and international levels. Of equal importance in

¹ An attempt by Ghana's Inspector General of Police (IGP), Mr John Kudalor, to block social media in Ghana on Election Day in 2016 was greeted with fierce resistance through a threat of protest by social media users, to be led by Prof Audrey Gadzekpo of the School of Communication Studies at the University of Ghana "We have a strong social media-loving public and social movement that will protest, and I will be one of those included in the protests," she noted, in response to Mr John Kudalor's comment that the Ghana Police Service was considering taking that action on November 7th in order to ensure that peace prevailed during the elections. Apart from sparking street protests, Prof Gadzekpo is convinced that an action of the sort would have dented the country's democratic image. Arguing in support of his proposal, Mr Kudalor said the use of social media by politicians, especially from the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), for election-related activities, had created political tensions in the country, thus his suggestion to go the Ugandan way, in which President Yoweri Museveni (recently re-elected for a fifth term) had all social media sites blocked on election day as a security measure to avert lies.

the enhancement of democracy is the influence of news on electoral processes. The interaction between power, politics and ICT policy in African contexts also formed a key item in the discussion, as the interplay, in large part, determines the ability of political actors and citizens to participate in democratic processes in any given digital space.

2.5 NEWS AS PERSUASIVE WEAPON

Literally, news, in journalistic terms, refers to any new events, but the term becomes debatable considering the currency that the audience has attached to occurrences that may be classified as news. News should be defined as a fresh, unpublished, unusual and generally interesting event (Randall, 2016). This warrants the need to identify the key elements that enhance the relevance of particular events to make them unique and interesting. For Randall, freshness, as a value of news, is always objectively established, unlike the interesting elements that generate debate among media practitioners, especially journalists, in newsrooms around the world. The implication is that the audience must be fed with something new which potentially excites and affects them, depending on where that audience is located. They consider it news because it is fresh and peculiar to them, because they have not heard about it, but it is of interest to their locality and the public. Besides, it becomes necessary to consider other ingredients which justify the news, in terms of value, as Randall agrees, taking note of the proximity, subject, news fashion, development, source, knowledge and the timing of the item which make it more valuable (Randall, 2016). This becomes very necessary, especially with the advent of technology. Technological development, especially the Internet and SNSs, including the social media, create complexity in the determinants of news, so it is important to recognize the value of news (Harcup and O'Neill, 2017)

Sometimes, the manipulation of a news item through the various production processes, particularly at the pre-production stage, which is susceptible to influences, creates doubts in terms of its objectivity or fairness. Malcolm (2016) attributes this deficiency to gatekeeping activity, and the creation of adequate space, the lack of significance and the impairment of political balance. This, to a large extent, influences audience preference for news, because, for example, audiences are assumed to choose programs or content according to their preferences for specific programs or

genres (Webster and Wakshla, 1983, in Soroka and McAdam, 2015). This calls for a variation in content to meet the needs and expectations of a variety of audiences. News can be divided into content-related interest in political information, and general interest in the news genre, which may also represent other motivations, such as suspense, curiosity, or material to talk about (ibid).

Quoting Prior (2007), Wonneberger et al (2011) argue that the content of news needs looking at critically, in view of its impact on the audience and, therefore, it must have some particular focus, taking note of the audiences' expectations. Effectively, there may be other motivations and expectations which, directly or indirectly, influence the choice of news in the context of its source, its writer(s) and its audience (s). This assertion ties in with these scholars' arguments that news preferences may also be related to motives other than the desire for political information, the expectations of the audience, in terms of quality and, specifically, the audiences' interest in politics. This suggests that interest may be a key factor in the determinants of news, and underscores why political interest is often used as an indicator of news preferences. However, the credibility of news is invariably challenged in view of controversies that are ignited by the emerging phenomenon of Fake News. According to Tandoc et al:

An examination of 34 academic articles that used the term 'fake news' between 2003 and 2017 resulted in a typology of types of fake news: news satire, news parody, fabrication, manipulation, advertising, and propaganda. These definitions are based on two dimensions: levels of facticity and deception. Such a typology is offered to clarify what we mean by fake news and to guide future studies (2017).

Tandoc et al.'s position further raises an argument on the authenticity and ramifications of news that is generated by social media, in view of its latitudinal features, which has increased representation and participation and has enhanced political discourse. Equally, these developments generate debate on the credibility and authenticity of news sources in political communication and political campaign. Consequently, sources of news and their value in politics have been discussed under this heading. The relations between 'spin doctoring' and political communication, in view of the emerging phenomenon of 'serial calling', which has become an aspect of political communication in the Ghanaian political context, are also discussed.

2.5.1 Sources of News

News forms a key ingredient in political communication, especially in party organization, education and campaigning, as the electorates rely on it to make informed choices, deliberations and participation. Williams et al. (2010), quoting Franklin (1997). indicate that the manufacture of news, unlike other forms of production, relies on input from individuals and organizations located outside the formal news organization in which production takes place. These individuals and organizations are newsmakers whose views impact largely on the conduct of the electorates. They are sources of news and are in agreement with journalists and media practitioners, in general, and offer vital input to the production of news at all levels.

The essence of news requires that its sources are credible and valuable, especially to journalists and producers, in the production processes and stages; pre-production, production and post-production, because the recognition and acceptance that citizens give to any news, potentially allow them to become properly informed citizens and equips them with the necessary education to carry out their political responsibilities as citizens (Gans, 2010). This further emphasizes the role of news in democracy and the socio-economic development of society. Empirical research indicates that news sources are influenced by a number of factors, including the philosophy of the media, taste of consumers, instincts of editors and reporters, audience, the availability of the news philosophy of the medium, pressure from the publisher, the influence of advertisers, news mix, such as a blend of soft and hard, local, national and international stories (Manning, 2001; Jeremy, 2006).

Additionally, new technology has influenced dimensions in the sources of news, as scholars reveal. For example, Lacy et al (2013) argue that not only do the electronic and print media have diverse news sources, but the Internet also provides sources of information. In a study of sources of news coverage of local governments by 198 radio stations, the scholars agreed that this trend was triggered by the dynamism and rapid changes emanating from the mode of the production systems and the environment within which news reporting is produced. This situation is also likely to be influenced by news consumers, who most often patronize news and form their preferences based on factors like ideological beliefs, partisanship, and proximity, among others. Although this situation creates competition and a struggle for news sources among news manufacturers, Manning (2001), believes that if the categories which emerge through news media

discourse have little influence upon the way consumers understand news or political issues, there is little point in attempting to theorize or empirically describe news source activity. This suggests that the import and currency attached to the news should matter most, rather than the sources. That notwithstanding, the fact remains that sources must be credited with some level of integrity and should be credible enough to avoid misinformation and misrepresentation of facts and information at the expense of the citizens.

Swanson (2000) argues that, besides the struggles, there are challenges that are posed by the new media, which media institutions, supporting journalism practices, especially political journalism, have had to contend with. According to him, the journalism establishment is being challenged by new sources and forms, and traditional providers of political journalism are seeing substantial portions of their former audience migrate to new media alternatives. A typical example, in his opinion, is Facebook, Twitter and other SNSs, in addition to news on conventional media forms, such as the 24-hour cable news services. He maintains that their solution to these challenges, as designed by main stream journalism, is a wanton disregard for journalistic ethics and canons. As he puts it:

Mainstream journalism's response has been twofold. On the one hand, the imperative to compete for audiences has led to a loosening of commitments to traditional journalistic values and canons of practice, resulting in news that is more sensationalizedand less governed by serious news values mainstream journalism has sought to market itself to consumers in both style and substance, effecting compromises that are deplored by some of its most respected practitioners and blurring its identity as distinct from other forms (2000, pp. 409-414).

These challenges point to the fact that there is no doubt that news sources have an impact on the news that is churned out to the audience. Political communicators and other political actors, and the audience in general, depending on the strategy, are likely to capitalize on these challenges to sway the electorates in electoral democracies. Even the gatekeeping concept used by most news manufacturers to dictate the forms of stories, raises further controversies around the effectiveness of news sources, as Manning (2001) notes in *News Audiences and News Sources*, even before the point of reception there are numerous factors that offer the news sources and managers of the news item the opportunity to influence the stories as they go through the production processes.

Moreover, the proliferation of news sources, although it creates more space and flexibility for media actors and society in general, especially with the advent of citizen journalism, invariably presents another challenge to the control of information, as against arguments associated with the gatekeeping concept. Fenton (2010) agrees with this assertion, and argues that the availability of space creates more challenges for media in claiming privileges, especially in terms of control, in that the Internet, for example, offers a space in which interested readers can check the validity of one online news report against another, and can even access the news sources to which articles refer.

This development has a tendency to create a sense of mistrust in terms of the sources of news, and, obviously, creates doubts in terms of content, in addition to their impact on news canons. Consequently, the consumers of news ultimately become the losers, since the lack of credible news sources pollutes the media space to the detriment of the credible information that is needed to enhance democratic discourse. The woes of democracy, then, especially in the area of participation and free media, are likely to deepen in a situation in which the political environment provides a fertile ground on which the citizens and non-governmental organizations begin to see the government as a key source of news.² Chen et al (2012), among others, maintain that the diversity and variation of news sources have not only overcome the gatekeeper's advantages, but have also provided alternative sources that are in contention with what were hitherto the government's vertical sources, which stifle free speech and participation in governance.

What might uphold the validity and credibility of news sources, to a large extent, may be the evolution of processes in the 'who' production concept of news, where the manufacturers and consumers recognized their roles and the responsibilities of their calling. Possibly, Kovach and Rosentsiel's (2008) position, which encourages media practitioners to live up to the basic canons of their profession by being fair, objective, balanced, and loyal to their audience, may provide positive mutuality and harmony between the journalist and their sources. However, the emergence of citizen journalism and new media, and their seemingly uncontrolled barriers, plus their

A study by Chen et al (2012) on how public relations function as news sources in China, and reveals that although the government remains as the dominating 'news source' for newspapers, other non – mainstream news sources (e.g., grassroots civilians) have emerged. Growing from what used-to-be the silent mass, they have become the subordinate majority today, having strong influence on certain coverage; and (3) PR people as one of the major news sources, interact with media in a selective manner; and such interaction takes places largely on tactical level.

interactive advantages, make the controversies over the news sources that help citizens to discern the credibility of information in the era of digitalization, more challenging.

2.5.2. Spin Doctoring as a Political Communication Weapon

Political communication relies on intermediaries whose jobs involve angling for information using favorable slants on an item of news. Spinning can thus manipulate or reshape a less favorable news item into a more attractive news form. Spin features prominently in contemporary public relations practices, especially in political communications, and attracts mixed interpretations from the public. Hogan (2009) confirms these debates on interpretations and maintains that the term ‘spin doctor’ has become common terminology, used as a mildly pejorative term for political aids who use the media for the party’s benefit.

Many factors motivate the use of spin, especially the urge for political communicators to produce a story which will put the best light on a party by accentuating the positive aspects of the issue or by diverting attention away, if this is not possible. Effectively, spin is used as a ‘two-edged sword’, potentially traversing all spheres of socio-economic and political endeavours. This ties in with the argument that the terminology is not limited to politics, taking note of its application by stakeholders in other fields, e.g., CSOs and NGOs outside the political sphere, who use it as a tool to project and defend the image of their organizations, especially in times of crisis (ibid).

In practice, there is a thin line in terms of the usage of spin, for example, political communicators and other political actors, in a typical democratic environment, will strategically deploy the practice, using both verbal and non-verbal cues in communication to disseminate information they deem favorable to their political inclinations, particularly by propagating their party’s ideologies and aspirations. In most cases, the cues have been activated to disseminate specially marked up copies of newsmakers’ speeches to the media in advance, so as to secure more and better coverage, among other cases. Spin doctors also strategically arrange media engagements to create an opportunity for newsmakers, including the political leadership, for photo shoots to provide publicity for policy issues, or to arrange a platform from which key political leaders can respond to questions from elected media houses, preferably those that are affiliated, or that share in their ideologies. *In extremis*, it will include supplying a diversionary story in the hope of removing the headlines (Geber, 2001). This is an indication that spin doctors have similar traits,

in terms of practice and operations, through the adoption of a similar approach to honoring their role of projecting and defending their parties and ideologies. Goltz (2012) likens spin doctors to propagandists, and argues that, conventionally, all spin doctors are burdened with the responsibilities of defending the positions of their institutions, conscious of the consequences, and they strive to delegitimize anything that contradicts their version of events:

This is the job of a spin-doctor, and such an individual (or institution) cannot be ethically or morally blamed for meeting their job description. In spinning a story, they are merely doing their job. In contrast, journalists covering a crisis are supposed to be wary of dramatic press releases and partisan reporting, balloon stories and disinformation, as well as blatant lies (ibid).

The quotation above suggests that spin doctors are adamant about the skills in painting their beliefs and ideologies white, as against professional media practitioners, whose calling requires strict adherence to the ethics and canons that guide their profession. The responsibilities of journalists on special beats, like war reporting, seemingly mediate the implications of spin as used by various actors, depending on the occasion.

Sometimes the individual handling or manipulation of the ‘spin tool’ enhances the potency of spinning, possibly based on factors like the skills of the users of the tool, the occasion, and the environment in which the concept is being applied. For example, a comparative content analysis of the press coverage of the 1997 and 1998 general elections in Great Britain and Germany revealed that the two countries’ journalists dealt with political spin doctors very differently. According to Esser et al.:

In Great Britain, ‘spin doctoring high gear’ predominated, in Germany it was ‘spin doctoring low gear’, explaining that British journalists covered their efforts extensively and critically, mainly because some of them turned to unusually aggressive methods towards the media. German journalists were less likely to report extensively on spin doctoring. This can be explained by the fact that it is still in the stage of development in Germany and, for the very reason that German journalists are still less interested in the strategic inner perspective of the electoral campaigning (2000, p209).

Esser et al.’s position, as expressed in the quotation above, could also indicate the level of passion, orientation, performance and interest of the journalists from both countries in the political context. Cowan (2012) argues that effective performance, both as oratory and in print, may be central to

the success and persuasiveness of speech. This underscores the multi-faceted nature of the skills for spin, which are not only limited to ‘skilled oratory’, and that any attempt to distinguish between form and content will cast doubts on the impact of the messages to audiences.

The spin phenomenon, in an electoral democracy, and in governance in general, has been questionable, judging from its ramifications for electoral processes. With the ever-changing trends in technology and the sophisticated nature of the electorates, political spin is attracting a lot of criticism as regards its potency and validity in contemporary political organizations, campaigns, rallies and other elements of democratic participation. New campaign strategies are centered on effective manipulation of the media agenda by tailoring political messages in a way that mimics media logic almost perfectly (Plasser and Plasser, 2002). It is also the understanding that political consultancies specializing in designing media campaigns for political actors have become part of a worldwide growth industry, with star ‘spin doctors’, like Dick Morris, Peter Gould and Saatchi and Saatchi, selling their products worldwide, and attracting clients from many new democracies, including Russia, South Africa and South Korea (ibid).

2.5.3 Conclusion

This section has provided an insight into the nature and role of spinning as a tool of communication in contemporary political campaigning and other political engagements. It is a tool that can be used to manipulate or reshape a less favorable news item into a more attractive news form. It has been identified as a key feature in contemporary public relations practices, especially in political communications, and it attracts mixed interpretations from the public, as motivated by several factors, including the desire by political communicators to produce a story which will shed the best light on the party, by accentuating the positive aspects of an issue or by diverting attention from it, if this is not possible. Their subjective and biased nature renders spin doctors a ‘propaganda tool’ and this burdens them with the tasks of defending the position of their ‘paymasters’, irrespective of the truth or otherwise of a topic. Spinning has therefore attracted criticism, as it is believed to promote unethical practices and devalues politics by substituting style for substance, which is very unattractive to modern democratic practices and developments.

The next chapter discusses the various theories underpinning the study, with due consideration of the literature and the framework of participatory democracy and its relationship to social media.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Political Communication

3.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework for the study. Grant and Osanloo (2014) refer to an exploration of theories as a Theoretical Framework; the blueprint for the entire dissertation inquiry, derived from an existing theory (or theories) in the literature that has/have already been tested and validated by others, and that are considered to be a generally acceptable theory in scholarly literature (p.13). Appreciation of the theories offers a better conceptualization of the study in a broader context, since it provides comprehensive insight into the field of knowledge, as argued by Pittman (2012). In other words, these theories incorporate all of the necessary components, and provide a clear structure and vision that form the basis of the research.

Specifically, the theories highlight ‘political communication’ and its exploitation by political communicators and stakeholders as they relate to the value of participatory democratic theory within the framework of digital platforms in contemporary political campaigns in the context of democracy.

McNair defines political communications as:

...all forms of communications undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives, communications that address to these actors and non-politicians, such as voters and newspaper columnists, and communication about these actors and their activities such as are contained in news reports, editorials, and other forms of media discussion of politics (2010, p4).

This definition suggests that political communications relate to communications that encompass values, norms and traditions that affect political culture in any given political environment. The media become the key channels of transmission for various political stakeholders, particularly newsmakers, in that the media are sometimes able to create, reinforce, and change political cultures, often with concomitant effects on the behavior of rulers and publics (Paletz and Lipinski, 1994).

The media's role has been very significant in democracies, and even in non-democratic cultures, in view of its watchdog roles and, with the advent of the social media, democratic theories, including participatory democracy, have possibly been influenced, compelling political strategists and political communicators to vary their approaches to political campaigning and organizations.

These developments have also possibly attracted various debates, notably, the impact of digital platforms in enhancing participation in deliberations on the development of electoral democracy. The ripple effect could be the generation of a new wave of enthusiasm for the Internet and social media-based communication, giving a new dimension to political communication and campaigning in contemporary democratic governance. Loader and Mercea (2011) believed that the integration of digital media (social media) would improve democratic governance as it has the tendency to enhance political participation by promoting an open and equal deliberation for citizens, representatives and policy-makers. Social media have further revived the discussion on media engagement and participation, as well as on the role of the citizen's use of it in democratic innovation, as they both build divergent cultures of communality (Hyden and Leslie, 2002).

This thesis makes use of Participatory Democratic Theory as a suitable democratic theory with which to validate the enquiries of the research. Consequently, the discussion is inclined towards the interface of participatory democracy and social media in a democratic setting, specifically, to the concept of 'participatory democracy', the dichotomy of 'participatory democracy and deliberative democracy', and their relationship with social media in a participatory democratic environment. The trajectory of the critique is also motivated by arguments surrounding the two theories, based on their relevance in contemporary democracy and their affiliation with digital platforms. Effectively, 'participatory democracy' has been put in perspective, as the discourse explores the relations between the two key theories of democracy: participation and deliberation. It has been established that participatory democracy and deliberative democracy are key democratic theories with some commonalities, although they have some distinguishing features that make each unique in the conceptual democratic practices and debates. The media's influence on the two theories, with reference to contemporary political communication and political campaigning, cannot be overestimated, especially the use of social media. The discussion

concludes that the social media can potentially leverage political participation in a contemporary democracy.

3.1 Participatory Democracy in Perspective

Various meanings may be ascribed to participatory democracy, especially, its role in education and the development of the citizenry in the overall democratic process. For example, John Stuart Mill's argument on the theory of democratic participation emphasizes the developmental and educational role that political participation plays in the cultivation of one's most fulfilled self (Bacharach and Botwinick, 1992, p.10). Their argument suggests that the desire to be abreast of fundamental knowledge regarding democracy underscores an individual's expectation of being empowered with the requisite education to effectively and actively participate in those deliberations that potentially contribute to formulating policies for development. In practical terms, the individual is conceived as being in continual search of self-empowerment (ibid), not only as a foundation, but also as a tool with which to provide the basis for the 'qualification and legitimacy' to contribute to deliberations.

Carole Pateman, although she agrees with Stuart Mill's emphasis on education and development, believes that participation is also vital, as an integral element in the process of personal growth and self-empowerment. She was of the opinion that ordinary people's active participation, for example, in workplace decision-making, was of critical importance in shaping a satisfactory life. Like contemporary radical democratic theorists, Pateman considered political participation a phenomenon that affords the excluded classes an opportunity to discover the real interests of the citizenry (ibid., pp.2-10). Acquisition of knowledge, in addition to communication skills, equip the citizenry with the required capacity for dialogue and enables them to contribute to deliberations that are in their interest.

Literally, participatory democracy requires, to a large extent, that all citizens are also given a voice in the governance process, in the sense that they are greatly affected by the policies and decisions that are implemented. The active involvement of the citizenry in decision-making signifies the recognition of the basic tenets of democratic practices, as argued by Swift (2006), that

decision-making is directly democratic when the people vote directly on the issues under consideration, as against voting for representatives to make decisions on their behalf. Besides,

... the interdependency between democratic participation and equality of sharing political power is rooted in the democratic belief in moral equality, and both ideals together rest on the imperative that ordinary citizens must play an important role in shaping their individual and collective destinies (Bacharach and Botwinick, 1992, p.12).

This implies that participatory democracy must create adequate space to accommodate diverse opinions from all shades and classes of people within the democratic setting, in the sense that 'active participation enables citizens to self-develop, as well as engendering positive psychological benefits, including feelings of political efficacy/ (Hilmer, 2010, p45). Participation also becomes more vibrant and meaningful in politics when it becomes more diverse and larger in scope. Pateman (1970) endorses this assertion because the idea of a 'participatory society' requires that the scope of the term 'political' should be extended to cover spheres outside the national government' (cited in Hilmer, 2010, p45). According to Hilmer, Pateman also believed that a political system that has been relatively democratized and whose citizens are educated and empowered by democratic participation and that is realized to the full, socio-economic and political potentials of participatory democracy (ibid, p46). Effectively, adhering to basic rules of recognition for the people to 'rule or govern based on their own decision affirms a genuinely participatory political system, where the people as a whole who engage in political debate are directly involved in political decision making' (Swift, 2006, p.185).

Macpherson (1977) described the theory of participatory democracy as a 'pyramidal system with direct democracy at the base and delegate democracy at every level above that (p. 114, cited in Hilmer, 2010, p46). This means that the majority of the citizenry outside government are, to some extent, represented, and this broadens participation and enhances a political debate, although quality deliberation is not guaranteed by majority representation. This scenario confirms that, at the least, 'there will have to be some kind of representative system, not completely direct democracy' (ibid, p46). This, to some extent, confirms, in generic terms, the concept of democracy, in that Macpherson, in his argument, 'sought to democratize already existing traditional political institutions which, were not as democratized as they might be'. However, participatory democracy requires the active inclusion of the citizenry, especially of the 'ruled', who form the majority in any participatory oriented environment within the concept of democracy. This belief fits Pateman's

position on Participation and Democratic Theory. In her opinion, an opportunity for the citizenry to participate in deliberations is likely to endanger interests that potentially encourage active participation, and that equally ‘enable (s) citizens to self-develop, as well as engendering positive psychological benefits, including feelings of political efficacy’.

The theory of participatory democracy has not, however, been spared of criticism by political theorists, for example, Mansbridge (1999), believe the theory has lost its significance, attributing this to:

... the decline throughout the ‘80s of participatory democratic practices that had been popular in the 1960s and 1970s, a lack of empirical evidence that participatory democracy makes good on its promise to provide citizens with a political education and the lack political interest, thus the problematic means by which the funding for an experiment on studies on participatory democracy would likely require’ (in Hilmer, 2010, p49).

Similarly, Warren (1996) maintains that, ‘participatory democracy is hopelessly impracticable’, arguing that participatory democratic theory ‘often seems beset by a fuzzy utopianism that fails to confront limitations of complexity, size, and scale of advanced industrial societies’ (ibid, p50). These criticisms stem from various arguments advanced earlier by scholars, such as Bacharach and Botwinic (1992), in connection with its relevance, taking cognizance of the extent to which participatory democracy has been used in some democracies, especially in the West, at different stages in the practice of democracy. In practical terms, advances in technology have influenced political communication and other activities related to various types of governance. Arguably, these developments have the potential to influence the impact of participatory democracy in post-modern democratic practices, which are mostly characterized by the complexities and modernization of political ideologies in order to meet the exigencies of the time, especially considering the dynamism in population growth and the sophistication of society occasioned by globalization.

However, the recognition of participatory theory in contemporary democratic governance makes the theory very relevant, not only in the scheme of democratic practices, but also as a baseline in the study of democracy and various theories associated with participatory democracy, especially its key tenets, which distinguish it from other theories of democracy. According to Hilmer (2010) and other theorists of participatory democracy, the theory is easily identified by the belief that citizens who actively participate in their self-governance will experience a heightened

sense of political efficacy and empowerment, and that citizens in a participatory democracy increasingly become educated, effective and empowered, because they are continually exerting a high level of control over the social, political, and economic institutions that directly affect their lives. Similarly, participatory democracy is identified by the belief that the citizenry become very active and develop more interests in participation in self-government when they become educated and knowledgeable in the affairs of governance. According to Hilmer,

Theorists of participatory democracy contend that participatory institutions provide citizens with a multitude of opportunities to learn how to be effective citizens, a third tenet of participatory democratic theory is an emphasis on extending democratic control into traditionally non-political sectors of society in order to break the monopoly of state power (pp56-58).

This suggests the creation of a very open and transparent setting within which all citizens and institutions, irrespective of status, are accorded the necessary courtesies and freedoms to participate in deliberations, but to what extent do deliberations become participatory, or what is the relationship between participatory democracy and deliberative democracy?

3.2 Overcoming the Blurring of Participation and Deliberation

Participatory democracy and deliberative democracy are key democratic theories that have some commonalities, although they have some distinguishing features that make each unique in the conceptual democratic practices and debates. Most political theorists argue that deliberative democracy inherently projects public debates that arrive at a rational consensus that emanates from disagreements and conflicts of ideas. Effectively, the citizenry is encouraged to participate freely and fully by expressing their opinions, their views on critical issues of interest that inform decision-making, and this is expected to be founded on an exchange of reasoning and arguments. For example, Florida posits that:

... deliberative procedures are based on public debate and reciprocal reason-giving, and may aim to attain a rational consensus or a shared solution, or at producing better decisions; but it may also be limited to circumscribing the reasons for a disagreement or a conflict, so as to render them more productive by identifying possible areas of equilibrium or compromise (2013, p2).

In other words, deliberative democracy thrives on dialogues, discussions and the reciprocation of ideas and opinions in a sphere of legitimacy that encourages consensus leading to decision-making.

On the contrary, political advocates of participatory democratic theories emphasize the equality of authority or power that individual citizens exercise in decision-making as among the key tenets of democracy, and that creates confidence and a sense of belonging, thereby enhancing participation. Florida confirms this assertion, arguing that:

... It is neither public discussion, nor public reason-giving, that comes into play here: what matters is only participation in a decisional process and the capability of doing so in conditions of equality, that allow all individuals to exercise a fair share of power, and thus affirm their immediate will (2013, p45).

This suggests that an individual is empowered to exercise his or her rights pertaining to the understanding and interests inherent in that decision, and that affect their lives and their community in general. That power to determine the expectations and aspirations of a citizen is inspired by a notion -- equality, in terms of sharing, which is distinctive from participatory democracy, as Pateman, argued that, 'in the participatory theory, 'participation' refers to (equal) participation in the making of decisions, and political equality refers to equality of power of determining the outcome of decisions...' (1970, p43, cited in Florida, 2013) in decision-making.

These contrasting definitions notwithstanding, the two theories maintain some of their characteristics and, thus, the objectives of deliberation and participation towards a common end, and the fact that the decision-making processes and outcomes are motivated by the well-being of the citizenry in general. It is therefore relevant, to suggest that the assumption that the application of deliberation and participation largely have the benefit of offering an enhanced opportunity that is inherent to political organizations, especially in terms of skills, and that citizens imbibe certain democratic practices, skills, culture and education that are needed to nurture and consolidate democracy. This is in consonance with Hilmer's (2010) position that contemporary theories of deliberative democracy are often described as participatory because they involve citizens deliberating on collective ends. Participatory and deliberative democracy theories, in practical

terms, thus largely connect certain traits in their implementations, although they are not the same as those pointed out by Floridaia, who writes that:

... there are forms and types of participation which have a deliberative inspiration, within which a more or less deliberative dimension or quality

may be operating; but not all forms of deliberation are “participative”; and not all forms of participation are “deliberative” (Floridaia 2013, p3).

What is more debatable is the extent to which the theories’ foundations’ reliance on this debate is motivated by its genealogical conception and recognition in democratic practices, and the implication that the two theories cannot be equated by judging them from the terminologies that identify them. In Floridaia’s, opinion, these two terms cannot be equated:

... “participatory democracy” is founded on the direct action of citizens who exercise some power and decide issues affecting their lives; “deliberative democracy”, instead, is founded on argumentative exchanges, reciprocal reason-giving, and on the public debate which precedes decisions (2013, p6).

Similarly, the issue of power becomes critical in debates on the two theories, for example, Hilmer (2010) maintained that the shifting of power away from the macro-level of the state to sundry micro-levels, as espoused in participatory democratic theories, is not always an obvious priority in deliberative democratic theory. For him, such a shift occurs not through deliberation alone, but in conjunction with an expansion of the sectors in which deliberation and policy-making occurs (Hilmer, 2010). This is suggestive of the fact that power, as an element in leadership and government, has the tendency, on the trajectory of deliberations and participation, to influence decision-making in a democratic setting. Floridaia considers this a critical issue in *Participatory Democracy versus Deliberative Democracy: Elements for a Possible Theoretical Genealogy. Two Histories, Some Intersections*, and argues that it warrants a thorough examination in the context of theories relating to deliberation and participatory democracy;

We hold that the point of view from which the diverse notions of “participatory” and “deliberative” democracy are best perceived is that of the different answers given to a precise question: can or must participative and/or deliberative processes have, or not, some “decisional power”? In what sense do, or can, such processes exercise some “power”? (2013, p5)

This is an indication that both theories thrive on consensus, apparently mediated by the urge to meet the needs of the citizenry by ensuring equality, to some extent, via power or legitimacy that is endorsed by a recognized institution. What matters most in democracy is the recognition of the inclusion of citizens, in terms of participation and deliberation, and this engenders a sense of belonging and involvement in decision-making, since they are directly affected by the outcome of any decision by the state. Effectively, the common interests of the citizenry must be the prime motivation for consideration at all stages of deliberation and participation, and these elements are inherent to various debates concerning the two democratic theories, but, more importantly, how do these theories relate to the digital media?

3.3 Do Social Media Matter in Participatory Democracy?

The media's role in governance is crucial, irrespective of the form and types of government and, thus, whether there is a democracy or a military junta, the media are still relevant in 'shaping and guiding' both citizenry and rulers on issues affecting them. However, the advent of the Internet and social media, as stated earlier, has transformed systems of government by creating more space for the enhancement of deliberations, mobilization and participation. These developments have equally led to an evolution of strategies culminating in the integration of professionalism into political communication, so as to meet the exigencies of the political campaign processes. This era was predicted in anticipation of the production of virtual public spheres (Loader, 1997; Blumler and Gurevitch 2001), who pointed earnestly at the era of improvement in the existing communication systems that were endangered by the rapid development of technology, and the subsequent modification of strategies to address sophistication in governance. According to Himler (2010), this trend in development enhances democratic governance, since it potentially creates an opportunity for open and equal deliberation among stakeholders, particularly between citizens, representatives and policy-makers. The impact is reflected significantly in various types and forms of participation in democracy, prominent amongst which are protests, complaints, advocacy and claims, that serve the interests of certain categories of the citizenry.

For example, the Internet and social media have become the main communication tools for activists, dissidents and insurgents who make use of the new media. Lee et al. (2018) describe this

development as being subaltern public spheres, which defy the mainstream discourses in the public sphere. In their opinion:

... the Internet and new media have been considered to extend or reinvigorate the Habermasian public sphere, where the circulation of information, ideas and debates are unfettered in genuine dialogues and rational deliberation on public issues (Brundidge, 2010; Holt, 2004; Kellner, 2014; Wojcieszak and Mutz, 2009, cited in P.S.N Lee et al., 2018, p.1949).

Arguably, an indication that it is not only the evolution of the media that enhances democratic practices, but also a reflection of the level of participation among the citizenry and various stakeholders as a result of the space created through the use of the Internet and social media.

Participation, as advanced by Held (1996):

... fosters human development, enhances a sense of political efficacy, reduces estrangement from power centres, nurtures a concern for collective problems and contributes to the formation of an active and knowledgeable citizenry capable of taking a more acute interest in government affairs (267, p278; cited in Scammell, 2000).

In effect, judicious use of social media possibly creates more platforms so that the citizenry would be better engaged in exchanges of ideas and in actively expressing opinions on issues of interest in relation to decision-making, in consonance with the tenets of participation and deliberative democracy, as well as imbibing a sense of patriotism and a sense of belonging, in that users would have some level of control in terms of content through contributions to debates. Papacharissi (2010) shares with Norris (2000) a description of this perspective as the second generation of Internet democracy, which has virtually resulted in the displacement of the public sphere model by that of a networked citizen-centered perspective, providing opportunities to connect the private sphere of autonomous political identity to a multitude of chosen political spaces (in Lee et al, 2018). The merits of this development are plausibly pronounced in societies that are more endowed with technological infrastructure, most especially in Western democracies, in that varieties of communication spaces are created to increase participation and enhance debate. This ties in with Norris's (2000) position that 'countries with an environment rich in access to many traditional forms of communication technologies, such as telephones, televisions, and fax machines, are also

most likely to experience the diffusion of the Internet' (p.11). Her assertion largely corroborates the defense that technological development has the potential to enhance the socio-economic aspirations of society, and that its influence on politics is profound. According to Norris, 'technological development 'directly influences how far political organizations can provide online services and information, and indirectly produces greater incentives for political organizations to do so, as the general public gradually becomes wired' (ibid).

Consequently, social media become a useful tool that may be complementary to the traditional media for various types of participation, as indicated earlier, in democracy, including protests, complaints, advocacy and claims, amongst others. In the opinion of Loader and Mercea (2011), social media will equip citizens with the requisite education, and generate the enthusiasm, to make them become actively involved in affairs that affect them.

The potentials of social media notwithstanding, Loader and Mercea believe that the influence of SNSs on democracy bring to the fore some inadequacies that need proper evaluation in order to confirm how they impact upon democratic innovation. For example, they expect, 'a more open, interpretive and contingent explanatory power, one that also recognizes the influence of social diversity, inequality and cultural difference' (2011, p760). Obviously inherent to this expectation is the possibility of equally important factors that must be taken into consideration to ensure proper, and more scientific, evaluation of the impact of social media on participation. Their position, therefore, becomes necessary in view of, for example, disparities in terms of levels of literacy, social status, the environment and the recognition of people involved in deliberations within a specific democratic setting, since all these elements affect the level of interest in participation in regard to the people who will be using the communication devices. As they put it, the acquisition of an iPhone or access to a social networking site does not determine the engagement of citizens (ibid). Similarly, using a mobile device does not mean or guarantee that the device is being used for political deliberations. For Bimber (2003), the issue of evaluation, as a measuring tool for determining the impact of social media on participation, has attracted debates that seek to question whether participation may be extended beyond a narrow constituency of politically active and informed citizens. Bimber's position may stem from the fact that, although there are engagements amongst themselves, particularly among peers, in rational discussion that has the benefit of educating and imbuing citizens with ultimately attaining a consensus, equally,

this participatory move has the potential to promote conflict. This confirms Weiler's optimism on the impact of social media on participatory democracy, 'that affiliation of small groups in participatory democracy create sectarian conflict within a society and undermine both rational discourse and conceptions of the nation as a whole' (2013, p6).

However, these arguments become contestable, in that participation may be in different forms and on different levels, depending on the environment and how active the citizens may be, and it is likely that a politically active society could be motivated by various interests to participate actively in deliberations. However, the fact still remains that the latitude granted by social media generates debates about the possibility of misinformation and the lack of factual authenticity, which pose a threat to participation in the contemporary public sphere in a democratic environment. These defects largely discredit the full merits of social media in participatory democracy, as argued by cyber-pessimists, who suggest that the Internet, for example, 'threatens more sinister possibilities for civic engagement, in particular, some have worried about the propensity of Internet users to seek out information and social connections that confirm their preconceptions and fail to challenge their assumptions' (Weiler, 2013, p3).

3. 4 Key Highlights

This discussion has provided insights into various theories underpinning the study, with due consideration of a variety of literature and the framework of participatory democracy and its relationship to social media. The theories rationalize, to some extent, Marangunic and Granic's position that an effective review of the literature and the theories creates a firm foundation for advancing knowledge, in that they facilitate theory development, close areas where a plethora of research exists, and uncover areas where research is needed (2015, p82). The 'Theory of Participatory Democracy' underpinning this study was put into perspective, assessing its value as a democratic theory, and how it is influenced by the media, with specific reference to social media, in the context of political communication and political campaigning. Effectively, the impact of using social media to advance political campaign and mobilization in participatory democracy has become relevant in contemporary political campaigns and communication. The discussion was also aimed at the interface of the dichotomy of participatory democracy and deliberative democracy as two democratic theories with contrasting definitions, but retaining some

characteristics in terms of their impact on the decision-making processes. It was evident that participatory and deliberative democracy theories, in practical terms, largely connect certain traits in their implementations, although they are not the same, in that:

... there are forms and types of participation which have a deliberative inspiration, within which a more or less deliberative dimension or quality may be operating; but not all forms of deliberation are “participative”; and not all forms of participation are “deliberative” (Florida 2013, p3).

What arises from the discussion, and is more debatable, is that, although the two theories cannot be equated, judging from the terminologies that identify them, the issue of power becomes very critical in debates on them regarding the shifting of power away from the macro-level of the state to sundry micro-levels, as espoused in participatory democratic theories, and this is not always an obvious priority in deliberative democratic theory (Hilmer, 2010).

It became clear in the discussion that the social media are an emerging communication tool that is complementary to the traditional media and that enhances various types of participation, particularly for protests, complaints, advocacy, campaigning, mobilization and organization, among other things. Equally, the social media have the potential to enhance democratic participation by equipping the citizenry with the requisite education, as well as generating the enthusiasm to make them become actively involved in affairs that affect them, in that they create more space in which the citizenry can actively participate in political discourses by offering alternatives or challenging decisions, thus moving towards consensus building and opinion sharing.

However, the social media are also bedevilled with some inadequacies which make them deficient, to some extent, and this must be strategically and empirically evaluated to confirm how they impact on democratic innovation. For example, Loader and Mercea expect, ‘a more open, interpretive and contingent explanatory power, one that also recognizes the influence of social diversity, inequality and cultural difference’ (2011, p760).

3.5 Review of Related Literature

Several scholars have used Rogers' (1995) diffusion of innovation theory in studies to determine the adoption of technology (Isleem, 2003). Using digital tools to determine their impact on political activity largely fits into the diffusion of innovation theory in studies that are related to this research. This study, among other reasons, explores how and why political actors are using new media in the digital era, with special attention to its usage as an emerging phenomenon whose impact evokes complexities in political communication and new media in a developing democracy, like Ghana.

Isleem (2003) notes, in Sahin (2006), that although many studies have used Rogers' theory as their theoretical framework, few among them have considered computer use for instructional purposes. The case studies confirm the relationship between Jacobson, 1998; Less, 2003, and this study, within the context of the Diffusion of Innovation Theory, with a focus on the relations between technology and the transformation of education. Other studies have delved into the relationship between technologies, particularly the connection between digital platforms, electoral democracy, political campaigns and political communications.

Jungherr (2016), for example, studied the use of digital tools by campaign organizations in Germany's 2013 Federal Election using observations and in-depth interviews with key personnel in the campaigns who came from six of the parties running for Parliament. Findings indicated that not only do the categories capture how German parties use digital tools, but also there are important differences between German and U.S.-based online campaigning. These differences stem from the different levels of intensity with which digital tools are deployed in each country (pp.364-375)

Rider (2016), in *Staging a Successful Political Campaign in the Digital Era: How to Respond to Natural Disasters on Social Media*, explored the role that digital media play in the responses of presidential candidates when they are faced with natural disasters. It was based on a comparison between two presidential campaign seasons, the 2004 campaign between the incumbent President, George W. Bush, and Senator John Kerry, and the 2012 campaign between the incumbent, President Barack Obama, and Mitt Romney, to isolate the effects of social media on political rhetoric and increased voter support. Findings indicated that the social media allow for interactive discussion with voters, 'candidates must look to predictions for voter response while generating content for social media posts, the use of the personal voice is possible through social media, and candidates lose total control of their message on them, finally, that social media can

allow candidates to overcome some obstacles, but there are still factors which it cannot overcome' (2016, p.1-89).

In Africa, a number of studies have been carried out on social media, election campaigns and political communications in the current democratic dispensation, as seen in the following examples:

Chadwick (2013) quotes a study by Mare and Matsile (2020) in which these scholars explored how political mobilization in the Zimbabwean 2018 election relied on a sophisticated appropriation of the hybrid media system. Their study concluded that political parties and candidates, in Zimbabwe, used a wide array of traditional and digital platforms during the 2018 elections. This also suggests that, in any given context, political parties, candidates and voters can possibly deploy all the various layers of media technologies (Bennett and Segerberg, cited in 2012, in Ndlela and Mano, 2020)

Similarly, Mano has discussed how Twitter has emerged as an important counter power to the 'big men' politics in Africa. His focus was on the relationship between social media and elections within the framework of alternative media. Mano's argument was that, in much of Africa, mainstream media are captured by commercial and political interests; hence, ordinary Africans have to rely on alternative communications. It emerged that the social media constitutes these alternative media (Mano, 2020 p.8).

Specifically on Ghana, Malcolm and Godwyll explored the state of ICT integration into the educational system in Ghana, with emphasis on ways forward in terms of ICT diffusion in schools.

The study focussed on Junior and Senior high schools in Ghana with interest in how ICTs are currently being used in the education sector in Ghana, what is actually happening on the ground, what are the strategies and policies related to the use of ICTs? What are the common challenges or constraints faced by Ghana schools in the area of ICT integration in schools? (2008, p4).

The study was motivated by the fact that computers were considered a novelty, and their related technology studies concerning technology diffusion in education have often focused on the first three phases of the innovation decision process. Studying how innovation occurs, Rogers (2003) argued that it consists of four stages: invention, diffusion or communication through the social

system, time and consequences. For him, the information flows through networks, and networking is affected in one way or the another, in view of the fact that the nature of networks, and the roles opinion leaders play in them, determine the likelihood that the innovation will be adopted (ibid).

Again, the *Governance Social Media Index Project*, under the auspices of Penplusbytes, has been monitoring new media and politics. The report covers social media usage by Members of Parliament (MP), some Election Management Bodies (EMB), and Political Parties. The Index Report for 2016 revealed that 93 of the 275 Members of Parliament (MP) were on both Facebook and Twitter, with 49 and 44 for the two leading political parties, the NPP and NDC, respectively. Of the 93, only 18 had Twitter accounts, with nine in the NPP and nine for the NDC. Surprisingly, only one independent candidate was on Facebook.

According to the Report, the Electoral Commission (EC), the only institution entrusted with the responsibility for conducting elections in the country, has both Facebook and Twitter accounts, with 114,028 and 1,619 followers, respectively. The Ghana Police Service has both Facebook and Twitter accounts, with 20,942 and 3,676 followers, respectively. The Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) has Facebook and Twitter accounts, with 13,383 and 1,218 followers, respectively. However, the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), the National Peace Council (NPC) and the Judicial Council of Ghana, were not present on social media.

According to the EC of Ghana, there are 25 registered political parties. Of these, only 11 are on Facebook and four (4) on Twitter. The four political parties with a Twitter handle are the NDC, the NPP, the Convention People's Party (CPP) and the All People's Congress (APC). The other 14 registered political parties do not have both Facebook and Twitter accounts (Penplusbytes, 2016, pp.5-14). Gyampo explores specific ways in which political parties in Ghana have deployed social media in advancing their interest. The study was motivated by challenges that have been encountered by political parties in their quest to tap the advantages of social media in prosecuting their ultimate agenda of capturing political power. It argued succinctly that even though social media has broad advantages, it has severe challenges that undermine its effectiveness and nullify any attempt to use it as a substitute to traditional media in Ghana. The study recommended 'an improved use of traditional media as a means of reaching out to people by political parties, as well as the use of social media only as an 'additional communication luxury' (2017, p.125). Dzisah also

examines the various roles and contributions that the media, particularly social media, have played in the democratic journey of Ghana, focussing on the 2012 and 2016 elections, though the country returned to multiparty democracy in 1992. The study reviewed literature and deployed quantitative methodological tools to help unpack the inherent dynamics of the users of social media, mostly the youth. The key questions that motivated the study revolved around political knowledge, efficacy and participation, in view of the intensity with which social media was [sic] becoming a key feature in Ghana's democracy. Findings supported the claim of 'knowledge, efficacy and participation, claims, revealing that access to new communication technologies, such as the Internet and mobile telephony, are promoting democratic discourses and enhancing participation through social media platforms' (2018, p. 25).

3.6 Strengths and Weaknesses

This discussion highlights the strengths, weaknesses and gaps identified in the body of literature reviewed in this study. They comprise of the scholarly research into the concepts of political campaigning, power, and digital media (social media) and their relationships with the traditional media in a contemporary democratic environment. It also explores the production and dissemination of news, with interests in sources and messages as they relate to political communication, political audiences and the matrix of interrelations, which provides some useful dilemmas. In the context of conceptual formulations and theoretical reasoning, these interrelationships provide the study with insights into Participatory Democracy and Deliberation, two key theories of democracy, and they explore the extent of influence, in terms of the use of social and traditional media in political communication, as they relate to contemporary political campaigning.

The arguments and revelations advanced by scholars in the literature, as discussed above, underscore the indispensable role of the media, especially social media, in societal endeavors, specifically, in political activities and political campaigns, as democratic societies embrace the phenomenon.

The literature established the link between democracy and communication in the context of politics, and, that the evolution of democracy and the multi-party systems places huge responsibility on political scholars and stakeholders, particularly political communicators, to evolve pragmatic strategies so as to deal with challenges associated with contemporary democracy. What makes the link crucial are the inherent tenets that uphold the democratic concepts, vis-à-vis, equity, and the rights and responsibilities of the citizenry, as well as free media and free speech, more especially in a capitalist system where there are imbalances in wealth and other resources. Political communication has taken a different trend, greatly transformed to meet the exigencies of the time, in that it has moved from being a direct, personal, face-to-face, activity, to being conducted indirectly via the mass media (Lilleker, 2011). Effective communication, therefore, must provide the necessary explanation in terms of concepts like participation, citizenship, digital media and the political economy of the media, as they impact heavily on the development of democracy. It became obvious that democratization can also be strengthened by transparent and more participatory political communication, particularly when weaker groups are empowered.

However, meeting these expectations would largely depend on the balances between democracy, power and ICT Policies, because power remains the key impetus for leaders of all categories to retain the dominance of the ruled, especially in politics. It has been established that most political engagements are centered on the control of power, broadly understood as the capacity to make things happen that otherwise would not happen (Stone, 2012). Power becomes a key motivation in democracy, hence the struggle for legitimacy at all levels of political leadership and in organizations, in the context of democracy. Like democracy, the contestation of power has become a major cause of conflicts that enable nations and leaders to gain control within territories at both the local and international levels. The interaction between power, politics and ICT policy in African contexts enriches the literature for the study, in view of the belief that the interplay, in large part, determines the abilities of political actors and citizens to participate in democratic processes in any given digital space.

Similarly, the literature has provided an insight into the nature and role of political communicators and their affiliates, like ‘serial callers’, in their attempt to using ‘spinning’ as a tool of communication in contemporary political campaigning and in other political engagements. It is a tool that can be used to manipulate or to reshape a less favorable news item into a more attractive

news form. It has been identified as a key feature in contemporary public relations practices, especially in political communications, and it attracts mixed interpretations from the public, as motivated by several factors, including the desire by political communicators to produce a story which will shed the best light on the party by accentuating the positive aspects of an issue or diverting attention from it, if this is not possible. Their subjective and biased nature renders spin doctors a ‘propaganda tool’, and this burdens them with the task of defending the position of their ‘paymasters’, irrespective of the truth, or otherwise, of a topic. Spinning has therefore attracted criticism, as it is believed to promote unethical practices, and it devalues politics by substituting style for substance, which is very unattractive in modern democratic practices and developments.

Again, the ‘participatory theory of democracy’ that grounded this study rationalizes, to some extent, Marangunic and Granic’s position that an effective review of literature and the theories creates a firm foundation for advancing knowledge, in that they facilitate theory development, and close areas where a plethora of research exists, uncovering areas where research is needed (2015, p82). The *Theory of Participatory Democracy*, therefore, aside from helping to put into perspective, also facilitated the assessment of its value as a democratic theory, and, how it is influenced by the media, with specific reference to social media, in the context of political communication and political campaigning. Equally relevant to the study is the revelation pertaining to the interface of the dichotomy of participatory and deliberative democracy, as two democratic theories with two contrasting definitions, while retaining some characteristics in terms of their impact on decision-making processes.

Floridia’s (2013) assertion affirms that:

... there are forms and types of participation which have a deliberative inspiration, within which a more or less deliberative dimension or quality may be operating; but not all forms of deliberation are “participative”; and not all form of participation are “deliberative” (p3).

The social media are an emerging communication tool, as confirmed in the body of literature, and they are also complementary to the traditional media, as well as enhancing types of participation, particularly for protests, complaints, advocacy, campaigning, mobilization and organization, among other things, but, requires digital education, logistics, ICT, etc., in some environments, notably, in the developing democracies. However, to some extent, the social media are also bedevilled with some inadequacies which make them deficient and this must be strategically and

empirically evaluated in order to confirm how they impact on democratic innovation. For example, Loader and Mercea expect, ‘a more open, interpretive and contingent explanatory power, one that also recognizes the influence of social diversity, inequality and cultural difference (2011, p760). These weaknesses provide leads to potential gaps in the literature.

3.7 Gaps Identified in the Literature

Staffan (2006) argues that many gaps exist, for instance, in the scope and depth of diffusion regarding the use of technologies, despite the exponential growth in research on the adoption of the new media in electoral campaigning. Arguably, most research on political campaigns, social media and political communications in democratic elections remains restricted to nationally-based case studies (e.g., Baxter and Marcella, 2012; Jungherr, 2012; Larsson and Moe, 2012; Strandberg, 2013; Gibson, 2013; Williams and Gulati, 2013; Carlisle and Patton, 2013; Nielsen and Vaccari, 2013; Macková et al., 2013). This situation raises debates and makes comparisons difficult, and this is often due to the utilization of incompatible methodologies or measures.

The African situation is no better. Not many empirical research projects have been conducted on political campaigns, social media and political communications in democratic elections, especially in relation to the digital media in the context of Africa. Moreover, the body of literature reviewed confirms that existing research on the use of social media, and digital tools in general, in political campaigning, was focused on single campaigns, either by providing sophisticated use of the technologies utilized on a small group of sites, or by putting the focus on a specific feature that is found across a wider sample of online sites (Panagopoulos, 2009), although there are some important exceptions to the rule of an Anglo-American bias in the study of political campaigning (Lilleker and Lees- Marshment, 2005; Negrine et al., 2007; Plasser and Plasser, 2002; Swanson and Mancini, 1996).

The non - western consideration gap is further widened by the failure of prior researches to explore the character of campaigns and the perceived challenges, like internal party strategies and funding, that have seen regular changes of power in emerging democracies. Many scholars believe more cross cutting interrogation needs to be put into play in order to bridge the gaps;

... there is the need for more comparative research and the extent to which not only organizational factors, resources, incentives and orientation, shape Internet use, but also the extent to which the political and social cultures, structures and traditions impact upon campaign strategy (Lilleker and Vedel, 2013, p. 28).

Lilleker and Vedel also recommend that the evolution of the new media as a campaign tool requires:

... a shift from the purely supply-side studies to ones which incorporate analysis of citizens' web usage and to what extent there is a demand for a more engaging, interactive and sophisticated online campaign among candidates or parties seeking election. More research must also demand a better understanding of the interaction between off-line and online politics, and whether online activism changes the nature of political participation (2013, pp. 27-28).

A typical example is the situation in Ghana. It is obvious that most of the studies on Ghana have not delved into how political parties are maximizing to the full the dividends accruing from social media, due to their lack of effective strategies. Besides this, not much empirical evidence has been gathered to establish the roles and impact that media (social media) and political activists, like 'serial callers', for example, play in political campaigns in the digital era.

In Hargittai (2003a) there has also been a digital gap, in terms of issues like the gender divide and rural access, which have not been addressed comprehensively by prior research. Besides, not much investigation had been conducted into issues like ICT policies, the lack of digital infrastructure (e.g., connectivity and network problems), lacking or inadequate resources, knowledge or skills, the level of literacy or illiteracy, etc., that are profoundly challenging in the African context, as they relate to Ghana, in terms of digital platforms and political campaigns.

This study was thus expected to arrive at findings which would not only be original, but which attempt to bridge the existing gap in data availability, as well as making a significant contribution to knowledge, suggesting that much work remained to be done, in order to fully understand communication strategies in the digital era, especially the extent to which political campaigning has become professionalized. The key findings and the scholarship that will emerge from the study may be of value to Ghana's democratic actors and to other future researchers who are interested in wider fields of modern political campaigning, the use of political communicators and political spokespersons, and their affiliates like 'serial callers'.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed a selection of literature that relates to the concept and that attempted to identify some gaps that might subsequently provide guidance to the study. The review provided insights into how the use of digital media has influenced political campaigning in some democracies, particularly in the West and in America, which have served as a motivation for their adoption by some of the democracies in Africa. Here, some Zimbabwean researchers recounted how the social media have impacted on political campaigns and other political engagement, as used by political stakeholders, notably, political parties, contestants and voters. Ghanaian political stakeholders have equally been using digital media for political engagements, as manifested in the works of Dzisah (2018), Gyampo (2017), Malcolm and Godwyll (2008) and Penplusbytes (2016). In all these related studies it was clear that researchers explored how and why political actors are using new media in the digital era, and the ramifications associated with the devices. However, there were gaps in the studies, as manifested in the literature, and the findings of my study are expected to fill at least some of these. The findings are expected to be original, and will provide an empirical basis for a significant contribution to knowledge about political campaigns, political communication and digital media in a contemporary democracy. Much research work, remains to be done in this area, in order to fully understand communication strategies in the digital era, especially the extent to which political campaigning has become professionalized.

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE ROLE OF OLD AND NEW MEDIA IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

4. 0 Introduction

The media form an integral part of society, they are recognized as a key tool for information dissemination of all types. Their critical role in safeguarding democratic principles cannot be overemphasize, especially as they are a key source of accurate socio-economic and political information for citizens. Their role fundamentally focused on effecting social change by strengthening the public sphere, promoting participation and representation, etc., in a democratic setting (Lazaroiu, 2012). In Chandrappa's opinion (2014), the media's role cannot be overlooked in a contemporary democratic environment, and are becoming more relevant, largely because they are the main sources of information on every aspect of society. However, the citizenry's reliance on media for information does not negate the fact that political actors, given the opportunity, can sometimes activate the media's potency to pursue negative campaigns which could be viewed as having a 'media bias's (ibid), an indication that the media provide an avenue for consumers, particularly political actors, to pursue all manner of agendas. This makes the media role complex and crucial, especially in an environment that is largely dominated by the traditional media, whose lack of interactivity limits a section of society joining the public discourse. The emergence of alternative media platforms, such as the social media, becomes relevant in complementary terms, since they provide unfettered access to all stakeholders, including the electorate.

Their role, therefore, remains indispensable in contemporary political campaigns, and in electoral processes in general, particularly in this era of digitalization. It is indisputable that political actors had relied on the traditional media, specifically, radio and print, since the 1930s, for all party activities, including party organization, resource mobilization, membership, and other relevant engagement. Actors' reliance and choice of the traditional media, enhanced information dissemination and largely facilitated decision-making processes, particularly on the choice of leadership and party preferences. That era preceded media transformation in the 1960s, following the advent of television, culminating in the creation of more space in which to enhance the public sphere. Vergeer et al, (2011) term these the pre-modern and modern eras of political campaigning

and organization, ahead of the postmodern campaign era, which is identified with technology. ‘The postmodern campaign, introduced in the early 1990s, is characterized by an introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), especially the Internet’ (Karlsen, 2009; Stromback 2007; cited in Vergeer et al, 2011, p480). The new media have further improved, thus creating more space and opportunities for political actors. Their limitations notwithstanding, the era of new media has dawned in global politics, and it behoves users, in the area of electoral democracy, to maximize them and their use so as to enhance democratic governance.

Thus, in the eyes of campaigners, digital tools have become so central to the organization, performance, and day-to-day workings of a campaign that they are not seen as separate elements of the campaign. Instead, all parties use digital tools to support traditional campaign elements and functions (Jungherr, 2016, p364).

Arguably, this reflects the way that the new media are changing the face of political communication and participation in contemporary democratic practices. However, this transformation does not negate the potency of the old media, also referred to as the traditional media, irrespective of time and environment. Both types of media’s functions essentially remain as key movers in political campaign communication, except for the inevitable changes that are normally mediated by the influences and impact of technological development.

This chapter thus discusses the New and Old Media as tools for political campaigns. It focuses especially on the impact of New Media/Social Media on Contemporary Political Campaigns, with a view to exploring not only their evolution and contribution to governance, but also to assessing their impact as the ‘seasons’ fade in democratic governances. For example, the last two decades have witnessed rapid developments in the media, their increasing use in political campaigns and electoral processes on the global democratic landscape, due to the integration of new media. The Internet, in particular, has influenced changes in the structure of the public sphere in the last decade or so, creating a virtually unlimited number of news sites and forums for political discussion (Brundidge, 2010). New media/social media are largely driven by the Internet, very typical in Africa where mobile phones have become the key platform for Internet usage. Effectively, the new media have added significance to political campaigns by facilitating the information transmission process, given their mobility and accessibility to users, as cited by Ndlela

and Mano (2020), and the increase in the use of smartphones and the adoption of mobile Internet in Africa are fundamentally altering the media ecology for election campaigns.

4.1 New and Old Media as Tools in Political Campaigns

The most important changes to political communication have come from new or social media. Vergeer et al. (2011) argue that the new media have revolutionized political communication in this third stage of political campaigning. This is the era when Web 1.0 technology became the key driver for political communication and political activities in general. Web 1.0 was characterized by the introduction of ICT, and it consisted predominantly of static websites, with the attendant complications. Scholars, like Vergeer et al., opine that technology was regarded as being, to some extent, user unfriendly, thus offering its advantages to only a limited number of people who had more than basic skills and who were able to produce content online (2011, p479).

Arguably, this development had the potential to diversify the public sphere, as more space was created to enhance participation and representation, in addition to information dissemination. Michaelsen (2016:11) affirms that this development is an improvement over the old media, in that, the new media, e.g., the Internet, have introduced quasi-instantaneous transmission of information at low cost, free from the typical barriers that confine the access to the traditional media.

Although, in the Internet era, ‘party identification and attachment declined in campaign environments like America and the United Kingdom’ (cf. Gibson and Römmele, 2001; Norris, 2000), contemporary political campaigns have seen an unprecedented revolution. Vergeer et al. (2011) attribute the revolution to the advent of the new media. They contend that this is facilitated by:

...new web applications particularly, the so-called Web 2.0 apps, which are considered to have transformed dynamics in political participation and representation. Digital media introduce certain novelties into electoral campaigns because they offer new tools for political communication (ibid).

Owen (2014:10) describes the new media as Internet technologies, such as campaign websites, blogging, Internet fundraising tools and social networking sites, like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. This description renders the new media an abundant source of election information for

an increasing number of voters. Owen's position affirms that of Vergeer et al.'s (2011) description of the new media as being a key feature of Web.2.0, due to its interactivity. According to these scholars, the technology uses the bottom-up approach, focused on sharing content online, collaboration among people online, and enabling socializing online, thereby making it sociable, as against the top-down features associated with the old media. In their summary:

Generic Web 2.0 applications are weblogs, social network services (SNSs such as Twitter, MySpace [www.myspace.com] and Facebook [www.facebook.com]), and sharing sites (e.g. Flickr [www.flickr.com], Picasa [www.picasaweb.google.com], YouTube [www.youtube.com]). Increasingly, Web 2.0 services combine multiple features, making them a one-stop platform for the dissemination of multi-media content, socializing, and blogging. For example, Facebook allows its users to give status updates, share photos, build social networks, and even play games. This is a major advancement as compared to Web 1.0 technology which consisted predominantly of static websites, complicated-and therefore user unfriendly-to maintain, leading to only a limited number of people with more than basic skills being able to produce content online (2011, p479)

This description of the key characteristics of the new media also brings to the fore the distinguishing features that affirm the upgrading of Web 1.0, and the clear difference between them (Webs 1.0 and 2.0) and the traditional media (Radio, Television and print), which formed the core of the media that were widely used in pre-modern political campaigns in the global electoral system. Web 2.0 has added new features of interactivity and the ability to dynamically engage audience members in elections, in addition to flexibility and adaptability, as they can accommodate a wide range of campaign applications. Moreover, they have unique features and applications that have transformed the nature of party activities, e.g., fundraising has offline counterparts, while there are others, like voter-produced election ads (Owen 2014, p9). The upgrades are developments that are considered to be evolutionary from the traditional media, and these digital realms have arguably culminated in the transformation of political communication, but the difference does not banish entirely the role that the old media continue to play in the history of political campaign in the global electoral process.

The old media maintain their traditional application of 'non-interactivity' in reaching out to the electorate. Political actors relied on mails, print and electronic advertising communication

strategies as being appropriate channels of communication in campaigning. The impact of these strategies is still profound, depending especially on the environment and the choice of demography that is adopted by political strategists and communicators. For example, in a dominantly illiterate environment, the old media become very effective in information dissemination (Aronson, 2012). The best option, in this instance, is the adoption of a mixed approach in communications, in terms of strategy, because the use of a digital network strategy has become an integral part of a campaign. Recently, institutional political actors who have incorporated digital media into their communication strategies have engaged in a rapid process of adaptation Lilleker et al. (2015). The relevance of the mixed approach emanates from its multi-faceted nature, e.g., traversing basic planning, from field organizing to fund-raising, from branding/messaging to press relations, and from registering people to vote to getting people out to vote (Michaelsen, 2011, p. 181). The implication is that benefits associated with the old and new media make them more complementary and to the advantage of users, although both have peculiar challenges. For example, the new media, notwithstanding their potentials, had to contend with the old media's core challenges of a top-down, centralized mode of communication that is synonymous with the third, or postmodern, age of political communication (Blumler and Kavanagh, 1999; Norris, 2003). Besides, while television remains the main source of election news for the majority of people, the online sources are gaining popularity (Smith, 2011), meaning both forms of media are appealing to different audiences, with peculiar challenges in the same, or different, settings, and whose communication expectations must be catered for in order not to deny them vital information that might influence their choice and contribution to decision-making. Both types of media thus become a 'back-up system', in view of their complementarity. The Internet, for example, has gone from a supplementary resource for election information to being the main source of news for more than a third of voters during presidential campaigns, and a quarter of voters during midterm elections (Owen, 2014, p5).

The symbiotic relations between the two forms or types of media become clear from the arguments advanced above, which affirm that new and old media's contributions to the enhancement of political communications in campaigns cannot be discredited. Pew (2010), acknowledges this assertion and maintains that it is empirically based that; 'citizens who use social media to engage in politics, are using it in addition to more traditional, established news sources, as opposed to using it as a replacement' (cited in Berry, 2011, p2), They are actively and effectively using social media to influence politicians by communicating their personal opinions on issues, as

well as by posting and signing petitions which reach politicians. The impact of this process in political communication, in the context of political campaign and the overall electoral campaign, cannot be discounted. The impact is profound for electoral democracy, as it has the tendency to not only increase the political participation of citizens, but also decreases the likelihood of there being an authoritarian state (ibid), especially in the formulation of public opinion, but it also enables certain aspects of public opinion to take on special importance, because they can influence the functioning of democratic government (Erickson et. al, 2010).

Arguably, the online world is enhancing deliberations and participation as expected in contemporary democracy, since it offers a space for political engagement to those who might not have been otherwise active (Gibson et al., 2005, p578). This underscores the potential of new media in political campaigning, as Casero-Ripollés et al, (2016) note, saying that digital media offer new potential for political communication and electoral campaigns, especially SNSs. Scholars, like LaMarre and Housholder (2011), add that YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites, responded to the needs of political communicators and political strategists and, have provided political elites with a new way to disseminate information, to mobilize engaged citizens, and to increase political participation.

These potentials transcend geographical boundaries, in that new media have, for instance, attracted attention in global electoral processes since their success in the American Presidential Elections in 2008. The United States' former President, Barack Obama's success in that election is partly attributed to the use of new media in his political strategy. That period marked an inflection point (Bimber 2014; Owen, 2014, p5), and has since influenced the political campaigns and communication strategies of most contemporary democracies.

4.2 New Media in Contemporary Political Campaigns

Historically, the potential of new media as a tool with which to revolutionize political communication in campaigning and other political activities, can be traced back to the days of the Former U.S. President Bill Clinton and his opponents in the US Presidential elections. Rahul (2016) argues that the world witnessed real command of the Internet during the presidential election campaigning in 2000, when, in the US, the Internet provided a new interactive tool for direct conversation between the candidate and voters. From then on, it has been continuously

growing in leaps and bounds, and has become an integral part of communications in political campaigns. Michaelsen (2011) adds credence to this assertion, in his opinion, the evolution of the new media during the last decade has facilitated the transmission of messages in different formats (text, sound, and image). Political events and developments in other parts of the globe attest to the fact that the US created an awareness of the potency of these new media. The uprisings involving the young, and other protests, especially in the Arab World, where the citizenry relied on SNSs to mobilize unending demonstrations against the leaderships and against hardship and dictatorship, indicate that online communication transcends geographical borders, and encourages the formation of transnational communities that are based on shared language, culture, or interests (ibid). For him:

The perception of the Internet as a means for democratisation and development is bound to shape future political expectations and decisions. As a consequence, the new medium increasingly attracts the interest of civil society activists, policy makers, and development organisations. In the US, as in many other Western countries, this has already led to a sharp increase in projects and funds dedicated to harnessing the supposed democratic potential of the Internet (2011, p.10).

This quotation largely confirms the recognition and confidence that stakeholders place in the new media as an emerging tool for communication. Besides, the commitment of resources to the development of new media helps to realize their full potentials, and re-affirms the invaluable role in, and the responsibility they have for, enhancing the course of political communication in contemporary global politics.

However, some scholars believe that new media usage becomes useful when it is backed by effective strategy, because, for example, 'Howard Dean failed to use the Internet as a tool to win elections, as a fringe candidate in the US Democratic nominations contest' (Owen, 2014). According to Owen, Dean's campaign ultimately failed because he used the Internet to make money, as against using it to answer questions around electability and extremism. Besides, there are concerns in connection with the control and regulation of the content of messages emanating from the diversity and focuses of audiences, in that the continuous growth in the number of political actors who can actively participate in a media campaign in the new media era has created challenges for candidates seeking to control their messages.

Michaelsen (2011) and Owen's (2014) observation and expectations of new media may be a concern for the academic world that is looking at experiences in other democracies. Arguably, the benefits of the platforms may be derived from a party organization, mobilization, registration, monitoring an election's result and election results' campaigning, among other political electioneering activities. These benefits are maximized by political stakeholders at different levels in political administrative portfolios.

Rahul (2016) notes that not only do political actors, especially presidential aspirants, strive to capture the media with the intention of establishing political hegemony, but also recognize the potentials of the media as tools for dictating the course of the agenda they orchestrate. This is because many people 'ultimately base their voting decisions on issues projected through the agenda'. He believes that, since social media has immense potential in terms of reach and access to the masses, it is being observed not only as an 'agent of political change' but also as an 'object of hegemony' (2016, p.4).

Aronson (2012) confirms that political actors have realized the potentials of new media because of their use increases across all metrics, and that gives political actors no option but to strategically integrate them into their campaigns. Aronson posits that new media usage is especially prevalent in competitive races and local campaigns, this has the potential to activate competition on Facebook and other social networks, because a small number of votes can make a difference to who wins and who loses (2012, p.180).

The above assertions demonstrate both sides of the digital platforms, but inherent to their arguments is the need for effective strategies to efficiently manage those platforms. In some democratic jurisdictions, these new media were efficiently managed to raise funds to support mobilization and campaign programs, and this was prevalent in the American electoral system. Owen (2014) attests to this in her evaluation of new media in the US electoral campaigns:

...allowing easier access to a wider spread of small money donors, created more direct communication between constituents and their elected officials, allowed groups of small donors to compete with the influence of big money in Washington, and helped millions to get involved and make a difference in the most critical election in modern history (2014, p. 26).

In her assessment, the benefits of the SNSs are not exclusive to one candidate, in that Facebook became a very useful political communication tool for all of the contestants in the American Presidential election, and in other, more minor, elections too:

Facebook, during the 2008 presidential election, demonstrated its ability as a tool for political communication. All the frontrunners in the 2008 primary election had a personal Facebook page, including Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, John McCain, and Mike Huckabee. This platform was a tool they could use to build a fan base (ibid, p.26).

The implication is that a large section of the populace, who are not traditionally media savvy, are indirectly catered to, particularly the youth and the loyalists, or fans, of the ‘politically-minded population’ and individuals, since such platforms have the potential to enhance representation and participation in the electoral system.

However, quoting Habermas (1989), Brundidge (2010) points out that the benefits of the new media, particularly as tools for mobilization and participation, have attracted criticism and have become a major academic theme that questions the extent to which the Internet might contribute to, or detract from, the normative goals of plurality and diversity that are embodied in the concept of ‘deliberative democracy’. Brundidge’s concern provides a lead to various positions from scholars regarding the defects associated with the use of the new media, suggesting that the platforms are equally prone to defects and challenges, and that thus this requires more studies so as to authenticate their full dividend in the overall electoral system. A Tunisian blogger, Sami Ben Gharbia, says that the sudden interest in digital activism, the politicization of cyberspace, and the proliferation of funding, affect the independence, autonomy, and authenticity that have characterized online initiatives in the Arab world so far. His concerns become more serious if we consider the involvement of the giant private companies, like Google and Facebook, whose ‘Internet Freedom Agenda’ (a new strategy for advancing the geopolitical and economic interests of the West) provides more impetus for activists and a proportion of the political stakeholders (2010).

In Africa, the Kenyan post-election crisis of 2007 is considered a typical example of the abuse of new media. Research on the incident revealed that new communication technologies actually exacerbated conflict and violence (Goldstein and Rotich 2008, BBC 2008). Evgeny

Morozov, in his detailed rebuttal of ‘cyber-optimism’, advanced the view that ‘a mere focus on information freedom and technology access neglects the way authoritarian rulers are using the Internet for propaganda purposes, online surveillance, and targeted censorship’ (cited in Micahaelsen, 2011, p.13). His argument ties in with the ‘vertical’ communication that is usually associated with political despots in that a one-sided approach to supporting net-activism would risk not only a waste of funds and resources, but would also carry dangers for the very activists at whom the assistance is directed (Morozov, 2011, in Micahaelsen, 2011; Vergeer et al, 2011). This situation throws more doubt on the positive dividends expected from new media usage because, in their opinion, political parties and political actors, although they recognize the communicative potential offered by the Internet, they are yet to acknowledge whether all the new possibilities offered, for example, exchange of information and opinions in discussion formats such as weblogs and social networking sites [SNSs]), will result in changing trends in political involvement (ibid, p478).

The arguments above notwithstanding, Nielsen (2011) believes social network tools have evidently reflected the success of the political strategies adopted by some political actors. He contends that ‘the integration of these tools has increased in campaigns to the point of becoming something natural and quotidian that is taken for granted as ‘mundane Internet tools’ (cited in Casero-Ripollés et.al (2016). This contention further reinforces the arguments on the complementary nature of the new media, they play hand in hand with the traditional media to reap maximum value for the enhancement of the electoral process, effectively establishing a connection or link for stakeholders in the campaign process. Aronson (2012), confirms this. In his opinion:

New media creates a sense of digital intimacy between the candidate and the voters and therefore, new media influences the public’s opinion of political candidates. It does this by helping to facilitate the candidate’s relationships with the public through online communication and direct dialogue such as texting or twitter. This in turn can frame the public persona of a candidate (2012, p.166).

This reflects a likelihood of familiarity, and the net result is mutuality, yielding enthusiasm. and offers to actors and participants the zeal to mobilize in order to increase the fan base of political institutions. This kind of direct communication between politicians and voters helps to build public support and involvement in a campaign, and it demonstrates the potential hat new media have as a tool with which to build and shape public opinion (Aronson, 2012).

4.3 Conclusion

The media's role in society has been acknowledged, especially its recognition as a tool for information dissemination in political communication. Its role in politics is critical, and is fundamentally focused on effecting social change by strengthening the public sphere, promoting participation and representation, amongst other things, in a democratic setting (Lazaroiu, 2012). This chapter discusses their (both old and new) relevance in political campaigning as platforms for reaching out to the citizenry. Specifically, the significance of *New and Old Media as Tools in Political Campaigns* and *New Media and Contemporary Political Campaigning* were explored with a view to analyzing the complexities emanating from their uses in contemporary democracy. It has been established that both forms of media (New and Old) are hokey platforms that are harnessed by political stakeholders in pursuit of various political activities. It has also been established that citizenry's reliance on media for information does not negate the fact that political actors, given the opportunity, can sometimes activate the media's potency to pursue negative campaigns, which could be viewed as media biases (ibid). The media's role, therefore, remains indispensable in contemporary political campaigns, and in electoral processes in general, particularly in this era of digitization. Besides, both media are associated with peculiarities that are occasioned by the specific era.

Each era was thus an improvement on the previous ones, as indicated by scholars such as Karlsen (2009) and Stromback (2007), they all enhanced deliberation and participation by creating improved platforms within the public sphere. 'The postmodern campaign, introduced in the early 1990s, is characterized by the introduction of information and communication technology (ICT), especially the Internet' (Karlsen, 2009; Stromback 2007; cited in Vergeer et al., 2011, p. 480). Both had their limitations but, in the context of campaigners, digital tools have become so central to organization, performance, and the day-to-day workings of a campaign, that they are not seen as separate elements of that campaign. However, the choice of new media's modernized technology does not negate the potency of the old media, which are referred to as the traditional media. Effectively, irrespective of time and environment, both forms of media's functions

essentially remain a key mover in political campaign communication, except for the inevitable changes that are normally mediated by the influences and impact of technological development.

Although both media are relevant and, in fact, are very effective tools for political communication, especially the new media, in view of the fact that its introduction was timely in dealing with the exigencies posed by developments in political campaigns, there are inherent challenges that inhibit the realization of their full potentials. Arguably, most studies have not been very focused on the critical need to explore extensively their deficiencies, such as illiteracy, bad network connectivity, the lack of regulations to ensure the judicious use of the platforms, and inequity, in terms of distribution and availability, which is caused by poverty, amongst other things. This poverty conundrum could be resolved through more education to help raise living standards and when there is more funds made available to access such media.

It is obvious that digital campaigns have been very effective in Western democracies and, as noted in the arguments, they (Western democracies) are endowed with resources and the requisite expertise to help evolve effective strategies with which to ensure success in usage. The situation is different in developing democracies, especially in Africa, due to the lack of resources, culminating in most of the challenges mentioned. These challenges create gaps in the arguments above, and they thus trigger the need for more research into the role of old and new media in digital campaigning from a global perspective.

As indicated earlier in Chapter Two, digital campaigning in Africa has yet to match up to the standards pertaining in western democracies. This makes Ndlela and Mano's (2020) questions, as to whether Africa has joined the trend in modern, digitally enhanced campaigns on the trajectory to democratic consolidation, relevant. Judging from the state of digitalization in general, and the penetration of social media into the continent, they doubt whether:

access to and use of technologies is universal, in that Africa has to battle with national factors such as media regulations, social media policies, journalism cultures, political cultures, audience and consumption patterns which affect access to the new media (ibid, 2).

Consequently, the continent's digital campaigns, and digitalization transformation processes in general, can be described as having mixed fortunes, in terms of availability and accessibility.³

There is a need, therefore, for further research, focusing on the global use of digital platforms in electoral democracies in order to determine the roles of new and old media in political campaigns and political communication in the era of digitalization. Such studies must consider a variety of variables, more especially in the challenges that account for disparities in both the Western and the developing democracies, but do social media have any meaningful impact on political campaigns in Africa?

³ See p.33 for statistics relating on Internet penetration in Africa.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING IN AFRICA

5.0 Introduction

The wind of democratization blowing across Africa over the last two decades has influenced the dynamics of governance. One key factor that is driving this phenomenon may be attributed to the role of the media, especially social media. The advent of new media technologies has transformed the communication process, making it more direct, fast and complex, besides the added benefit of shrinking the world and expanding access at the same time (Rahul, 2016).

The social media are regarded as a communication platform that affords patrons the opportunity to gather and disseminate information to a wide audience without interference or restrictions. This ties in with Boyd and Ellison's (2008) description of social media as SNSs, where users can create profiles and share information. They describe those social media as:

...web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd and Ellison, 2008, p211).

The advantages make the platforms relevant as an interactive communications tool (Berry, 2011) for effective deliberations which may be vital elements for enhancements in participation in a modern democracy. Their versatility and unrestricted nature, as explained in earlier discussions, warrant an exploration of their impact in the wake of rapid integration into political communication strategies in political campaigns and electoral democracy in Africa.

In this discussion, attempts have been made to examine the relation between social media and politics, and how the digital platforms impact upon political campaigning. The enquiry has also become necessary in that 'Social media extends the bounds of traditional news formats by allowing users to actively engage with the content as well with as their sources' (LaMarre and Housholder, 2011, p.10).

How political stakeholders maximise ‘social networking sites including political blogs (e.g., huffingtonpost.com), interactive political news sites (e.g., Washingtonpost.com), public policy and activist sites (e.g., democracynow.org), political party and candidate portals (e.g., rnc.org, barackobama.com), and government-produced media (e.g., westwing.gov) (LaMarre and Housholder, 2011, p4),

Political activities, but especially campaigning, have been analyzed in this discussion, with reference to the African situation.

5.1 Social Media and Politics

There is no doubt that the media have evolved over the years, broadening the scope of debate and creating space for communicators, and for the audience in general. The evolution permeates all aspects of the social spectrum, business, governance, technology and politics, amongst others. Equally, it has facilitated information dissemination and influenced the pattern and form of content in anticipation of meeting the expectations of audiences that depend mostly on the media (old and new), as key sources of information. From monitoring elections and addressing issues, such as unemployment and corruption, to providing humanitarian aid during crises-new media have been used in an array of instances around the world in the last decade (Schreiner, 2015). For example, the social media innovations that rose to prominence in the United States’ 2008 presidential contest, became standard practice in the 2010 midterm elections and set the stage for the development of political applications for handheld devices (Owen, 2008). Primarily, political actors must embrace the seemingly herculean responsibilities of diversifying political campaign strategies and other electoral elements so as to meet the exigencies of the media, as mediated by rapid technological advancement.

Aronson opined that political campaign strategies, in terms of media usage, must be diversified because, with each passing election cycle since 1994, the proportion of political candidates using online media as an integral part of their campaign strategy has steadily increased (2012, p. 150).

Effectively, the advent of the new media, especially the Internet and digital platforms. like Facebook, and You Tube, and other SNSs. like Twitter and Instagram, seem to have broadened the media space and further activated the discourse in the political participation and campaigning

in the political electoral system globally. This assertion becomes more relevant, considering the relationship between new media and social media. Aronson's consideration of social media as an appendage of the new media clearly confirms the invaluable role of social media in modern political communication, in that the 'new media epitomise the value of social networking online that allows users to contribute and control content as well as to initiate contact with other users' (2012, p. 149). Arguably, SNSs may cater for the need for the instantaneous quality that transmits news and publicizes events constantly, as would be expected in the political campaign realm. These are manifested in all aspects of global communications, as Rahul (2016) argues, in that the use of Internet, ranging from e-mailing and e-commerce to e – governance. The implication, Rahul (2016) argues that the Internet has narrowed the communication space within a specific public sphere, irrespective of time and space. Rahul maintains that social engagement in socio-political activities, and people's proactive participation in the political agenda, are also increased through social media and the viral usage of networking. Social media have increased public opinion with an increased knowledge base amongst the masses. Social media sites, such as Twitter, have encouraged people to express and politically involve themselves, through the use of media tools, be it laptop or mobile phone (2016, p2). This is suggestive of the fact that, although the availability and accessibility of social media underscore the assertion that the platforms have largely assumed the expectation of being modern tools for communication, invariably, this has become debatable, because the flexibility and unrestrictive nature of the platforms not only create more space and encourage participation and the enhancement of mobilization, but are also associated with problems like professional ethics and the abuse of free speech, in some democratic settings in the electoral system.

The social media, since their inception in the early 21st century, have influenced political participation across the globe, especially in countries where electoral democracy prevails. They have become more impactful, even in countries where democratic governance is being thwarted via tyranny and despotic machinations. By disseminating suppressed information and political critique, they bring more transparency to the acts and decisions of the political elite and they facilitate the formation of alternative political opinions (Michaelsen, 2011, p. 16). Owen (2010), quoting Shao Quan-Haase (2010), confirms that social media use fulfils needs, including, enhancing social connectedness, self-expression, sharing problems, sociability, relationship

maintenance, and self-actualization. In a study on ‘new media and political campaigns’, she concluded, that:

Campaign reporting is no longer the exclusive province of professional journalists, as bloggers and average citizens cover events and provide commentary that is widely available. Voters look to new media as primary sources of information and participate actively in campaigns through digital platforms (Owen, 2014, p2).

Similarly, ‘Unlike the mainstream media it is providing a pluralistic platform to people and, also setting agenda other than the agenda set by ‘paid and sponsored formal media’ (Rahul, 2016, p2). The arguments from these scholars attest to the assumption and belief that the social media are providing alternatives, in terms of information, news sources and varieties of channels for information dissemination. These enrich deliberations and encourage participation, as they broaden debates around participatory democracy.

New media’s impact on politics can be described as a revolution in electoral politics within the sphere and realm of American political practices (Owen 2014). A study by Aronson confirms Facebook’s position, that ‘social media is often a better predictor of election results than how much money a candidate raised and spent’ (2012, p. 179). He cites Facebook’s findings on the impact of new media on ‘election results’, which indicate that in the 42 local election races that Facebook analyzed, the winner had more ‘likes’ but less money, establishing that new media outreach can either have an impact on election results, or may correlate to a certain margin of victory (ibid, p.181). According to Aronson:

The evidence from our analyses provides a compelling case that Facebook played an important role in the 2006 congressional races and that social networking sites had the capability of affecting the electoral process... Facebook seems to be one more tool that candidates can use to connect with voters and make a favourable impression. (Williams and Gulati, 2011, cited in Aronson, 2012, p. 160)

These results confirm the potency and relevance of social media in the day to day affairs of society, and establish the fact that its complementary role has come to further enhance communication in every aspect of societal endeavors, including politics.

Yet, social media still has a long way to go before it becomes effective enough to play a significant role in influencing people's decision to vote or vice versa. To an extent, the younger generation seems to be quite influenced by social media, whereas the older generation is still trying to come to terms with it (Rahul, 2016, p3).

This further ignites the debate on the full potentials of SNSs and the categories of users, judging that interests for the platforms resonate with the youthful population. Besides, it establishes that new media are not without blemish, and emerging democracies, including those in Africa, need to be guided by the experiences of most of the developed democracies worldwide.

5.2 Social Media as Tools of Communication in African Political Campaigns

In Africa, as in developing democracies elsewhere, social media have become a 'household name', in fact, they can be considered to be one of the key movers for the continent's socio-economic and political engagement. Areas of interest which have heightened their uses, are their interactivity and instant feedback, particularly for mobilization, organization and the dissemination of information in electoral activities. Makama (2015), writing a comparison of social media penetration in Africa and India, reveals, that India had 103 million social media users at the time of his study from a population of over 815 million people; while 93 million are on Facebook and 33 million on Twitter. These statistics, however, represented mainly a middle class, just as in Nigeria. For him, Indian politicians were aware of those statistics and effectively utilized them by incorporating digital platforms into their campaign strategies.

Although not much empirical study has been conducted on how social media is used in Africa, the available statistics suggest social media is being maximized for socio-economic and political advantages. A study by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has established that Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are very effective in persuasion, judging from their impact on the Arab Spring Uprising. These platforms and networks have the potential to influence politics. This is also true of the political sphere in Sub-Saharan Africa, although one might argue that the potential is not yet fully exploited (Schreiner, 2015). According to Schreiner, global Internet penetration has,

in the past 10 years grow seven-fold, from 6.5 percent to 43 percent, indicating the growing importance and attention the social media are attracting in the day-to-day activities of society⁴.

In Africa, it was established in 2015 that one in five people had access to the Internet, compared to only ten percent in 2010 (ITU, 2015, ICT Facts and Figures - The World in 2015). Increasing use of the Internet in Africa seemingly corresponds to the craze for more people to adopt social networking tools, like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter. At the same time, the use of social media is growing at an incredible speed (Schreiner, 2015). For example, in June 2015, Facebook counted 120 million active users across Africa, of which over 80% were accessing the platform using mobile devices (BBC Afrique, 2015, 'Facebook ouvre un bureau en Afrique'). In Senegal, for example, social media helped mobilize people during the water shortage crisis in Dakar, the capital, in September 2013. Using Twitter, protests were launched against the government and the City of Dakar's lack of action to solve the problem. The platform also helped to locate neighborhoods where water was still available (Jeune Afrique, 2013).

Adeiza explored the impact of digital media on democracy consolidation, and examined the state governorship election in Ekiti, Nigeria. According to him, that election presented an interesting case for exploring the interaction between politics and the use of digital media by politicians. 'The preliminary findings indicated that the winner of the election was able to use digital media to his advantage while framing them as elitist tools. The candidates framed and used digital media differently during the election' (2014, p. 10). Similarly, social media use in Liberia and Nigeria helped fill the gaps in the traditional media, which had an inadequate presence in those countries, while also acting as watchdogs over politicians who might have otherwise attempted to rig elections (Smyth and Best, 2013). They also argue that the speed of information sharing on social media may have reduced the level of suspicion of malpractice, and ensured the acceptance of the election results (ibid).

⁴ Global Internet user penetration 2014-2021, indicated that, in 2017, 46.8 percent of the global population accessed the Internet. This figure is projected to grow to 53.7 percent in 2021. Clement, J. (2019). Worldwide Internet user penetration from 2014 to 2021. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/325706/global-Internet-user-penetration> /Accessed 27/06/2020

In Ghana, the political campaign strategies of the parties have been influenced by social media since the country's 2008 electoral elections. 'Politicians do not seem to underestimate the power of social media to galvanize, canvass and rake-in floating voters and keep their loyal supporters up-to-date with information and news' (Penplusbytes, 2017). It is not only politicians, but also the general citizenry who are in tune with the relevance of social networking platforms, as there are more than five million (5,171,993) Internet users in Ghana, representing 19.6% of the population, while Ghana's Facebook user base is about 1,211,760 (Penplusbytes, 2017). The Ghanaian experience predicted a massive use of social media in the 21st century (ibid). A study by Penplusbytes (2016) reveals that Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are not just innovations in the Internet world, but are fast becoming influencers and opinion creators:

The use of these tools in Ghana's politics has seen a phenomenal increase in recent times. As of 2017, 34% of the total number of Facebook users in Ghana are between the ages of 25-35, with 41% between 18-24 years of age. The effect of social media cannot therefore be brushed away in the 2016 elections in Ghana (ibid).

Besides, as of April, 2020, the Social Media Statistics in Ghana stood at, 'Facebook, 42.96% Twitter 29.38%, Pinterest, 12.6%, Instagram, 10.15%, YouTube, 4.49%, reddit, 0.11% (Startcounter, 2020), indicating an increase in social media usage, although this was not specific in terms of their usage for political activities.

However, revelations emanating from the study from Penplusbytes' statistics, underscored the extent to which social networking platforms are impacting on Ghana's electoral processes. Indeed, Ghana's 2016 elections confirmed the complementary role of digital platforms as major tools for information dissemination. The two major political parties, NDC and NPP, were visible on all major social networking platforms, especially Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. They consistently posted statements and 'planted stories', and photos of candidates, as well as audio - and audio-visual materials of party activities. Other political contestants, for example, the CPP, PNP and PPP, also used new media for their campaigns, but not to the extent that they were used by the NDC and NPP. Effectively, the social media became key sources of news and information for the traditional media, as evidenced in the print media and various political shows and programs from both radio and television. For example, social media were quoted as the leading sources of

stories in most newspaper review programs on radio and television. This presupposes that the media were dictating the pace in terms of what to discuss in the media space, therefore the party, or individuals who clearly captured the media, particularly the social media, stood to have the advantage of maximizing to the full the media influence on various audiences. Rahul confirms this assertion:

This is an undeniable fact that media helped set the issue agenda for the campaign and that agenda dictated the issues on which many people ultimately based their voting decisions. The modern political system is more based on this premise and thus different political parties try to have access over different media economically as well. Since social media has immense potential, in terms of reach and access to the masses, it is being observed not only as an ‘agent of political change’ but also as an ‘object of hegemony (ibid, 2016, p4).

The youth of Africa, like their contemporaries in the Western World, are fast embracing social media as a major tool of communication, and this warrants a candid reflection on the extent to which social media is influencing their activities. Schreiner (2015) confirms this, with reference to some disturbing developments that occurred in the Arab world. ‘Since the Arab Spring, the role of social media in influencing political action by young people has gained increasing attention’ (ibid). Schreiner opines that although social media did not cause the revolution, Facebook and Twitter were undoubtedly important platforms for mobilizing the crowds (2015d). Today, 50 per cent of the African population is under 20 years old, according to UNICEF (UNICEF, 2014, Generation 2030 Africa, p. 18).

These revelations and statistics confirm that additional space created in the media has further enhanced interactivity among an emerging group of new media enthusiasts, who combine skills and creativity in their form and style of communications. Invariably, this gives clearer indications of the need for media users, especially political communicators and political strategists, to review their strategies in terms of channels of communication and choice of audiences, for messages and information dissemination that meet the needs of this dynamic category of voters. This validates Zickuhr’s (2010) position on the dynamism of audiences for categories of media in the face of social media’s evolution. According to him, ‘early political Internet users were younger,

male, and educated. However, as the audiences for new election media have expanded exponentially, they increasingly resemble the general population' (Zickuhr, 2010, Owen, 2014).

Consequently, Africa's democracy and electoral systems will be enhanced as the increase in space provides fertile ground for effective political participation and mobilization. Owen sees this as being close to reality, in that younger and more educated people are the most inclined to use the more pioneering platforms (2014, p. 11). These benefits notwithstanding, 'enthusiasm over new media developments in campaigns can at times overshadow the reality that the audiences, for all but a few political media sites, are generally small' (Hindman, 2009) and use of the most innovative campaign applications can be slight (Owen 2011a, 2011b, cited in Owen, 2014).

Similarly, the social media's complementary role in information dissemination is worth considering in terms of its functions in promoting effective political communication in the contemporary electoral process. It is on record that media managers and practitioners in the traditional media, recognizing the drastic drift of the audience towards the use of digital media, especially the youth and the most educated adults, have redefined their strategies by incorporating new media as, key vehicles for information dissemination. This is evident, e.g., in a first quarter report on Ghana's Social Media Index (SMI) report. In 2017:

With a focus on assessing the activities and performances of well over 350 radio stations, 60 newspapers and 34 TV stations, to discover the extent to which they are harnessing social media as a new generation of dissemination tool, the SMI report endorses Facebook's status as the most popular social media tool in Ghana, with greater patronage than Twitter. There is, indeed, more Ghanaian radio, TV and newspaper presence on Facebook than there are on Twitter. (www.penplusbytes.org: accessed (2017, p. 11).

In effect, the use of social media has become a universally indispensable tool and part of a new strategy for political communication, in terms of campaigning and other political activities. As evidenced in the index, Ghanaian political parties, and some election management bodies, have increased their reliance on social media in order to engage their electorates, particularly ahead of the 2016 General Elections (ibid). Penplusbytes argues that:

... the power of social media is fast becoming very ubiquitous, particularly in politics, as a major source of news for many citizens and, affects voting behaviour because it allows for cheap access to the

production and consumption of current information without editorial filtering (2016, p4).

This underscores the argument that social media's interactive and accessible advantages, potentially widen the media space, broaden political activities and encourage the divergent views that are needed to broaden the political discourse. Danju and Maasoglu (2013) confirm that the craze for social media facilitated the mobilization of the masses in the 2011 revolt in North Africa and in the Arab world in general. According to these scholars, the digital media created an appropriate channel through use of which the masses could vent their anger on the challenges of autocracy and democracy, which provided fertile ground for despots whose rule attacked free expression and bred corruption, a lack of jobs, especially for the youth, amongst other things. 'The participants demand democracy to get rid of corrupt autocratic rulers, end the corruption in government, fair elections, freedom of expression, social justice, dignity, and job opportunity for a well-educated young population' (ibid, p679). Similarly, social media-YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook-along with online bloggers and mobile phones, all played an important role in communicating, coordinating and mobilizing government oppositions and mass revolts across the Middle East and North Africa (Cottle, 2011).

Using the media effectively and efficiently becomes the priority of every society. This is an expectation, especially for political communicators in pursuit of their political parties' agendas in campaigns and other activities. They aspire not only to educate, formulate and shape public opinion, but also to help in developing the political consciousness of citizens, who otherwise do not have the capacity to understand critical political issues. These concerns reaffirm that there will always be a marginalized group among the citizenry, whose civic expectations must be catered for, hence, the ability of political parties to reach out to citizens with timely, accurate and important information becomes imperative for the effective functioning of every democratic state (Penplusbytes, 2016).

However, Africa's challenges of poverty, lack of adequate communication infrastructure, and inequality in terms of status, among others, cannot be shelved in the debate on social media and political communication, especially on the way that social media is impacting on the electoral process. For example, a study in Ghana revealed that social media is driven largely by fast Internet connectivity, and therefore there is a need to improve Internet services across the country to enable

the effective use of social media for political communication (Penplusbytes, 2016). These challenges are setbacks that hinder the smooth application of digital platforms, as shared by some scholars, particularly judging from the deficiencies associated with traditional media. For instance, Owen posits that:

Since the traditional media have already an establishment and there are factors such as technological barriers, availability, accessibility, affordability and, time resources, along with issues of socialization in the urban areas, a digital divide prevails that limits the role of social media in political campaigns (2006, p5).

These are among a myriad of challenges that shape the use of social media in most developing democracies, including those in Africa.

5.3 Conclusion

The discussion has centered on the impact of social media on political campaigns in Africa, putting the 'social media' into perspective as they relate to politics. An attempt was also made to explore how social media have been used to execute political activities, indirectly comparing the African situation with western democracies. It is clear from the discussions that digital platforms are influencing the trajectory of democracy in Africa in the midst of the challenges posed by technological advancement. As Rahul (2016) argues, technology changes the communication process with a change in itself, and the advent of new media technologies has transformed the communication process, making it more direct, fast and complex, besides the added benefit of shrinking the world and expanding access at the same time. However, challenges such as technological barriers, inadequate technological infrastructure and accessibility, as well as affordability, create a digital divide, thereby limiting the role of SNSs in political campaigns in Africa. However, the advantages of versatility, interactivity and their unrestrictive nature create alternative platforms that encourage the deliberations and participation needed for mobilization and organization in political activities, and this makes social media a potential driver of the development of political communication and mobilization in both democratic and undemocratic environments. The role of social media in the success of the 2011 revolt in North Africa, and the

Arab world in general, evidently justifies the potentials of the platforms in Africa's course of nurturing and consolidating democracy.

However, the fact that the benefits of social media are bedevilled with deficiencies is, to some extent, an admission that more research is needed to deal with such exigencies. Most of the existing literature on the way that digitization and, specifically, the social media, are impacting on political campaigning in Africa and developing democracies has not adequately addressed issues relating to the low rate of technology literacy, poor ICT infrastructure, the lack of widespread accessibility to the Internet, among other challenges. Besides, it cannot be entirely credible that youth activism and participation in politics and political campaigning may be due to the high rate of patronage of digital platforms by the youth, because such activities may not result in a significant impact on political changes (Abbot et al., 2011). In the opinion of Dini and Saebo (2016):

The inclusion of young people in the political sphere is important for the emergence of democracy. While some argued that citizens who use social media effectively and efficiently are more likely to participate in political discourses, contradictory results indicate that social media do not substantively encourage political talk among the politically apathetic youth, but may contribute to the broader democratic goal, with a good support system from other stakeholders (2016, p2701).

Effectively, users of digital media, in general, may come into contact with politically-based information via their mobile phones and other digital devices, in view of the intrusive nature of the Internet, but there is no guarantee that users will succumb to such 'uninvited' information. What are worth considering are the challenges associated with the dynamism in social media technologies, this calls for research into the rapid development in technology and its ramifications for online social inequality and digital disparities, especially for people with disabilities, whose condition often marginalizes them from participation in the political discourse and other political engagement (Karkin, 2014).

Research would potentially provide empirical data to help fill the gaps in most of the studies, and provide evidence for the claim that the adoption of social media portends an effective political campaign for successful electoral fortunes, or otherwise. Social media are potential tools to promote public participation and ensure effective information dissemination in any recognized

democratic setting, in that it creates convenient and accessible platforms for the fertilization of ideas, and this is critical in political campaign organization and mobilization, since it helps the citizenry to make informed decisions.

CHAPTER SIX

POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING IN GHANA

(The Nature of Political Campaign in Ghana: Before and After Independence)

6.0 Introduction

Political campaigns form an important element in democratic processes. They can be considered a key process and a vehicle for the execution of political strategies, because they provide an appropriate platform for political actors in any political election to interact with the citizenry, especially in disseminating information. Kam (2006) confirms that political elections have become very necessary, in view of their potentials to offer the electorate, and citizens in general, the opportunity to make a choice in terms of leadership and government. She views political elections as a basic tenet of the electoral process by ‘offering citizens the opportunity to determine who will govern’ (Schumpeter, 1942, in Kam 2006, p. 931). For Kam, political elections bring in their wake mixed fortunes for political actors and the governed, because they strengthen democracy by holding the elected accountable to the electorate and undermine democracy at the same time (ibid). Kam’s position, to a large extent, confirms that political campaign is an indispensable tool, irrespective of the environment in which democracy thrives therefore it must be practicably evidenced in any multiparty-oriented society, including Ghana, which is touted as the beacon of democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa.

As indicated in Chapter 2, political campaigning has changed over the last two decades, as reflected in the ways organization, strategies, channels of communications, the electoral systems and modes of message transmission and technology, amongst other things, have changed. The transformation has been occasioned by a combination of factors, so it becomes necessary to explore and identify the extent of transformation, bearing in mind the basic indicators that drive the campaign process. ‘Political campaigning has undergone such a radical transformation that those principles and practices that were accepted by practitioners and theorists even 15 years ago, are largely irrelevant today (Trent and Friedenber, 2000, p4). This could be attributed to certain

legitimate factors; a decline in the influence of political parties; electoral financing legislation; political action committees and technological advancements, which have all combined to change contemporary political campaigns (ibid, p.5) in the context of the American political parties' campaign system. The implication is that the transformation may be reflected in every aspect of campaign processes and activities, hence the need to pursue the scholarly argument in the context of features that characterize changes and a rationale for political campaigns, especially in an evolving democracy like Ghana. This finds space in Norris's (2000) assertion that the transformation of campaigns can be determined based on three different models that are mediated by distinct use of communications; the pre-modern or direct campaign, the modern, and the post-modern campaign. She argues that all the models have their individual features that distinguish them, in their campaign eras, from one another, and that, in the pre-modern campaign, newspapers and direct face –to-face communication at rallies and meetings were dominant (ibid). Modern campaigning is characterized by the increased use of national television and advertising. The postmodern campaign, introduced in the early 1990s, is characterized by the introduction of information and communication technology (ICT), especially the Internet (Karlsen, 2009; Stromback, 2007 in Vergeer et al., 2011, p. 480).

The above 'campaign seasons' confirm that campaigns were influenced by technological development and, specifically, by communications tools and platforms, that have, directly or indirectly, lead to the transformation of information dissemination in campaigns that are especially dependent on the century's emerging communication tools, as evidenced in the emergence of SNSs, like Facebook, etc., in the 21st century. Arguably, SNSs have taken campaigns to a different level in contemporary political campaigning by providing candidates with a personal platform on which people who are interested in them can link up, become a member of the candidate's online social circle and, by doing so, interact with the candidate more closely (Lilleker and Malagon, 2010). The interactive features embedded in SNSs not only promote quality in representation, but also enhance participation by creating more space in the modern public sphere. That notwithstanding, there is the possibility that new technology could equally create some deficits in political campaigning, and in the electoral system in general.

Besides, the adoption of new methods of political communication has, to some extent, contributed to factors that continue to influence electoral campaigning. These are a mix of communication and advertising communication tools that are powered by expertise in Public Relations, advertising, marketing and communications. This is described by experts as the ‘professionalization or Americanization’ of campaigns; and signals the introduction of skills and specializations into the planning and execution of campaigns, and, this has taken the campaign process to a more effective level, probably for the better (Farrell, 1996; Mancini and Swanson, 1996). These scholars contend that political campaign management has changed fundamentally over the last two decades, describing the trend as a process of modernization, professionalization, and as a trend from being labor intensive to being capital-intensive campaigns.

Similarly, campaigning has been influenced by intelligence, especially political and marketing intelligence. This strategy transforms the skills in the design, testing, and the redesign of the campaign messages, suggesting that political campaigning has taken a new approach. In measuring the professionalization of political campaigning, Gibson and Römmele (2012, p2) confirm that ‘over the past two decades, a new style of political campaigning has been identified by a range of scholars working in the parties, elections and communication field’. They argue, for example, that although the new forms of campaign are identified by different names and labels in the US and UK, there is basic agreement among scholars on the essential ingredients of the new approach, which can be summarized as increased ‘professionalization’ (ibid, in Norris 2000; Swanson and Mancini, 1996).

Consequently, it becomes necessary to thoroughly interrogate the evolution of campaigns in Ghana, in view of their checkered political history, vis-à-vis transition from colonialism to independence in 1957, and the nature of post-independence political campaigns which were interrupted by military regimes amidst intermittent military coup d’états until the attainment of political stability in 1992. Effectively, the end of the coups marked another era in Ghana’s democratic history, and thus ushered in the current Fourth Republic and more than two decades of an uninterrupted democratic dispensation. Successive democratic elections in Ghana in 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008, resulted in two peaceful transfers of power between the major political parties (in 2000 and 2008), as well as in continuing improvements in the performance of Ghana’s formal institutions, notably the Electoral Commission (EC), the judiciary, the security forces and

the media (Jockers et al., 2010, p96). This amply reaffirms the assumption that democracy thrives when it is firmly supported by institutions of governance, especially when their independence and freedoms are respected and upheld by the government.

It becomes imperative, therefore, to explore how political campaigning fares in Ghana, especially in the era of digitalization. In doing this, a *short history of politics in Ghana* has been highlighted in this discussion, with a view to tracking the political events that have shaped the trajectory of the country's democracy. In doing so, attempts have also been made to establish the connection between, *Political Campaigns in Ghana before and after Independence*, and the nature of the campaign strategies employed by political stakeholders. Similarly, attempts have been made to explore the *exploitation of incumbency and the effects of campaigns*.

6.1 Short History of Politics in Ghana

Ghana's democracy is fashioned alongside the western model, specifically, the American Presidential System, and is spiced with the Parliamentary flavors of her colonial masters, the British. She operates a hybrid presidential-parliamentary system. These relationships seem to have influenced her political system, especially political campaigns, in terms of the organization and execution of the campaign agenda.

The campaign system before independence was dominated by agitations, courting for recognition of leadership, and pockets of violence among the parties acting as a front for the campaign for the independence of Ghana. This scenario was the result of long years of colonialism and imperialism, during which the colonialists completely took charge of the socio-economic development of their colonies. Events after the Second World War served as a springboard for the educated elites, who had had a feel of Western education and had tasted democracy and multi-party rule, especially in the West. These developments possibly created fertile ground for the political elites, as they capitalized on the emotions of those disillusioned and angry soldiers who felt cheated by the colonial masters after fighting alongside the British forces in the World-Wars. These reasons partially influenced the formation of political parties in the 1940s.

Arthur (2009), quoting Gyimah-Boadi and Debrah (2008, p.127), confirmed that the ripple effects of the wars, and the subsequent agitation from the colonies, especially the British colonies, could not be discounted when it comes to Ghana's political campaign narratives, indicating that the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) was the first political party to be formed, on 4th August, 1947. For him; 'The UGCC advertised itself as a nationwide political organization, working to ensure that, by all legislative and constitutional means in the shortest possible time, the control of the government should pass into the hands of the people and their chiefs' (2009, p. 49). Arthur also maintains Morrison's (2004) position, that the UGCC was under the umbrella of the Danqua-Busia group, predominantly merchants, businessmen and intellectuals, who reflected the moderate, liberal, Western-oriented interests of their class. According to him:

The tradition of the CPP continued under the banner of the Progress Party, which won the 1969 elections under the leadership of Kofi Abrefa Busia in Ghana's Second Republic. The Popular Front Party (PFP), led by Victor Owusu, and the United National Convention (UNC), led by William Ofori-Atta, which lost the 1979 elections to Dr. Hilla Limann's People's National Party (PNP) in the Third Republic, also emerged from this tradition (ibid).

This establishes that there were other political parties whose contribution shaped the political parties campaign history in Ghana. Arthur's elaboration also, concretizes the crucial role that political parties played in Ghana, both before and after independence, and, more especially, the role of the CPP that is described by historians as an offshoot of UGCC and was the second political party to be established in Ghana. For Fobih (2008), the CPP, led by Osagyefo Dr. Nkrumah, was formed in 1949 as a left-wing inclined party and succeeded in leading Ghana to independence after defeating the UGCC and other opposition parties in the 1951, 1954 and 1956 elections (p. 49-50). These developments were characterized and preceded by intense confrontations, violence and agitation, which are considered to be the hallmarks of Ghana's political campaigns before, during and after the elections.

Historically, therefore, the UGCC began agitation for self-government in a 'progressive form', but some forces within the party, led by Ghana's first President, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, broke away from UGCC to form another political party, the CPP, which declared that it wanted 'self- government now'. According to Gyimah-Boadi and Debrah, 2008, p. 127; Fobih,

2008), Nkrumah's CPP led a government style of campaigning and was populist inclined, and that played on the emotions of the lower classes in Ghanaian society. 'The CPP had had a populist vision and a strategy of mobilizing the inchoate grievances of workers, women, school leavers, and others' (Arthur, 2009 p.50).

There is every indication, as seen above, that antagonism, mistrust and violence became dominant traditions in Ghana's politics, even after independence. This ties in with Arthur's arguments that:

... the axes and their traditions were in the forefront of political activity in the country before and immediately after independence, but for a greater part of the period since the 1950s, Ghana has been under authoritarian military and one-party rule (2009, p50).

Ghana's democracy, as stated earlier, was interrupted by a series of military interventions until 1992, when she re-embraced democratic rule. This shift, for Arthur, was the result of internal and external pressures on the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government, which took power on 31st December, 1981, by a military coup, Ghana embarked on its transition to liberal democratic rule (ibid).

The strategies adopted by Ghanaian political parties for campaigns, mobilization and other electoral processes, according to Young (2004), were a common feature in African states in their quest to gain freedom from their colonial masters. 'Their impact reflected in the achievement of independence as a defining historical moment culminating in an epic struggle' (2004, p23). Agitation and robust campaigns, characterized by massive rallies, have become a common feature in Ghanaian politics. Oelbaum (2004, p245) agrees that strategies adopted by Ghanaian political actors had become indelible in their political campaigns, and in the body politic in general with the Ghanaian democratic architecture virtually assuming a two-party tradition with smaller parties making very little impact on the multiparty democratic project. These strategies seem to have polarized the Ghanaian political culture, the ripple effect of those confrontations has become a common feature. This assertion finds space in the narration that, 'by the time Ghana attained independence, the country had developed clear partisan lines, known as the Danquah-Busia and Nkrumah axes' (Lindberg and Morrison 2005, p566; Arthur 2009, p50).

Arguably, the accounts above had, to a large extent, significantly influenced the structure and parameters, in terms of the 'nature of political campaign in Ghana before and after independence. Ghana's post-independence political landscape has been dominated by the

‘Danquah-Busia and Nkrumah axes’, now NPP and NDC, respectively, which claim to share the same traditions as their mother parties, which were believed to have shaped the course of the county’s multi-party democratic rule.

6.2 Political Campaigns in Ghana before and after Independence

Historical accounts, narrated by scholars, add credence to the notion that the whole campaign environment in Ghana was belligerent in nature-confrontational, among the political parties on one side, resulting from mistrust and suspicion in their dealings with the colonial authorities. Besides their struggle for supremacy and recognition, the parties were thus very agitated in their relationships with the authorities on the other side of the divide. Corresponding responses from the electorate, and citizens in general, at such conduct and the attitude of political actors, could, predictably, be violent, and this directly influenced the campaigns.

Gyimah-Boadi’s (2001) observation on *a peaceful handover in Ghana* lends credence to the legacy of tension in Ghana’s pre-elections activities. He described political events preceding the 2000 elections, for example, as an environment characterized by deep mistrust and intense acrimony between the ruling party and the opposition. For Gyimah –Boadi, reports of ruling party agents and the organs of the state intimidating the opposition were rife, and there was a pervading sense that violence might erupt. All this created an unprecedented state of public anxiety, as many people feared that the transition from the 18 years long Rawlings’ regime to a new democratic one, which was to be headed by then Candidate John Agyekum Kufour of the NPP, would be disrupted. There was general apprehension that tension, which preceded the elections might degenerate into civil conflict (Ibid., p. 104). Arguably, these features were reflected, for example, in the content and style of communication adopted by political communicators and party executives, who interacted with electorates at all levels of the campaigns.

Messages on campaign platforms, and in campaigns in general, are crucial in politics, and political actors, realizing their benefits, inevitably tailor their messages to the urge to break away from their ‘oppressors’. Not only were such messages persuasive in political communications terms, but were directional and well-structured, so as to make the expected impact. Young (2004) suggests that the focus of the African after independence was that of incorporating visions of

liberation, transformation and uplift, to reflect the notion that the independent African state was a new born polity, and that, as ‘new states’, African politics appeared to shed the colonial chrysalis (ibid).

The focus of messages on campaign platforms in Ghana before independence were thus not far from the nature of the messages, as described by Young (2004). As stated earlier, political campaign messages were crafted to suit the expectation of the Ghanaian electorate, most of whom were ‘lower class’ and believed in the Socialist ideology propagated by the first President, Dr. Nkrumah, and his CPP (Gyimah-Boadi and Debrah 2008:127; Fobih 2008; Arthur 2009), as against opposition parties, particularly the UGCC, which were presented as conservative and elitist.

Strategically, the state media, mainly print and radio, especially radio, which was readily available and inexpensive, became the key communication tools, as complementary to the traditional (personal contact) campaign style of reaching out to electorates. Newspapers were printed alongside leaflets in which political messages, highly persuasive in nature, were strategically distributed to citizens at social and political gathering.

The pre-independence political campaign era was also characterized by ethnic and tribal manipulation, as against Berman’s observation that African ethnicity, and its relationship to politics, is new. Berman argued that ethnicity was not old, and that it was ‘a response to capitalist modernity, shaped by forces similar to those related to the development of ethnic nationalism in Europe in the late nineteenth century, but, encountered in distinct African and colonial circumstances’ (1998, p308). However, later developments in African political elections, after independence, convinced him to concede that ethnicity had occupied an unimaginable space in many electoral campaigns in Africa, (Gyimah-Boadi, 2001, p. 106). According to Gyima-Boadi, Ghana’s 2000 election campaign clearly showed that ethnicity had been used as the main criterion by some groups in order to form political parties, as a major guide for elites in many African societies, for the purposes of mobilization of groups, and, this largely contributed to the creation of a false sense of consciousness among the masses (Vail 1989; Gyimah-Boadi 2001, p. 106). It must be made clear that ethnicity, literally referred to as ‘tribal politics’, was not only a phenomenon in Ghana’s pre-independence politics, but was a major campaign tool and strategy for grassroots mobilization, participation and for recruiting membership.

Unlike the pre-independence campaign, modern political campaigns have become scientific and sophisticated as a result of technological advancement. The use of traditional media has been transformed through the complementarity of the new media's instant feedback, wide space and unending interactivity. This transformation has not only created more space for discourse, but had also enhanced participation and debate, thereby changing the face of campaigns in the contemporary electoral system, for instance, the new media have introduced certain novelties into electoral campaigns because they offer new tools for political communication. Lilleker et al., (2015), and Vegeer et al, (2016) confirm that contemporary institutional political actors, who had incorporated digital media into their communication strategies, had engaged in a rapid process of adaption. Specifically, the Internet era revolutionized political communication in the third stage of political campaigning, during which Web 1.0 technology became the engine driving political communication. Web 1.0 was characterized by the introduction of ICT and consisted predominantly of static websites.

The role of new media in political campaigning, as indicated above, was reflected in the transformed nature of the Ghanaian political campaign after independence. The new media, particularly SNSs like Facebook, etc., have become key tools of information dissemination. Information dissemination, in terms of content and messages, is a key element in political campaign activities, and most political parties maximize them to their advantage.

The NPP, for example, made very good use of this strategy in the 2000 Presidential and Parliamentary elections, by summing up their message to Ghanaians with a '*Positive Change*' slogan. The NPP appealed to Ghanaians to vote the incumbent NDC out of power, so as to ensure changes based on the accusation that the ruling government's poor governance had resulted in severe economic crises, the serial murdering of women for ritual purposes, the lack of probity and accountability emanating from accusations of corruption, unemployment, etc., to which the NPP and its allies claimed the incumbent NDC had failed to find solutions (Nugent, 2001). Nugent likened this to the strategy of the Senegalese opposition, as he thought this was a very effective weapon that won a victory for them.

The NPP articulated its campaign in terms of the need for 'POSITIVE CHANGE'. As a slogan, this did the job very nicely: it invited the electorate to focus on all the things they disliked about the NDC regime and then to imagine the opposite. This enabled the NPP to be somewhat

imprecise about how it proposed to better the lives of the Ghanaian people in the midst of a severe economic crisis. The 'change' motif also lent itself to a range of discourses: from complex media discussions about economic policy to bread-and-butter appeals on the stump (2001, p418).

The arguments, above, suggest that most messages for political campaigns in Ghana are not only centered on ideological beliefs and vision as espoused in manifestos, but also meticulously crafted so as to feed into the thinking of the electorate, cognizance of the exigencies of the period, with a view to provoking and persuading them to reflect on their circumstances, a request that is very crucial in determining the choice of leaders and parties. Gyimah-Boadi (2001) argues that the NDC was consistent with its slogan 'Change in Continuity', which had characterized its previous campaigns, which assured the electorate of the continuation of 'good works' that had been much improved. According to Gyimah-Boadi, the message emphasized the NDC's hands-on experience in government, and the benefits of continuity in policies and administration (as opposed to experimentation by neophytes), and blamed the country's economic difficulties on what they described as the inequitable international economic system, as well as an anti-NDC conspiracy by Western donors.

Besides, the development of democracy and multi-party government has unconsciously imposed a herculean challenge on the Ghanaian electorate, in that they have to decipher messages and information churned out by a number of political parties with different ideologies and manifestos. This encourages diversity, in terms of opinions and enhance deliberations in participatory democracy (Matthes and Marquart, 2015; Fishkin, 1995; Thompson, 2008). Matthes Marquat believe that citizens in a democracy should be confronted with arguments that oppose and challenge their views, and this, they say, will potentially foster political tolerance, increase the awareness of oppositional opinions, and encourage political engagement (2015, p231). Divergent views expected from different political parties' campaign platform, are therefore healthy and have been increasingly enhanced through the transformation in campaigns occasioned by the technology boom post-independence.

6.3 Campaign Strategies

Another feature shown equally in campaigns in Ghana, is how impactful the strategies are. Prominent among them is the establishment of social clubs, like Keep Fit Clubs, regional and tribal associations, etc. For example, in 2000, the NDC, having realized that the party leadership had, to some extent, abandoned the youth and that the youth had not identified with the party's founder in the Rawlings' era of the '80s and '90s, decided to form some youth and keep fit clubs across the country to attract them. A typical example of this strategy was at Likpe-Mate, a town in the Volta Region, where young men who saw themselves during the Rawlings years as the only reliable NDC supporters, sought to attract fit clubs whose members jogged where the idea originated, and these sprang up in other parts of the country. Similarly, the NPP strategically capitalized on the youth population, and pitched for the youth vote, which was always going to be decisive, given Ghana's demographic profile, in addition to the unappealing Rawlings' youth associates, who also faced an unemployment challenge, in canvassing for votes, especially among university graduates (Nugent, 2000, p418).

Strategies adopted by the political parties for campaigns, mobilization and other electoral processes, as indicated, were tainted with confrontation, violence and agitation, etc. Young (2004) posits that 'these were common features among the African states in their quest to gain freedom from their colonial masters, and their impact reflected in the achievement of independence, as a defining historical moment, the culmination of an epic struggle' (2004, p23). Political campaign rallies, press soirées, regular attendances at funerals and traditional festivals within constituencies and towns, were considered appropriate occasions, since they provided platforms for political stakeholders to interact with a section of the electorate. What was crucial, then, was how to evolve strategies to maintain various traditions and consolidate their hold on power.

6.4 Exploitation of Incumbency

In his narration of Ghana's campaign in the 2000 elections, Gyimah-Boadi (2001) recounts that contesting political parties adopted various campaign strategies to execute their campaign agenda. The incumbent NDC is on record as having heavily exploited the advantages of its incumbency in the 2000 elections. President Rawlings, his Vice President, Professor John Evans Atta Mills, and

leading members of the ruling party at the national and district levels, freely mixed the business of government with that of the party. In that election year, they embarked on a spree of commissioning public works projects, often with great fanfares. Local chiefs were prevailed upon to organize ‘durbars’ (festive gatherings) to showcase the ruling party and its candidates. Invitations were commandeered to the funerals of dignitaries; some, such as the funeral of the influential Paramount Chief of Dormaa, Osagyefo Agyeman Badu, were taken over by the NDC’s political leadership. The party displayed its largesse and patronage capabilities at these cultural events, which also provided opportunities to canvass votes for the NDC and to take partisan swipes at the opposition. Most importantly, these events drew generous and favorable coverage in the state media (Gyiam-Boadi, 2001, p.106).

However, the incumbency advantage did not make any meaningful impact, as the NDC lost the 2000 elections to the NPP and its allies in a decisive second round. The NPP were also accused of using the incumbency advantage in both its first and second terms in governance, but lost in the second term, despite their massive abuse of incumbency in the 2008 elections, also in a second round, and similarly to the defeat of the NDC in 2000.

Strategically, an incumbency advantage not only makes ruling governments visible, but also creates the impression that governments are concerned and are very ‘down with the ordinary citizens’. However, the impact of the abuse of incumbency becomes debatable in the Ghanaian electoral context, judging from the exit of ruling governments after a second term of eight years in office.

6.5 Effects of Campaigns

Literally, campaigns are expected to make an impact on electorates if strategically executed. According to Hart: ‘a good campaign potentially makes a difference as it expands what we think about as citizens and puts us in touch with people whose problems are different from our own’ (2000, p. 11). For example, as stated earlier, Dr. Nkrumah’s CPP capitalized on socialist features by identifying with the poor in Ghana to persuade the electorates in the 1950s and early ‘60s so as to win elections against his opponents, who were perceived to be elitist and capitalist. President Rawlings’ NDC, fashioned alongside the CPP tradition, also won two successive elections: 1992

and 1996. Their campaign messages were focused on improving the economic and social livelihood of the people. However, the NDC failed to capitalize on the incumbency advantage to retain power after 2000, although the Presidential Candidate for the NDC, Professor John Evans Atta Mills, then Vice President, effectively campaigned on the achievements of the NDC's massive infrastructural development. The opponents, NPP and other competing parties, campaigned on messages relating to the poor living conditions of the people, allegations of massive corruption, the threat of insecurity, in addition to a possible 'one-party' state if the incumbent were allowed to stay in power. As indicated earlier, the NPP also exited from power after two terms of eight years, in spite of the abuse of incumbency and the message of continuity in development to improve the lives of the electorate.

The trends and causes of the defeats of the two dominant political parties remain the same as those occasioned in the NDC's defeat in 2016 (2008-2016), in spite of massive national campaigns based on the much-touted *Green Book*, to showcase huge infrastructural development projects to improve the socio-economic lives of the citizenry.

All Ghanaian political parties, particularly the dominant ones, launch massive campaigns across the country through rallies at both the local and national levels in order to interact and explain their manifestos. Parties in opposition recapture power after an eight year stay in the political wilderness, retain power for a term of office and exit in the second term, and this trend has become a convention since the country's Second Republic in 1992. These developments question the impact of the campaign strategies pursued by the political parties.

6.6 Conclusion

This discussion has centered on political campaigning in Ghana that forms an essential element in electoral democracies in the political context. Specifically, campaigns provide appropriate platforms for political actors to interact with the citizenry, to offer them the opportunity to make choices and show preferences in leadership and governments (Kam, 2006, and Schumpeter, 1942). To understand the nature and impact of campaigns on the electorate, it became expedient to trace the history of politics in Ghana by highlighting events that culminated in the adoption of a multi-party democracy, and Ghana's political campaigns were influenced, to some extent, by the

agitation, confrontation and violence that characterized the Africans' quest for freedom from colonialism. Post-independence democracy has been marked by military interventions, and, until the current Fourth Republic from 1992, which has witnessed over two decades of an uninterrupted democratic dispensation.

It was clear from the discussion that the country's political campaigns are characterized by massive rallies, media engagement and the display of achievements while in office, together with the abuse of incumbency. Although such political strategies could be considered impactful, in view of successes in capturing power from incumbent governments, the trend has manifested itself as the culture of eight years in power reserved for successive governments since the Fourth Republic began in 1992, in spite of the incumbent governments' achievements, and this raises a lot of questions and debate in regard to the impact of political campaigns in Ghanaian politics. The above position notwithstanding, campaigns might be described as indispensable tools, and this reaffirms Kam's (2006) argument that campaigns are often viewed as necessary evils that both strengthen and undermine democracy. Effectively, campaigns strengthen democracy by holding the elected accountable to the electors. At the same time, convention like a mandatory eight years in office as in the Ghanaian situation, undermines democracy, in that it potentially and possibly truncates a government's efforts to accomplish the plans of the political parties, irrespective of their efforts.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RESEARCHING POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

7.0 Introduction

This research uses qualitative ethnographic methods to investigate party-political communication in a national context. It explores social interactions, behaviors, and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organizations, and communities (Reeve et al., 2008, p. 195). In effect, the method for this study is designed to gain thorough insider perspectives, knowledge of experiences, and views on how political actors are using digital network services, including SNSs and the Internet, for political campaigning in Ghana's democratic setting.

In this chapter, therefore, more detailed discussions have been designed in an attempt to locate specific data collection techniques:

1. Focus Group Discussion (FGD),
2. Interviews (informal and in-depth interviews),
3. Sampling for the techniques,
4. Case Study (Observation),
5. Validity and reliability, Data analysis procedures,
6. Ethical considerations, and
7. Limitations of the study.

As emphasized by Allan and Randy (2005) in Jackson (2011), this methodology appears to be the most appropriate, not only focusing on achieving the objectives of the research, but, also by having the potential to replicate the methodology used in other studies of the same nature.

7.1 Design and Methods

The methods for this research were informed by the objectives. Brown (2006) defines methodology as the philosophical framework within which research is conducted, or the foundation upon which the research is based. This is a framework associated with sets of paradigmatic assumptions used to conduct the research work (O’Leary, 2004, p85). Consequently, the study adopts a qualitative method, defined by Hammersley as:

...a form of social inquiry that tends to adopt a flexible and data-driven research design, to use relatively unstructured data, to emphasize the essential role of subjectivity in the research process, to study a small number of naturally occurring cases in detail, and to use verbal rather than statistical forms of analysis (2013, p.12).

Hammersley’s definition gives credence to Bryman’s (2008) expectation of qualitative research: to strategically emphasize words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. The benefits of a qualitative approach, as espoused above, motivated the adoption of qualitative techniques as an appropriate strategy for this study, by relying on a raft of ideas from respondents, knowledgeable in political campaigning, political communication, political mobilization, organizational and information technology, etc. Besides, the choice of qualitative method reflects a constructivist perspective on the study, as it offers the opportunity to make multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings that are socially and historically constructed (Creswell, 2003).

Relatively different qualitative approaches were adopted to explore the effectiveness of various communications channels and the strategies of political actors, with emphasis on the NDC and the NPP in terms of their style and approach to information dissemination pertaining to party political campaigning and other party activities in the digital era. The impact of communications, from the perspectives of political communicators (spokespersons, serial callers etc.) in the context of party followers of different status, including levels of literacy, religious affiliation, political ideologies and beliefs, as well as observations and interactions from various political players, have also been critically interrogated.

The data collection process relied on a Maximum Variation and Convenient Sample techniques, and was undertaken between October, 2017, and February, 2019, in Accra, Tema and Koforidua, the former being the two of Ghana’s 16 regions where most of the respondents could be located for interviews. The interviews complemented this researcher’s prior observation and

participation in some of the party organizations and political campaign activities of the two major political parties (NDC and NPP), before, during and after the 2012 and 2016 elections. As indicated earlier, this chapter further discusses, in more detail, the research design, and it locates specific data collection techniques.

7.2 Research Design

This study is guided by a qualitative design, a ‘blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings’ (Burns and Grove, 2003, p.195). The design utilized thus provided a framework to facilitate an understanding of the context or settings of the participants through formal and informal interactions that enable the researcher to personally gather information (Creswell, 2014). Similarly, the design facilitated the establishment of the rationale for the constitution of the study, before determining the collection and analysis of data. In effect, the ‘why’ and ‘what’ of the study were established before the ‘how’, in terms of strategy, tactics and techniques (Kvale, 1987, cited in Jensen, 2002, p238).

A qualitative technique was also considered the most appropriate design in providing answers to the phenomenon, since the study involved a lot of activities in the field, notably, dealing with the task of actively observing the political activities of political actors, and exploring respondents’ viewpoints on how political actors were using digital media to execute political campaigns.

Accordingly, the study has made use of an observation technique in the context of Case Study Methodology (Clarke, 2005), in addition to the use of informal and in-depth interviews, to collect the data. The FGD approach was equally beneficial: five focus group discussions of between eight and ten participants were conducted. The criteria for recruitment were informed by the expectations of eliciting views from the perspectives of political actors, notably, politicians, ICT experts, a cross-section of the youth, party communicators, including serial callers, and some from the electorate. The outcome of the FGDs helped shape the questions for the interviews. This was facilitated by the choice of sampling to select the participants, since that helped to approach and select the most qualified and relevant participants to enable me get the right types of responses for the study.

Sampling techniques were applied, with reference to original research questions and the choice of design, as indicated by Black (1999), because they had an impact on the type of design chosen to guide the study:

Sampling is an essential consideration when carrying out most designs. What will constitute an appropriate sample of adequate size, and ultimately how difficult it will be to contact and collect data from subjects, will depend upon the original research question and the designs chosen (1999, p. 110).

Consequently, both **Maximum Variation Sampling** and **Convenience Sampling** were adopted. Maximum Variation Sampling was used to capture as wide a range of qualities or phenomena as possible, as normally predicted by certain indicators and established characteristics, such as the popularity, expertise and knowledge of respondents.

A descriptive technique was applied to analyze the data, in that the study sought to answer salient questions, like, ‘What events or outcomes are occurring? What are the characteristics of a category of person or organization? How prevalent or widespread are the events or phenomena?’ (Black, 2003, p31), which, normally guide descriptive research. In applying this technique, this researcher considered himself an ‘interpretive subject’, with a single ambition, as indicated by Jensen, to interpret ‘meaning into action’, as against quantitative study, in which ‘interpretive agency tends to be exercised in a sequential and delegated form’ (Jensen, 2002, p236). Responses were thus subjected largely to comprehensive and more analytical discourses from different perspectives on the subject under interrogation in order to arrive at credible findings.

The adoption of multiple qualitative techniques was therefore in line with expectations of an accurate assessment of the validity and potency of digital network devices (New Media), particularly, the Internet and SNSs, as the key social networks were mostly evaluated by the electorate and political actors as being new engines of transformation, in the context of Ghana’s political campaigning in the digital era. The techniques had the potential to facilitate the data collection process.

7.3 Data Collection

The data collection exercise for the study took 12 months (October 2017-January 2019), in two phases: between October 2017 and February 2018, and between July 2018 and January 2019, with different data collection techniques. The exercise comprised interviews and other forms of data collection procedures, to give me a well-rounded collection of information to facilitate the analyses (Turner, 2010). In-depth interviews, preceded by FGDs and informal interviews, were conducted to gain insight into respondents' appreciation of political communication, digital media (Internet and SNSs) and their correlation with the political campaigning and other political activities that impact on Ghana's electoral and campaigning processes.

The responses generated from the FGDs and Informal interviews were used as a guide and as reference materials for framing the questionnaire for the in-depth interviews in the first phase of the data collection process. The second phase marked the conclusion of the remaining interviews. The FGDs and the in-depth interviews were pre-arranged with official letters from this researcher, requesting time, date and venues, as well as the synopsis of the interviews; spelling out their rationale and scope. The informal interviews were conducted without prior request. All the in-depth interviews were conducted largely in the offices and homes of respondents, after they had given their approval via follow-up phone calls, SMSs, emails and WhatsApp communications; at the convenience of respondents, and in the context of the suggested venues, times and dates. The FGDs marked my first contact with respondents from diverse political backgrounds, notably, political stakeholders, ICT savvy people, 'serial callers' and some political interest groups.

7.3.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

The Focus Group Discussion approach was equally beneficial to this study, it enabled this researcher to elicit views from a cross-section of the youth, 'serial callers', media practitioners and party communicators, amongst others, as stated.

This researcher conducted five focus group discussions with between eight and ten participants each, in interviews of one and half to two hours on average, for the first phase, to generate information about digital platforms (social media) as tools of communication, and their relationship with political communications (Patton, 2002, p385). Participants were from

politically-oriented youth groups, political communicators, ‘serial callers’, media practitioners, ICT experts, and some political activists who had no links with this researcher. The rationale was in consonance with Reinard’s (2008, p225) suggestion that group interviewing is a useful technique for getting information about virgin topics, meaning that their responses may possibly generate data that may be original. Similarly, this researcher used both structured and unstructured interview techniques, as suggested by Myersa and Newman (2007), in which two or more people are interviewed at once by one or more interviewers, to generate consensus around the role of social media and how the platforms are used in political campaign using local elections as a case study, and with a view to exploring how political actors were using social media in their political organization, mobilization and campaigning, with particular interests in the 2012 and 2016 elections. This helped the researcher to generate appropriate questions to guide the interviews, since there had not been enough empirical data on social media use strategies for political campaigning in the Ghanaian democratic dispensation. ‘As can be seen, none of the above scholars have focused on the role of social media in shaping the activities of political parties’ (Gyampo, 2017, p.188).

In my interaction with the participants, I organized them in Accra into groups, providing a venue, transportation and refreshments, after which I moderated the discussion in a very flexible, objective, and persuasive manner, offering rapt attention, as advised by Fontana and Frey (2000, p652, cited in Flick, 2009, p.195), meanwhile, a research assistant took notes and recordings of the discussions. Although there were periodic deviations, as characterized in interviews, such deviation helped unearth information that was used as a guide for follow up questioning. This approach confirmed Wilkinson and Birmingham’s (2003, p. 177) suggestion that probing reveals information beyond the original content of the interview guide. In the process, this researcher was careful not to allow individuals to ‘hijack’ the discussions, to ‘prevent single participants or partial groups from dominating the interview’ (Flick, 2009, p. 195). Not only did this precaution guarantee equal opportunities for participants to contribute, but it also allowed participants to share both their experiences and opinions on the subject matter openly (ibid).

7.3.1.1 Sampling for FGD

As explained earlier, the Maximum Variation Technique was used to sample participants (from politically-oriented youth groups, political communicators, ‘serial callers’, media practitioners, ICT experts and some political activists) with varied expertise so as to capture as wide a range of qualities or phenomena as possible that have certain other and established characteristics (Jensen, 2002, p239). Besides, the choice of participants was also influenced by their accessibility to this researcher, in line with Jensen’s description of Convenience Sampling and its attendant benefits of generating both valid and reliable insight (ibid, p240) into the use of both digital and traditional media in the Ghanaian political campaign environment. Again, the techniques helped this researcher to avoid the hassle of protocols that are associated with interviewing, and, that made it easy for me to reach out to the participants.

In my interactions with the participants, I used the ‘Group Interview Technique’, which enabled me to meet each of the five different groups of between eight and ten participants once (Myers and Newman, 2007). This helped me to moderate discussions, using unstructured questions in the context of areas relevant to the questions and objectives underpinning the study. As is typical of group interviews, I ensured that all participants caught my eye through special seating arrangements, preceded by advanced arrangements for logistics, transport (where necessary) refreshments and audio recorders (Oppenheim, 1999).

The discussions covered the following areas, among others:

- Concept of media and their ramifications for politics and political communication
- Political actors and media preferences
- Political leadership and digital tools as weapons in their contest for power
- The Role of Traditional and New Media (Social Media) in Political Campaigning in Ghana.
- Proliferation and use of Digital Devices and their implications for political campaigning (Digital Connectivity, Accessibility and Political Communication)
- Social Media, Language Use and Credibility of News Sources

- Digital media, Strategy and Message in Political Campaign

- Social Media and their ramifications for the Future of Political Campaigning.

7.3.2 Interviews

This research adopted an exploratory interview approach appropriate for in-depth interviews, or free-style interviews, as well as for group interviews (Oppenheim, 1996). The methodology, as discussed above, was informed by the research objectives and questions. The qualitative nature of the method therefore attracted qualitative interviews, in an attempt to cover both factual and meaning levels (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003). The interviews were particularly useful for this study, since they helped this researcher to get the story behind participants' experiences, as well as serving as a follow-up to certain responses to questionnaires, for example, through the interviews, this researcher was able to pursue in-depth information around the topics (McNamara, 1999).

The study found Gall and Borg's (2003) summary of formats for interview design useful. As suggested by Turner (2010), I ensured that the interviews are based on an 'informal conversational' approach, conducted with a general interview guide and standardized open-ended approaches, which complement the other techniques in the collection of data.

In all these interviews, I used unstructured or semi-structured interview formats with an incomplete script, as is normal for the various types of qualitative interviews (Fontana and Frey, 2000). With this mode of interviewing, I conducted the interviews alone, with some prepared questions, and relied on improvisation for follow-up responses (Myersa and Newman, 2007) to elicit more information from respondents, while jointly taking notes with research assistants.

All the interviews were conducted in a very congenial environment, while ensuring that they did not deviate from the subject matter, because 'the interviewer must be able to put interviewees at ease, while asking questions in an interested manner, noting down the responses without upsetting the conversational flow, and give support without introducing bias' (1996, p. 65). I also conducted informal interviews by focusing mainly on 'serial callers' and a section of

the electorate, with those who showed interest, and with others without interests in political mobilization and political campaigning. I distinguished the two categories based on their responses and reactions to my request to elicit their views through questionnaires. In most instances, I explained to the respondents the essence of my study and the need for them to share their experiences with me at their convenience, emphasizing that the interviews were optional. Those who opted to participate were encouraged to speak to the interview guide, although not in any particular order or structure. This allowed for more responses to follow-up questions.

7.3.2.1 Interview Guide

As indicated earlier, the interviews followed questions that were comprehensive enough to fulfil the main task of attracting responses to potentially meet the expectations of the research objectives and questions, and to make meaning from what respondents said (Kvale, 1996). These benefits therefore, motivated the use of an interview guide to deal with complexities associated with words, as Fontana and Frey reminded, that, ‘the spoken or written word has always a residue of ambiguity, no matter how carefully we word the questions and how carefully we report or code the answer’ (2003, p.61). Consequently, the interview guide ensured consistency, clarity and uniformity in the questions for prospective interviewees. The same questions were asked of all respondents, with some variations and emphasis on certain responses and questions, and sometimes with follow-up questions, to elicit specific responses so as to satisfy the expectations of particular expertise reactions from general responses on issues. The interview guide was relevant for both formal (in-depth) and informal interviews, especially for the formal interviews, as their outcome enriched the analysis through expert lenses, which were very crucial to the discussions.

7.3.2.2 Informal Interviews

The informal interviews did not follow any formal structure or procedure, in terms of arrangements such as venue, duration and day. I explained the theme and rationale for the interview to potential respondents, and engaged those who were readily available, interviewees who were not readily available were granted requests for a ‘call back’ at their convenience.

Respondents who agreed to participate answered unstructured open-ended questions, as required for unstructured or semi-structured interview formats. In these interviews, as recommended by Wimmer and Dominick (2003); Myersa and Newman (2007) and Silverman (1998), I used an incomplete script and prepared some questions beforehand, in addition to asking follow-up questions as the interviews progressed. This strategy created the opportunity for me to obtain some sensitive information that would not have been forthcoming had the questions been closed-ended (Wimmer and Dominic, 2006), based on the themes for the interview.

The themes for the questions were centered on the concept of media, types of media (traditional and social media) and their impact on political campaigning. The themes also captured the rationale behind the electorate's preferences for political parties and party leaderships, as influenced by the media, especially the social media. Again, reasons for the most patronized social media platforms and their impact, as used by political actors, how social platforms were used in terms of strategy and their impact on political campaigns, with a focus on future political campaigns, also formed key items in relation to the questions for respondents. All the respondents who participated in the informal interviews were selected at random, based on an appropriate sampling procedure.

7.3.2.2.1 Sampling Procedure for Informal Interviews

The sampling procedure was appropriate, as it helped me to elicit information from qualified respondents. These interviews (informal responses) served as complements to responses from the FGDs-a foundation for drafting questions for the in-depth interviews. The choice of the respondents was made through both purposive and accidental sampling techniques, because not only were the selections based on availability or ease of inclusion, but also on a procedure directed towards obtaining certain types of elements (Dane, 1990, p302-303). This is because I expected a sample of respondents who were interested in politics and who followed political events, especially political campaigns and political discourses, in both traditional and digital media,nd, that expectations were met is reflected in the quality of participants; responses.

In effect, the 'opportunistic sampling technique', which 'relies on (the) selection of those most likely to co-operate with the researcher' (Balnaves and Caputi, 2001, p95) became relevant to this study. In all, 22 of 40 prospective respondents suggested for the interviews offered to share

their thoughts, experiences and opinions on politics, political communication and political campaigns, in the context of the 2012, 2016 elections, and beyond, with reference to the media (traditional and digital) in the digital era. These (22) respondents were included in the project because not only did they offer to participate, but they also appeared relevant in terms of the quality of their responses, plus that they showed immense interest in the study and were available for interviews. The remaining 18 declined my request to participate in the study due to lack of interest and knowledge, and also for fear of disclosing what they described as sensitive information resulting from their political inclinations. These concerns were no different from reasons attributed to prospective respondents (15), who declined to participate in the in-depth interviews.

7.3.2.3 In-depth Interviews

The study also made a case for in-depth interviews, as argued by Priest (1996), because it provided an opportunity for open-ended conversational exploration of the electorate, media experts and politicians' worldviews on some aspects of the study, particularly on the impact of the traditional media, the social media and political communications in the era of digitization. In effect, this technique appropriately facilitated efforts by this interviewer to elicit from respondents detailed and new information about the subject being studied (Boyce and Neale, 2006). Similarly, the strategy established the focus of the interviews, e.g., the motivation being to question the rationale for urgency in the Ghanaian situation, the nature and form of campaigns, types and form (Fontana and Frey, 2003) of political campaign rallies, and the influence of language in information dissemination pertaining to campaigns in the digital era. The benefits of exploring individual experiences and perceptions, especially on sensitive topics, did not blind this researcher to some key demerits, e.g., concerns about fears of reprisal and the danger of imposing the researcher's agenda and eliciting artificial responses, that are often associated with the in-depth technique, as indicated by Wimmer and Dominick (2001), so that, unlike a survey questionnaire, the in-depth interview did not have a rigidly set structure, as in the case of the structured and semi-structured interviews, and 'in-depth interviews have the advantage of providing a wealth of detailed information on even sensitive issues' (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006 p.135). Respondents answered 10 questions, in addition to follow-up ones relevant to the research objectives and questions (See Appendix).

7.3.2.3.1 Sampling Procedure for In-depth Interviews

The study adopted a combination of snowball, convenience, purposive and key informant sampling techniques to select the prospective interviewees for the in-depth interviews. By use of the Snowball Method, this interviewer initially contacted a few potential respondents to help identify those sharing the characteristics needed to fit the criteria he was expecting for the interviews (Boyce and Neale, 2006). I also ‘purposely’ selected people who had an interest in the topic, through the characteristics of their role in the community, and being knowledgeable in the research topic, who were willing to respond to the questions, and who were very articulate with communicability and unbiased, to participate in the interviews (ibid). In effect, I sampled a range of respondents with an interest in media, communications and politics, notably, those with expertise in political communication, political scientists, Skills in ICT, political strategies, regular monitors of political proceedings, both on traditional and social media, and regular contributors to political discussions on both traditional and social media, amongst others.

I developed a purposive sample comprising 20 of 35 respondents, selected on my own judgment and knowledge of their relevance to the topic. The prospective interviewees responded positively to the request to share their experiences and to provide insight into how political parties were using social media and the Internet for political mobilization, participation and campaigning in Ghana. Their reactions to new media and the 2012 and 2016 elections projected the future of Ghana’s political campaigns, amidst the unending development of technology and its ramifications for democracy. As indicated earlier, 15 of the prospective respondents declined my request to them to participate in the study due to a lack of interest and knowledge and for fear of disclosing what they described as sensitive information arising from their political inclinations and organizations.

The responses from both interviews (formal and in-depth) were boosted by incorporation of the Case Study Method-the contribution of the media, especially the use of social media, in the development of Ghana’s democracy, which is touted as a model for Africa.

7.3.3 The Case Study Approach

Ghana's democracy is chosen as a typical Case⁵ for interrogation in this study, as an emerging democratic country which has been successful with two landmark electioneering campaigns and, thus, voting in both the Presidential and Parliamentary categories in 2012 and 2016. The adoption of this technique satisfied the three tenets of the qualitative method: describing, understanding, and explaining (Tells, 1997) the phenomenon of digitization in a multi-party setting. In effect, this researcher was motivated to explore how political actors were using the phenomena of digitization with a view to justifying the impact of the various devices, e.g., the Internet and SNSs, on political campaigning in the Ghanaian multi-party setting.

The participatory technique was applied, 'a process that is guided by rational principles and assumptions, motivated by an interest in obtaining data on occurrences, events, processes, reactions, forms of conduct and relationships' (Smart et al., 2013). The techniques offered this researcher an opportunity to immerse himself in the programs of the two main parties in Ghana (NPP and NDC) by observing their political campaign programs, notably rallies, internal elections and outreach events, because this gave him the opportunity to observe most of the activities of his respondents.

Participating in their programs gave me the opportunity to monitor, through observation, the activities of political actors, mode and channels of communication of the political parties and other political stakeholders, especially their communicators and 'serial callers'. This approach relied on an unstructured technique, e.g., this researcher sometimes depended on informal interviews and footage from party programs on television and radio especially that of the NPP, as against his affinity with the NDC, which gave him unfettered access to the latter's schedules. This offered flexibility, and was thus devoid of pre-determined variables or objectives, as against a structured approach requiring that data be collected to specifications in terms of variables in pre-defined schedules (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006).

This confirms Darlington and Scott's recommendation for the observation technique, as unlike interviews and document analysis, observation not only affords access to events as they happen, but also, generally, requires little active effort on the part of those being observed. Again,

⁵ See: The Case of Ghana in 1.9

unlike interviews, which could be time consuming for participants, taking not only the time for the interview, but also the efforts required to make arrangements, ‘to clear other activities, observation takes place at the same time as an activity that would be happening anyway’ (2002, p75).

In effect, I observed campaign rallies and monitored the modes of communication of the political parties, with a view to identifying their preferred media, how and why they used them, as well as the benefits of party activities. The method not only complemented the others (interviews and FGSs) in the data collection process, but also facilitated efforts to generate credible findings. This confirmed Jorgensen’s (2015) position that observation is a unique method for investigating the enormously rich, complex, conflictual, problematic, and diverse experiences, thoughts, feelings and activities of human beings and the meanings of their existence. However, I was mindful of the challenges and disadvantages associated with the observation technique, thus, overcoming the longer duration, the tendency to compromise with high levels of observer bias, and the influence of the researcher’s presence on primary data (ibid). Besides, I was limited to some extent, because internal processes of cognition and emotion could not be observed, even if non-verbal indicators of what these might be have been adhered to. Events that have already occurred, or that have not yet happened, could also not be observed (Jorgenson, 2015).

All these challenges, therefore, served as limitations to the study, because they did not offer the opportunity for me to appreciate to the full why respondents and participants behaved in the way that they did and, even if they did, there was the tendency for them to pretend, as Darlington and Scott confirm: ‘people who know they are being watched may alter their behaviour in all sorts of ways, both consciously or unconsciously’ (2002, p77). However, the conduct and arrangements for the data collection processes ensured that respondents could not be compromised in terms of their behavior and their responses to suit the request for information.

7.4 Reliability and Validity of Methods

The study combined different data collection methods to validate the findings, since ‘multiple techniques’ (as indicated earlier) acted as ‘checks and balances’ for defects in the application of the methodology. Besides, findings would have been meaningless if they were not measurable enough to answer the research questions (Field, 2005). Criterion-related validity, one of Cohen et

al.'s (2007) different forms of research validity, has been used to determine the extent to which a measure is related to an outcome (Taherdoost, 2016). In effect, it helped the attempt to explore how political actors are currently using digital media in political campaigning and how the devices will impact upon future campaigns in the digital age. The attempt to validate and ensure the reliability of the various techniques and methods applied to this study thus confirmed how well the collected data covered the actual area of investigation, as explained by Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) in Taherdoost, (2016).

This researcher thus, engaged⁶ research assistants, whom I briefly invited to support this project, especially in recruiting participants and making the right choices, for example, in terms of questions and recording. Consequently, the research assistants and the researcher underwent an orientation to acquaint themselves with the basics of data collection and related procedures. The orientation equipped the research team with the concept of data, the rationale for collecting the data and the basic ethics of data collection, as key ingredients in arriving at credible findings for the research. These preparations were beneficial to this study, particularly during FGDs and interviews, which required both research assistants and the researcher to monitor responses from participants, to respond with relevant follow-up questions, to manage the conduct, especially the temperament of the respondents, and to prevent participants from veering off the subject matter. These arrangements and precautions tie in with arguments and advice from Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005; Wimmer and Dominick, 2006; Berger, 2011; Krippendorff, 1980, and Reinard, (2008), that research ensure that data collection procedures potentially guaranteed both the validity and reliability required for the achievement of credible data and findings.

In Swanson's (2014) opinion, 'the definitions of valid and reliable are analogous to accuracy and precision. Reliability (both the reliability of the data and the consistency of measurements) is a prerequisite for validity'. The study, therefore, was not concerned only with the validity of the data, but was equally minded of the relationship between validity and reliability, as significant research instruments, and ensured that all processes and procedures for data collection passed the crucial test of establishing appropriate connections between the two.

⁶ The research assistants' contribution to the interviews and the study in general was minimal, they helped in the recording and the taking of notes.

It was important that I tested my findings to improve validity and reliability. Consequently, I subjected the data to a review, in line with Golafshani's (2004) recommendation of measures and checks to ensure the research's validity and reliability. The review established that an open-ended perspective adheres to the notion of data triangulation by allowing participants in the research to assist the researcher in answering the research question, as well as with the data collection (ibid). This recommendation underscores my expectation of arriving at credible findings based on the application of multiple data collection methods. It is instructive to note that the role of the research assistants was minimal, but helped me improve my insights and analysis.

7.5 Ethics

The study is significantly guarded and guided by the core principles, or norms, of the 'dos' and 'don'ts' that regulate the conduct and behavior of researchers and 'stakeholders' in the research fraternity, according to the University of Westminster's research ethics. Key ethical principles guiding scholarly research have therefore been complied with in this study; due adherence to the principles of responsibility and sharing and cooperation form its basis (Gallo, (2004). In other words, rules and regulations regarding intrusion into privacy and the rights of respondents, in addition to the attribution of authorities, whose works are, to a large extent complementary literature and validate the study, are considered. So, 'the point[s] of view of all the stakeholders, i.e., those who may directly or indirectly be affected by the results of our activity' (2004, p468-469) are considered.

This project is also, guided by the University of Westminster's Code of Practice regulating the ethical conduct of research. I appreciate the regulations' requirements, that certain categories of work may not be undertaken without approval from the university authorities. Noting my responsibility as key researcher on this study, I wish to indicate that I obtained the necessary approval, and that there were no ethical dimensions related to pursuing this study. I sought the necessary approval from the university's authorities where necessary during this study.

7.6 Conclusion

Qualitative methodology was justifiably suitable for this research, within the context of an ethnographic study. The methods used provided the opportunity to explore relatively different qualitative approaches so as to respond to questions that are related to the effectiveness of the various communications channels and the strategies of the political actors, as political campaigns and electoral democracy in the general advance into the digital era that has been occasioned by technological development. The methods provided flexibility that facilitated the data gathering and analysis in the entirety of the research process, precisely by eliciting information from respondents who are knowledgeable in political campaigning, political communication, political mobilization, organization and information technology, etc., and who formed the core target for the study. The methods validated and ensured the reliability of the various techniques and methods applied to this study, in tandem with the sample of the population and the scope of the research, as advanced by Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) in Taherdoost, (2016).

7.7 Challenges

I encountered several challenges in the course of collecting the data. I had to contend with issues of access, particularly to respondents. Although most interviewees offered to be interviewed, reaching them was problematic, as most of them were on tight work schedules and kept postponing the interview times, or changing the venues. Others blatantly disrespected appointments (days) scheduled for the interviews, in a ‘typical African style’. Besides, some respondents who had earlier assured me that they would speak to me later declined, describing their decisions either as personal, or saying that they were not prepared to speak to me because they were suspicious of my political background, as I was the Communications Director of an opposing political party (NDC). I also had to contend with the challenge of dealing with some respondents who sounded irrelevant, and who were not abreast of the themes for the interview. Time spent with such people was wasted. Some respondents would not even agree that I used a tape recorder, for fear that I might be documenting their Party or their organizational communication plans and secrets.

I needed to spend time with them assuring them of their confidentiality and the fact that all of the information given to me was for research purposes. In some instances, I had to reach

interviewees through influential people or colleagues who were close friends of ‘uncomfortable’ interviewees. I needed to exercise the utmost restraint and tolerance, especially with respondents who sounded irrelevant and were very apprehensive, considering the fact that I was wearing ‘two hats’; as a politician and as a researcher, probing an area which some respondents claimed was unethical, because they were largely disclosing an aspect of their Party’s communication strategy to an opponent. I used the research assistants to record most of the interviews, especially where respondents vehemently opposed the idea of recording their voices. I had to approach all the interviews with utmost circumspection to allay their fears and suspicions about my political background, and to avoid bias, although I remained focused on the interview guide.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

8.0 Introduction

Findings emanate from formal interviews with respondents whose views are crucial to politics, media and democracy in Ghana. The respondents are made up of some politicians, political communicators, media practitioners, communications experts, ICT experts, and social commentators. The views of some youth activists, ‘serial callers’, and a selection of the citizenry, were also elicited through the FGDs used to gather the data. The choice of respondents was informed by the research questions, which were influenced by problems that generated the investigations for the study. Results are separated under themes, and they resonate with aspects discussed in the literature review, reflecting the theoretical arguments of scholars, such as McNair (2003) and McChesney (2000), pertaining to media, democracy and political campaigns.

As indicated earlier, a ‘thematic analysis’ technique was used to analyze the data obtained through interviews and observations. The findings aptly manifest the consistency of interviewees’ concerns about the uses of digital media (social media) as potential drivers to further transform political communication and information dissemination in the trajectory of Ghana’s effort to consolidate gains in her multi-party democracy. Of equal concerns to interviewees, were the lack of innovation in strategies and the investment of resources in digital infrastructural development, as precursors to education and awareness creation for improvement in the network services, accessibility and policies needed to regulate the use of digital media. Effectively, a successful electoral process in Ghana’s democracy would largely be contingent on how strategically the nation deals with the exigencies of media (channels of communication), political communication, political campaigning, and organizations that are caused by technological transformation.

In the following discussions, procedures for data collection have been highlighted, especially in an attempt to rationalize the application of ‘thematic analyses’ for the study. Findings are discussed under eight thematic areas, interspersed with quotations from authorities on political

communication, media and communications, ICT and political campaigning, among other topics, as discussed in the literature review.

Relevant images, for the purposes of content illustration, are also used to enrich the discussion. They include, screenshots of political actors, political parties' activities and info graphs from the Internet and social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other SNSs, etc. The images facilitated interpretation immensely and provide a visual explanation of the text by creating more space in which to accommodate information.

8.1 Data Analysis Procedure

In arriving at the findings, I first checked and reviewed them to gain an overview of the main themes. The review was in tandem with an Interviewee Transcript Review (ITR) process, as Hagens et al. (2009) advised to improve the rigor of interview-based qualitative research. Consequently, I carefully verified the content of the transcripts by ensuring the accuracy of facts, information, correcting errors and providing clarification with reference to the interview guides. In most cases, I added details to the transcripts, for example, time and date of interviews, profiles of persons, including designation and gender, correction of grammar and terminologies, particularly in social media and political communication. For Bechar and Mero-Jaffe (2013), such responses relate to the ratification of content, the authenticity of content during the interview, corrections of language, additional clarifications, power interactions, and changes in the balance of power between the interviewer and interviewees, feelings of embarrassment and threat, research ethics, and the reflective responses validate the transcript, to some extent. The review process made me more aware of their contents and structure. In effect, the process refined the data by providing clarity, accuracy and reasoning, as Hagens et al. note, 'such a process reflects a high-quality interview transcript as a complete and accurate reflection of the verbal exchange between the interviewer and interviewee during the interview' (2009, p65).

Subsequently, the data from each respondent was coded for consideration separately, using a combination of pre-defined themes that are based on the original research questions, and themes that emerged from the data after a thorough review of the transcripts. The pre-defined and emerging themes were then compared to explore similarities and differences in terms of responses.

This helped refine the themes into main and sub-themes. These procedures not only facilitated the processes of identification, analysis and reporting patterns within the data to ensure flexibility, but also complemented the theories underpinning the study to allow for a rich, detailed and complex description of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p79).

The use of media to engender debate and assist in the formation of opinion in the democratic, political and social public spheres, dominated the themes (informed by the main research questions and objectives) that run throughout. Eventually, the following themes were settled on for discussion:

1. Politics, Political Communication and Political Campaign in Ghana
2. Political Campaign Development in Ghana
3. Political Actors, Digital Tools and Contests for Power
4. How were Digital Platforms Used for Political Campaigning in Ghana's 2012 and 2016 Elections?
5. Messages, Credibility of Sources, Language in Political Campaigning
6. Digital Platforms, Strategies and Choice of Political Parties and Leaders
7. The Digital Era and the Future of Political Campaigning in Ghana

8.2 Politics, Political Communication and Political Campaign in Ghana

Global politics and its ramifications on governance in Africa are so compelling, especially in terms of a multi-party system, that Ghana would be left behind if she did not evolve pragmatic policies to consolidate her progress in democracy, and political communication is expected to play a very important role in that process. As Kriesi (2011) indicates, political communication is at the heart of the democratic process because citizens need to have an 'enlightened understanding' of the choices at stake. It was thus necessary to elicit views on how political communication was influencing political campaigning, with reference to the emergence of Ghanaian democracy since the 1950s, when agitation for independence began.

Interviewee's responses pointed out that Ghana's political situation had been identified by several factors, notably, performances in the practice of democracy, the economy, probity, and

accountability, political stability, and other tenets of democracy, like free expression and free media.

For 7Asa Asante (Accra, 26/1/2018), not only has the number of political parties increased, but the concept of participation has also reached a new level, attributable to the media's vibrancy and dynamism, as occasioned by developments in the multi-party democracy and changes in contemporary political communications. This suggests that opportunities and incentives generated by changes in the functioning of political parties, technological innovation, professionalism and the media, will encourage political actors, including political communicators, to exploit political communication for political benefits (Korzi, 2004, and Klinghard, 2005, 2010). For example, Asa-Asante believes that 'democracy has become the only game in time, which is on the lips, the hearts and minds of everybody, and that it gives hope as to the country's direction in terms of consolidation'.⁸ Agbenu, Editor of the *Ghanaian Times*, shared Asa-Asante's view, in that democracy faced reversal when people still desired to go back, or regretted it due to the recurrence of uneventful situations, but he maintained that it was useful not to re-embrace military rule. Agbenu's position was that the military's interference had been a blot on Ghana's governance system, so the country's current (25 years without military interference) situation must be considered a massive credit to democracy.⁹ Doworkpor, a journalist, entrepreneur and parliamentary aspirant, confirmed that:

...there had not been any successful military interventions for some years, where soldiers killed people, people would be held before kangaroo courts, and so forth and so on. So those fears had been dropped and it was a positive signal that we have come to a point of no return in party politics and politics will continue (interviewed in Accra, 24/ 2/2018).

7 **Kwame Asa – Asante (PhD)** is a Political Science Lecturer at the University of Ghana, Legon, in Accra. (Interviewed in Accra, 26/1/2018)

8 **Mr. Dave Agbenu** is the Editor of the *Ghanaian Times*, one of Ghana's State -owned newspapers established by the first President, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, to defend the policies of the state. (interviewed in Accra, 12/2/2018)

9 **Mr. Kofi Dewokpor** is a professional journalist, entrepreneur and parliamentary aspirant for the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency of Accra.(interviewed in Accra, 24/ 2/2018)

What this meant was that Ghana has had her fair share of erratic coups engineered by the military during her democratic journey and, currently, the people are determined, as a country, to protect the rule of law and expand the frontiers of the country's democracy.

However, there have been some negatives in the context of performance and progress in the democratic journey: allegations, notably, abuse of power, corruption, violation of rights of individuals, etc., as portrayed by the media. These developments, according to some respondents, particularly media practitioners and civil society organizations, punched deep holes in arguments by politicians on campaign platforms in defense of their positive contribution to the country's current political situation. Besides, the intensity and the ultimate reward for political parties has always raised tensions in political corridors by creating those tensions and animosity. This situation could be attributed to the country's election system, in which the party that wins an election is empowered to form a government without the inclusion of opposition parties in the allocation of portfolios. This system of governance, according to most respondents, had, since the country's adoption of multi-party democracy in the 1950s, bred a political campaign characterized largely by acrimony, vilification and insults. They agreed that the country's current political situation needed review, preferably to embrace the inclusiveness of all political parties so as to enhance the political situation in consolidating democracy.

These sentiments amply demonstrate that the political situation needed a bit of adjustment to create more space for deliberation and participation in the consolidation of democracy in Ghana, and the interviewees were unanimous on this.¹⁰Awuku, national youth organizer of the ruling NPP thought,

...that is a challenge that we must work towards, but overall, I think that politics in Ghana has arrived, we need a little bit of fine-tuning to get it right, especially when it comes to the operation of democracy. We have done well in the area of election, but when it comes to translating the workings of democracy into transformational development, there is a huge gap there, we need to fix that. Overall, I think we have made a lot of progress when you are talking about politics. (

Arguably, Awuku's position sounded more appealing to all respondents, because although there were challenges, like mistrust, corruption and inequity, in the country's political system,

¹⁰ **Sammy Awuku**, is the National Youth Organizer of the NPP. He was also a Deputy Director of Communication of the party. He is a youth activist and political scientist. interviewed in Accra, 10/1/ 2018

particularly acts of vilification, animosity and acrimony, etc., which indirectly influence political campaigning, ‘this situation has been a key characteristics of the Ghanaian politics,’ as Arthur confirms that, ‘the axes and their traditions were in the forefront of political activity in the country before and immediately after independence, but for a greater part of the period since the 1950s, Ghana has been under authoritarian military and one-party rule’ (2009, p50). However, 11Adoli , an ICT expert, opined that, ‘the citizenry preferred that if there is anything wrong, lets correct it and maintain the *status quo*. So, by and large, you have seen how we are affirming democracy by the day and all is well.’

All the interviewees’ reactions affirmed these concerns, an indication that democracy is being recognized in the country’s body politic.

What was striking in the interviewees’ reactions to the political situation was summed up by 12Dzisah, who said that Ghanaians are generally political,

Ghanaians eat and drink politics, it is in their DNA, in as much as they deal with social socio-economic and political issues, the focus has always been on political issues, because Ghanaians are generally political and therefore, particularly in the political season, you find diverse groups discussing politics (Accra, 23/10/2017).

Effectively, the political situation in Ghana was liberal and participatory, and that probably created more opportunity for the citizenry to be fully deliberative on socio-economic and political issues in the media space, implying that all that Ghanaians needed was to allow politics to grow to ensure its consolidation. This is because the ripple effect of the past political confrontations and violence before her independence has resulted in clear partisan lines, known as the ‘Danquah -Busia and Nkrumah axes’ (Lindberg and Morrison 2005, p566; Arthur 2009, p50).

11 **Kofi Adoli** is an expert in ICT with special interest in Social Media. He is an executive member of the UK-Ireland diaspora branch of the NDC, Ghana’s main opposition party, and a national communications team member of the Party. Interviewed in London, 5/3/ 2018).

12 **Wilberforce Sefakor Dzisah** holds a PhD in Media and Communications from the University of Westminster, UK. He is the former Rector of the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ). He is a political communicator and lecturer.

Interviewees were hopeful of a brighter political future for the country, judging from the extent to which the pillars of democracy were functioning, as the President of the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), 13Monney, argued:

Ghana is a politically active nation and, the media's dominant subject is politics. Our obsession with politics is such that, especially the media, are influenced by the culture of over-politicizing of issues because they know that the Ghanaian is hyper active when it comes to politics (Tema, 18/11/2017)

This is a demonstration that free expression has created a congenial space for the media to operate in, subsequently, there is an enhancement of, and then deliberation and participation. This has given meaning to political communication and campaigning in the context of politics that potentially impact positively on the country's political situation. Now, Ghanaians are critically talking about human rights, political parties, the economy, and all sorts of things which it was impossible to discuss freely before the Fourth Republic, suggesting that democracy is gaining root in Ghana. But what is the place of political campaign in this democratic development?

8.3 Political Campaign Development in Ghana

Under this theme, I explored the essence of political parties and their contributions to political party campaigns and related developments in Ghana. The focus was in line with the rationale for the formation of political parties, and their responsibilities to the citizenry in the overall political campaigns' process and execution, especially in the delivery of campaign messages and promises, as contained in their manifestos. This is because the manifesto becomes the blueprint for governance.

Interviewees gave varied responses and interpretations of the need for the formation of political parties, arguably endorsing the view that political parties form the blocks on which the administration of any country is built.¹⁴ Kpesah-Whyte (Accra, 3/11/7), a lecturer and political communicator, described the political parties' role in political campaign development as being

¹³ **Dr. Affail Monney** is a journalist and President of the Ghana Journalist Association (GJA). He was a former Director of Radio at The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation. (GBC), the state broadcaster.

¹⁴ **Michael Kpessah-Whyte (PhD)** is a lecturer at the Department of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon in Accra, and a political communicator NDC. He was a director at the National Service Secretariat (NSS)

sources of human resources through which political education and messages are channeled. He argued that political parties manage the socio-economic and political agenda, which determines the success or failure of a country, to the extent of development in any democratic setting. For Dzisah:

...their manifestos are pregnant with plans and policies, mostly based on the needs and expectations of the electorate as occasioned by their research, so, the serious political parties are guided by concerns expressed by the electorate in terms socio-economic developments (interviewed in Accra, 23/10/2017).

This means that political formation is about the development of the electorate. 15 Sikanku (Accra, 23/11/2017) argued that all political parties, irrespective of their ideology are development-oriented, with the belief that politics is about the development of the people they superintend, and it therefore makes sense if programs are skewed towards meeting their agenda of developing the resources of the people for development.

Beyond the rationale for the establishment of political parties, as espoused by respondents, are the arguments about their efficiency in party organization and management, in that, technically, the success of every organization, or of an entity like a political party, hinges on how solid the structures are. The above arguments fit into Rogers and Storey's (1987) position, that every political campaign must have an identity and, in most cases, campaigns are identified via other basic elements. This suggests that political campaign must not only be identified with a purpose, but must equally be integrated with other elements that potentially enhance the success of political parties.

In the view of Ayiku¹⁶), most of the political parties were not solid on the ground and not national in character, they were heavily concentrated in the cities, and that creates a huge deficit, in terms of their interaction with the electorates, particularly in their attempt to create the right fora for deliberation and participation. Awuku (Koforidua, 10/1/2018) attributed this situation largely to a lack of adequate resources, which had, over the years, limited the operations of parties, especially small ones. His opinion was that the situation had invariably impacted negatively on

15 Etse Sikanku (PhD) in Media and Communications with an interest in digital media. He is a lecturer at Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ), He is a journalist and a radio/TV broadcast host on politics.

16 **Charles Nii Ayiku** is an ICT specialist and the former manager of Ghana's presidential websites. He is now a lecturer at the University of Professional Studies (UPSA).

political organizations and campaign developments. This vindicates Farrell, Koldyn and Medvic's (2011, p. 18) advice, that modern campaigns will require skills to give credence to the fact that there had been modernization in contemporary political campaign activities. Political parties' inability to reach out to, and actively engage, all of the electorate meant that not only were the electorate denied the right to participate in the essential decision-making processes, but they also lacked the necessary education to enable them to make informed choices. Besides, resources were required to mobilize the necessary human capital to actively execute strategies to develop campaigns at various stages. The Editor of *graphiconline*, Yeboah made that clear in his reaction to political campaign developments;

...political parties cannot make any headway in their campaigns if basic infrastructure, logistics and human resources are lacking, there should be efforts to provide basic needs for the parties to effectively participate in the deliberative processes, especially in the area of political campaigns (interviewed in Accra, 10/12/2017).

Yeboah's reaction is an indication that inadequate resources are hindrances to political party developments, 'if we consider that political parties were formed to make mass mobilization of voters occur efficiently for several levels of officeholders' (Aldrich 1995; Farrell et al. 2001, p. 12).

An issue that recurred in interviewees' responses was the absence of a policy on funding for political parties in the country, the consensus among the interviewees was the need to explore the funding for them. Funding for political parties and party activities had become a major issue that had attracted national debates. Unlike Ghana, the Policy Development Grants (PDGs) that are managed by the Electoral Commission of Britain, under the *Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA)*, prescribe policy development grants for qualified political parties to manage party activities, especially in developing policies such as manifestos, for elections to the UK Parliament, Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales, Northern Ireland Assembly, and local government.

The total grant is £2 million per year and distributed via a formula based on representation and performance at national and devolved legislature elections. To be eligible for the grant, a party must have at least two sitting Members of the House of Commons and have taken the oath of allegiance provided by the Parliamentary Oaths Act 1866 (The Electoral Commission, 2018).

In Africa, Zimbabwe is a typical democratic country whose political party activities are funded to some extent by government. The country's *Political Parties (Finance) Act* [Chapter 2:11] of 2001, says that government will 'provide for the financing of political parties by the State; to prohibit foreign donations to political parties and candidates.' Although the Act may not be sufficient to regulate the funding of parties, it provides some checks against financial malfeasance in party funding. Protagonists believe that allowing parties the laxity to fund themselves would potentially breed corruption and the misappropriation of resources, especially when political party financiers/bankrollers were rewarded with a portfolio in government that is based on their contribution to party financing and resource mobilization. Sikanku (Accra, 23/11/ 2017) believed that the desire for parties to recoup investments in party management and organization becomes inevitable, and this potentially creates a breeding ground and a motivation for people to engage in corrupt activities, The need for broader consultation by the Inter Party Advisory Committee (IPAC), an organization formed by the stakeholders to manage party activities in the country, therefore becomes imperative if electorates are to build a consensus on political party funding so as to resource political parties.

What interviewees wished for in all their responses on politics and political party campaign developments was, to some extent, the availability of resources to manage party activities, but that should be contingent on the establishment of a credible and strict regulatory framework to not only monitor party activities, but also to ensure the equitable distribution of resources to improve the status of all political parties and their campaigns as they contest for power.

8.4 Digital Tools as Weapons of Contestation for Power

Contesting for power is crucial in politics and, in Ghana, political stakeholders have been working assiduously towards the adoption of digital platforms as reliable complementary communications tools to the traditional media, in the execution of political campaigns and other political activities since 2012. Eliciting the views of Ghanaian politicians and stakeholders on the use of digital platforms for power was thus critical to this study, more so, when the ordinary Ghanaian assumes that issues relating to politics dominated discussions in the media and other public spaces. Stone (2012) explains, that it takes opposing parties to contest for power, and it assumes that preferences are set, and power is that which determines the outcome in a straightforward instance of clashing

wills. It thus stands to reason that any aspiring leader would use every strategy and opportunity, including the media, to attain power, because power would, in the final analysis, offer absolute authority. This finds space in Jensen's (2017) position on the control of digital space for information dissemination. He argues that, 'the capacities for interaction in web spaces organized by campaigns may attract supporters, but ultimately, decisions over campaign messaging, policy, strategies, and tactics remain with the formal campaign organization' (2017, p25). This suggests that an organization, or leader's, ability to control power would significantly enhance his/her chances of controlling all the structures that matter in the contest, including social media communications, and could potentially influence change in the organization of power within a political campaign. Similarly, power 'reflects a different paradigm and view, in that power with a person is the force emanating from the core of the person who commands the respect of others without the authority or responsibility of a position' (Parse, 2004, p2014). This suggests that political actors, especially leaders, will commit to the effective use of digital platforms to facilitate their resolve to attain power for a desired purpose. Responses tie in with the above argument, specifically on the fact that power is the source of strength, resources, and is a key influence on campaign decisions and success. Sikanku (Accra, 23/11/2017) explained that:

... in politics, leaders must be empowered to feel as if they are the ones in control and, messages emanating from them must be personalised, must be more engaging and interactive especially on social media, since that media is supposed to close the gap and dismantle those vertical relationships and make them more horizontal.

This explanation agrees with Stone's (2012) understanding of power as the capacity to make things happen that otherwise would not happen. For him, power is a significant form of causation, but can come in various forms.

Sikanku's (Accra, 23/11/2017) assertion resonates with other interviewees' positions, in that all arrangements, in terms of strategies and resources, are geared to capturing power. In effect, many of these political engagements are centered on the control of power (Stone, 2012). Their engagements varied in structure and form, ranging from press conferences to rallies, as well as training sessions, fund raising and membership outreach.

The arguments derive strength from the reactions of the electorate, particularly those of voting age who are part of the politically-minded active youth populace with unbridled interests

in the use of social media. The claim of interviewees was that the youth constitute about 60 per cent of those of voting age, and any attempt by a contestant to neglect them would happen at his/her own peril.

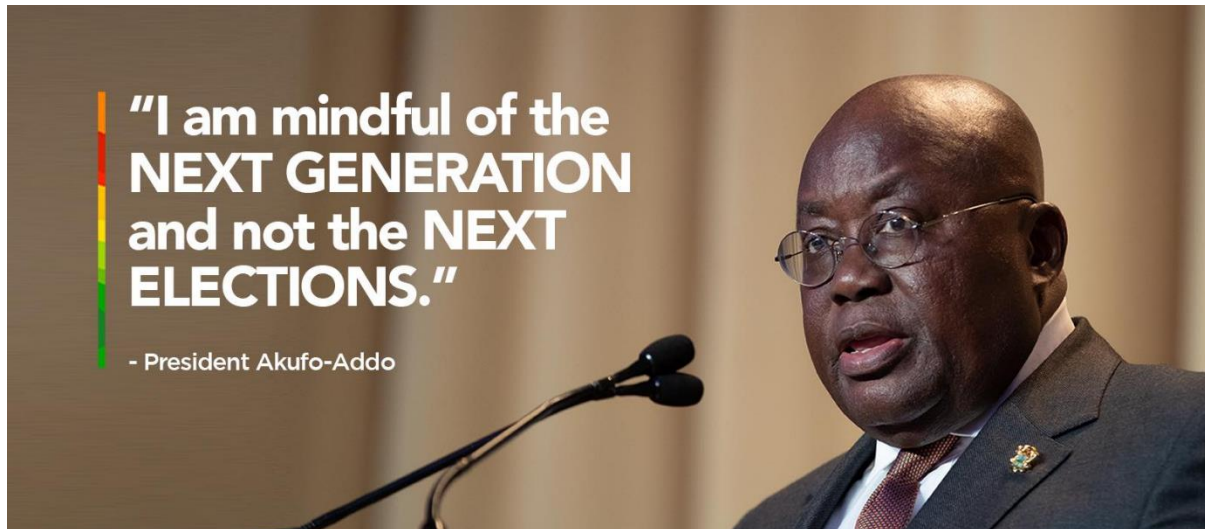


Figure 1. Timeline of then Candidate-Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo Page, 1.6M like this Politician. Source. *myjoyonline*



Figure 2. Facebook cover page of former President, John Dramani Mahama Page. Accra, Ghana. 1.1M like this Politician. Source. *myjoyonline*

There were varied opinions on this issue, but the consensus was that, although there was no scientific evidence to monitor comments through ‘likes’, ‘share’, etc., and posts on social media, particularly on the Facebook and Instagram platforms, the reaction of social media patrons (Figs. 1 and 2), to a large extent, gave credence to the assumption that contestants demand that

power plays a part in contests. This means that political communication strategies must be skewed towards winning the support of this category of the population if political parties are to excel in the contest for power.

Mensah (Accra, 30/10/2017) confirms that political actors' success in the use of digital tools in the contest for power will not only depend on the youth, but will also be largely contingent on how resourceful and committed they were in their attempt to harness and utilize digital devices. He posits that although a leader may be powerful and resourceful in using digital media to drive this, s/he must equally be amenable to the characteristics of digital spaces. Effectively, prospective leaders using digital media would be handicapped in relation to going viral if their messages were not appealing, not effective in delivering those messages, not engaging, or if a the message is not very contentious and not provocative. This fits into Parse's (2014) position, that power, in social media reflects potential modes for the expression of power, whereby force emanates from the personal words, images, graphics, and pictures that are intentionally posted to platforms, sites, blogs, and microblogs where interactions occur. The deduction is that if leaders are able to go viral, then, it means they are powerful in the way they organize and project and that also depends on the kind of tools that they use to create space and content. For example, the camera angles must be very powerful, to the extent that they can create very appealing, very engaging and very provocative content that people will find very interesting, and can then share and like it.

Typical examples are (Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6, below), when the then candidate, Nana Addo Dankwah Akuffo Addo, of the opposition NPP, was captured by media lenses sipping 'Kalypo', a local popular soft drink. The image went viral on social media, attracting criticism from some members of the ruling NDC, who said that the opposition leader was being populist and that the drink was a snack for school children. Although not scientific, some political analysts and political marketers claimed the NDC's reaction instead won some votes for the opposition NPP, because the latter capitalized on the NDC's reaction in order to impress on the electorate that the NDC was against 'Made in Ghana' goods, and in that the story broke amidst a serious national awareness creation project 'Buy made in Ghana products.'

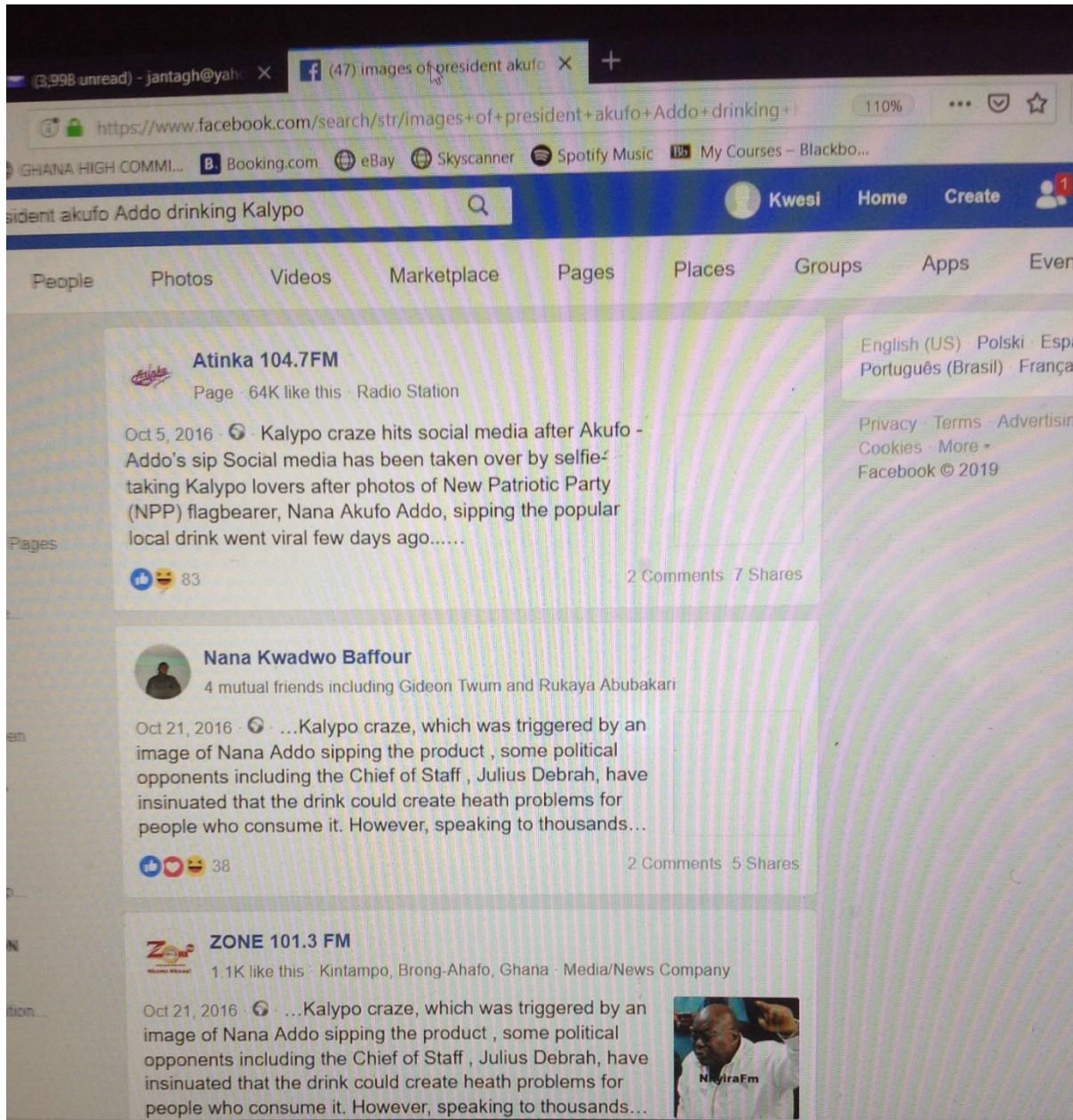


Figure 3. Story about then Candidate Akugo Addo captured sipping ‘Kalypo’ local popular soft drink, assumed to be for children. The story went viral on Facebook barely a month before Ghana’s 2016 general elections.

A




Figure 4. Images of then Candidate Akufo Addo (wearing spectacles and white top in the picture) of the NPP, captured sipping Kalypo, a local popular soft drink, assumed to be for children. The story went viral on Facebook.



Figure 5. Above, a cartoon showing the then opposition Candidate Akufo Addo teasing his opponent, the then incumbent candidate, Mahama, with a Kalypso drink.

THE HERALD  **Liman's Fate Must Not Befall Mahama**
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NPP MARKETS OLELE'S KALYPPO BABY DRINK
Over Its 2016 Manifesto

COCOBOD'S Massive Interventions To Farmers Revealed

Coming-Up Nduom To Disclose What Killed Eva Lokko

Petroleum Price Indicators (As at 1st August, 2016)

	PBU Effective 1st Aug, 2016 (12th - 26th July Averages)	Estimate for PBU Effective 16th Aug, 2016 (27th July - 11th Aug Averages)	% Change
BoG FX Rate (GH\$/USD)	3.9435	3.9482	0.12%
Crude Oil (USD/BBL)	45.28	40.74	-10.04%
Petrol (USD/MT)	454.73	430.46	-5.34%
Gasoil (USD/MT)	393.84	356.60	-9.45%
LPG (USD/MT)	292.23	257.17	-12.00%

*PBU - Price Build-Up

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Figure 6. Below :Local Newspaper *The Herald*, showing pictures of then opposition leader Akuffo Addo and other NPP big wigs, the Party Chairman Freddy Blay, the wife of the then opposition running mate, Samira Bawumiah, and the NPP Acting General secretary John Boadu

In Vegeer et al.'s (2011, p79) opinion, institutional political actors who had incorporated digital media into their communication strategies had engaged in a rapid process of adaption that

potentially yields good results. That is an indication that digital media, in the Ghanaian context, has become a novelty by offering new tools for political communication. A leader of a political party with such resources was therefore technically ripe for a successful contest for power. Besides, these resources must, in many ways, be reflected in terms of their communications and content creation, but do these efforts influence the citizenry in their choice of leadership and preferences for political parties?

This was among the various follow-up questions that attracted varied responses from interviewees, in that projecting persons and parties via the new media required decent and recognized leadership traits and organizational skills that would be convincing enough to attract the electorates. As Monney (Accra, 18/11/2017) argued, social media offer a depth of knowledge to contestants, and those sources could be used as a laboratory to help diagnose the qualities of a good leader. This gives credence to the assumption that any piece of information that becomes persistent, especially on social media, had the potential to convince the judgment of social media savvy patrons, particularly during the political campaigning season.

8.5 Is Every User of a Digital Device Talking Politics?

The arguments above further prompted a conversation on the assumption that most people using digital devices were likely to use them for political communication purposes, especially mobile phones. In other words, do the proliferation of digital devices, and their uses among the citizenry, mean that every user is talking politics? This attracted varied responses, but the consensus was that everybody using digital devices (smart phones) consumed a bit of news, in view of the fact that politics dominated discussions in the media. However, there are other demographic variables, like income, education, access and age, that might possibly intervene in the kind of information or news on social media and that should also be considered a determinant of the digital device uses.

Beyond income, we look at social status or living conditions, or people's social status; definitely, in the rural areas, there are a different set of factors, and the Internet might not be as big of a deal when it comes to political campaigns as it is in urban areas (Sikanku, Accra, 23/11/2017).

This is an indication that several factors potentially influence ownership and the way the devices are used and, in fact, this is not always necessarily to communicate in relation to politics.

Braimah (Accra, 27/1/2018) agrees with this, but argues that several people who were using digital platforms for professional communications might be into client or customer relations and have other commitments. Braimah's position thus finds space in the belief that the devices were being used for different purposes, including politics, for example, to access Facebook because s/he had created a platform for a specific purpose, and it becomes difficult to assess the impact this makes on the electorate in terms of persuasion. This is in line with Aldrich et al.'s, argument, that:

... even if campaigns could reach a large pool of undecided voters through these channels, their efforts may well be counter-productive. Mobile phones and platforms like Facebook are highly personalized mediums [sic] of communication, and unsolicited messages are likely to be regarded as more intrusive than a 'cold call' to a landline, or a flyer posted through the mailbox, it becomes difficult (2016, p.166).

The implication is that one cannot predict the recognition or the benefits that users would presumably attach to the use of a device, with particular reference to engagement with political issues that stray onto their platforms. At least those who can read and write will understand the text, and it is highly possible that even illiterates, on platforms like Facebook or WhatsApp, will comprehend and appreciate messages, be it politics or something other that strays onto their devices, especially if they are constituted of info graphs, local languages, or are in pictorial forms.

Probably, Yeboah's (Accra, December 10, 2017), response may provide a very cogent clue to the assumptions. In his opinion, it was difficult to conclude that people using mobile phones and other digital devices were using them for politics, but, speaking in relation to website (*graphiconline*) traffic, for example, gave a clue to what people were reading, and thus per publication, usually in terms of affinity and in-market traffic. His experience also affirms other arguments from some of the interviewees, that the process of monitoring why people use digital platforms may also be dependent on seasons, including the political campaign era.

I observed that not only did most broadcast stations increase the number of political discussion programs a few months ahead of elections, but they also varied the existing ones with innovations to enhance quality in the content. I also observed that most of the political discussions on radio derived their sources from trending issues on social media, especially WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram.

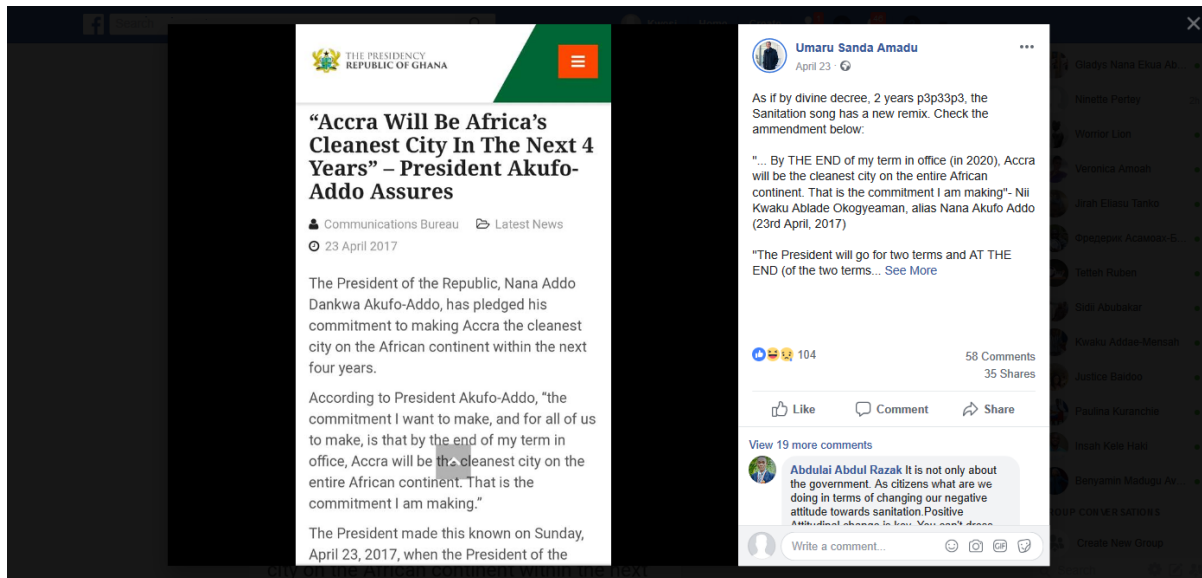


Figure 7. A trending issue sourced from social media for debate on radio and television broadcasts.

So, yes, from my end, I will say that people were using them for various things, sometimes even personal communication and what have you, but most traffic was on politics, and people discussed virtually all the issues, therefore, you think political messages were sinking in. Besides, post-election evaluation by some of the political parties and interest groups, tell you that the messages did not go in vain, I mean, they hit the targets where they were supposed to hit (Yeboah, 10/12/ 2017).

The statement above reaffirms the argument from some of the interviewees that one should not be dismissive about assessments on evaluation pertaining to the post political season, and that assertion further raises more arguments on the assumption that everyone using a digital device might be discussing politics, because politics is in the ‘DNA’ of Ghanaians. For example, Kpessah –Whyte (Accra, 7/11/2017) posits that politics in Ghana seemed to have permeated everywhere, livelihoods, occupations, and career pursuit, and therefore political news seemed to be thrown at the citizenry on social media without invitation.

A key issue that resonated in the responses was that although people might not necessarily set out to say they were using the platform for political purposes, they might engage in a discussion, since, when the topics came, confirming the philosophical saying that ‘man is a great political animal, so we tend to do it everywhere we find ourselves. This is in line with Gainous and Wagner’s (2014) observation that half of voting Americans used SNSs in 2010 (59%), but very

few of them used those sites to seek information of a political nature, and even those that did use SNSs for political information tended to be the more politically engaged. According to these scholars, those citizens tended to follow the news more often and were members in more civic groups. Similarly, the study's findings revealed that those who used SNSs for political information tended to prefer one-sided information. This suggests, similarly to the American example that politicians are handicapped in their bid to engage their audience on social media, to some extent, given that their audience is already prone to participation and already agree with their policy positions (ibid). These observations further extend the debate on the assumption that mobile phone users are into political discourse.

For example, Ayiku (Tema, 14/12/2017) notes that holding a mobile device was not about direct politics, but people commented on things that might affect them that were being initiated by the politicians. There could thus be some level of influence on participation in political deliberation. The above observation suggests that digital platforms, in the Ghanaian context, largely dominated politics. Avle (2017) confirms how Ghanaians are actively participating in radio broadcast programs via the use of Twitter. According to her, a local FM station, *Citi97.3*, creates space via the use of Twitter in which citizens can contribute to various programs, including political discussions and political talk shows.

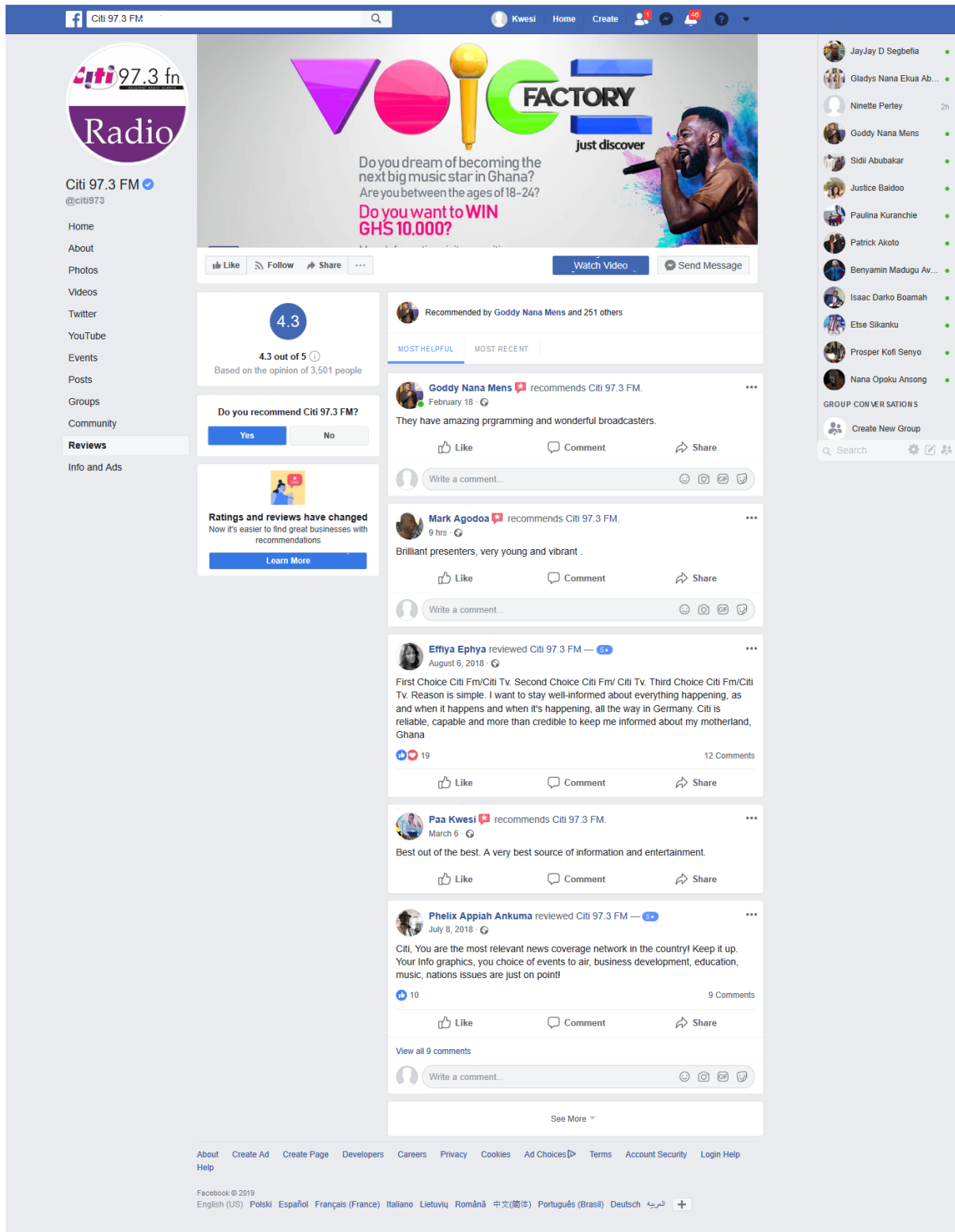


Figure 8 Above, a Citi97.3 space via the use of twitter in which citizens can contribute to various programs, including political discussions and political talk shows.

Braimah (Accra, January 27, 2018) considered these developments to be promising for future political campaigns, but emphasized that digital platforms' dominance would eventually depend on regulations that would guide their usage. This means that digital platforms might possibly be major platforms on which people engage, as against traditional media, because they potentially break barriers in communication. In Braimah's, opinion:

... on radio, you either have to call -in, or text in, and it takes the discretion of the producer or presenter to have your voice heard, but with your phone you can always say what you want and engage people, somebody responds and you reply, and so on and so forth (Accra, 27/1/2018).

This suggests that digital media will promote free expression and enhance democracy, as posited by Loader and Mercea (2011), and social media have the potential to contribute to the development of democracy.

Potentials in the role of digital media in Ghanaian political campaigning are reinforced by responses from Asa Asante (Accra, 26/1/2018), who said that digital platforms might be vehicles that carried a message, but should be strategically targeted at the preferred audience in terms of what they wanted to hear. Such messages should be packaged on all fronts to make the needed impact in political communications, because digital media have a democratizing effect on political campaigning, in view of their interactive capacities and their potential to create a participatory architecture through which to facilitate interactions between campaigns and supporters that otherwise do not exist (Lilleker and Jackson, 2010).

The interviewees' consensus was that, once the audience's expectations were met, messages would definitely yield positive results, especially if they were based on research, as that helped to determine what text to communicate to suit them. This would make digital platforms indispensable tools for political parties, and thus political actors stood the risk of paying for the communication deficit if they rejected the devices, more especially when dealing with a significant digital media-savvy generation, like the youth. The youth became a typical example at the center of this argument because, in the opinion of interviewees, as Agbenu revealed, 'the youth form a highly significant number of our population, and their minds are fertile, they can't tell between propaganda, lies and spin and other, they know and can read in between the lines (Accra, 12/2/2018). This means that sometimes the caliber of audience needed to be considered by the

leadership who were aspiring for power when they were fashioning strategies, so that the full impact of digital platforms could be maximized.

In effect, social media platforms have become social mobilization tools to attain the objectives of most political parties, thereby, essentially moving political communications in the matter of campaigning for new realms of access, and given political leadership and organizations a new segment of people that could be targeted, in addition to the ‘traditional’ audience. Although not scientifically proven, the arguments, as espoused by the interviewees, extend the debate on political actors, digital tools and the contest for power further for review.

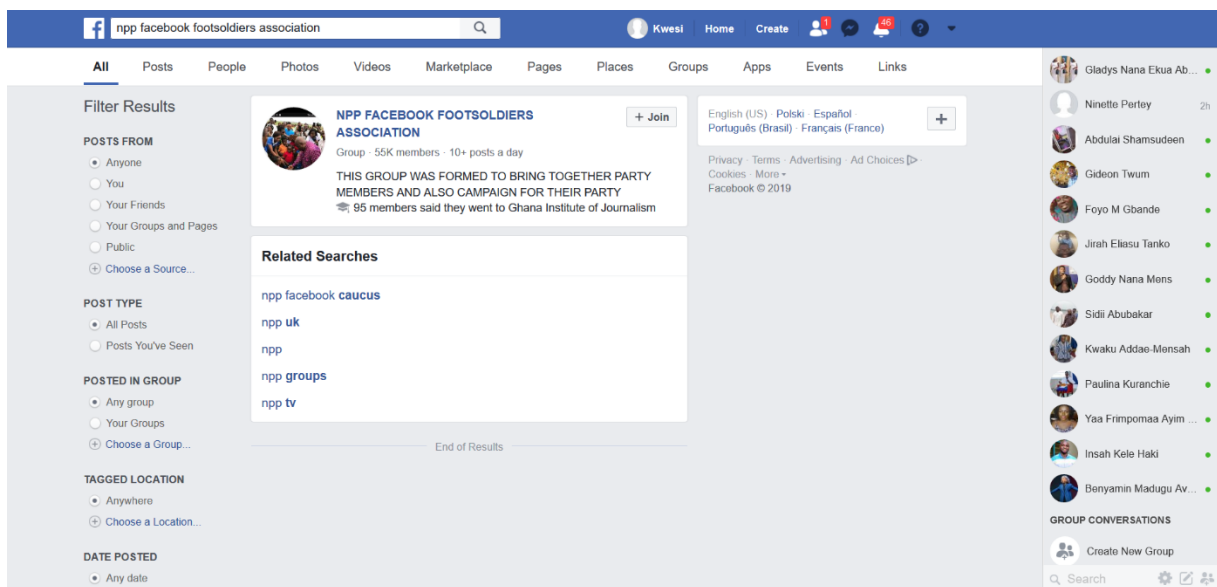


Figure 9. Above: social media platform, NPP Foot-soldiers’ Association, to mobilize party followers in the 2016 elections.



Figure 10. Below: NDC group for mobilizing female support for the candidate, John Mahama, in 2016.

8.6 The Use of Digital Tools in Contemporary Political Campaigns in Ghana

The use of digital platforms in Ghanaian politics became widespread in 2016, although their usage dates back to 2008. There had been various assumptions in terms of their significance, as espoused in the previous argument, particularly in regard to their role and influence in political campaigning. It thus became expedient to probe how political actors were maximizing the impact of the social media platforms, more especially, in the 2012 and 2016 elections, in that the adoption of digital platforms promises to be a key factor for successful political campaigning in the future.

Key issues, raised by most of the interviewees, covered their understanding and appreciation of digital tools, projections for future uses, especially challenges, such as the lack of accessibility and the unreliability of digital devices, the misuse of SNS's and inequity.

These concerns and challenges notwithstanding, interviewees considered digital platforms to be added value to the extant channels of communication, that potentially create space and that further broaden the scope for political discourse relating to the consolidation of democracy in Ghana.

Whilst allowing people to take full advantage of the new media opportunities to produce their own material, such as movies or blogs,

which can be empowering and have a positive impact, there is also a downside, where such instant, public communication can have negative effects or damage other members of society. It is important to ensure that democracy and equality are sustained in this new collective space (Archer-Lean and Pavitt, 2011).

The import of the quotation above suggests that social media, as choices to augment existing channels in political communication, should not be considered sacrosanct, the platforms have inherent problems (as discussed earlier) that, equally, must be addressed. However, the challenges should not negate the entire dividend that is to be accrued from social media, which have become unavoidable platforms and tools in contemporary political communication, especially in relation to the enhancement of free expression, by providing a myriad of information sources and accessibility as an alternative space for the citizenry.

Most interviewees appreciated digital platforms as a novelty in communication space that was without bounds, providing the opportunity for virtual interactivity to mankind. Their thinking was that SNSs had begun to close the communication gap, and, invariably, to dismantle hitherto vertical forms of communication, culminating in the lack of instant feedback and inadequate space for participation. New technologies enable audiences to simultaneously create and consume media content in a more noticeable manner, and even broadcasters capitalize on this to pursue participatory programming and trumpet it as the triumph of freedom of expression (Abubakar, 2017).

Similarly, respondents agreed with the description of digital platforms as new technology, in consonance with Kaid and Holtz-Bacha's, (2008) definition of new media technologies, as encompassing online tools, such as blogging, podcasting, political party/candidate websites, SNSs, and online video-sharing websites, etc., with their advantages of not being restrictive in terms of time and location, irrespective of users.

For example, the Editor of *myjoyonline*, 17Malik (18/2/2018), argued:

... today, virtually everybody has Internet access on their smartphones. Everyone has access, so people are sitting in 'trotro' and they are reading

17 Malik Abass Daabu was the Editor of *myjoyonline*, one of Ghana's leading privately – owned online portals for information dissemination. It is one of several online portals managed by the Multi-Media group.

a story on myjoyonline and they are surfing Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter.

Arguably, the development of the platforms has enhanced these things (communication) because, when: ‘I do a story, we have our social media platforms, so we can pick the link of the story and put it there’ (18/2/2018). Malik’s appreciation of digital platforms not only reveals the relevance of the key platforms dominating the Ghanaian political campaign spaces, but also how patrons were using the devices. Again, it is a justification that social media must be effectively utilized, taking account of their full potentials in contemporary political communication, and they are not to be considered a static technology with which to propagate ideologies and promote propaganda. To be deduced from Malik’s arguments are the debates they raise pertaining to issues of preferences for platforms, as adopted by political parties, and as expressed by interviewees.

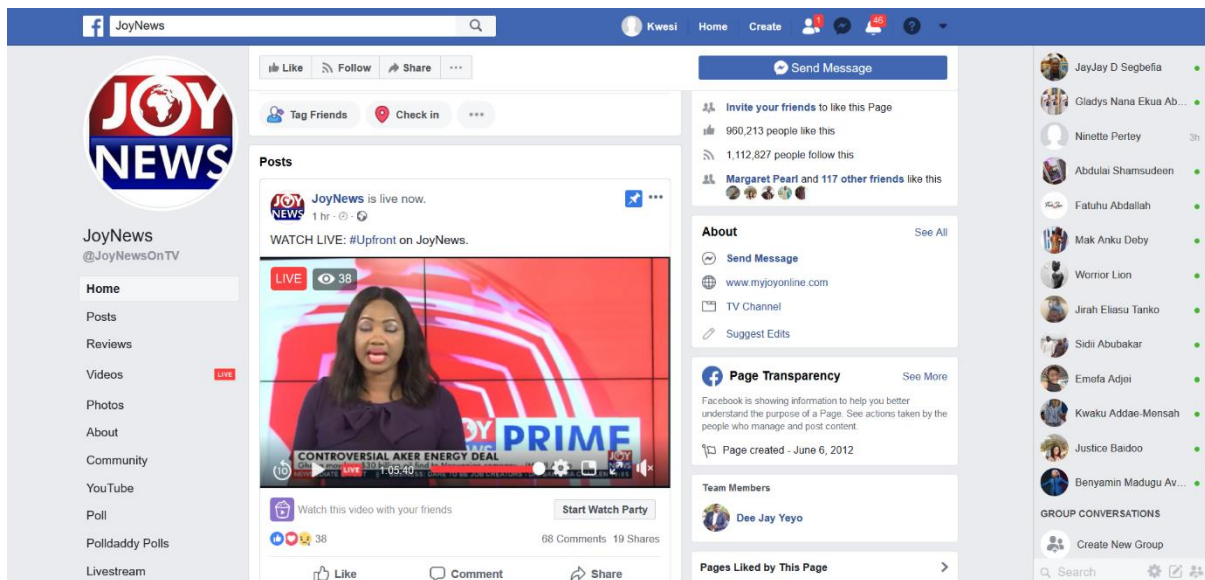


Figure 11. Below: JOYNEWS created space for the citizenry to participate in debates on politics.

8.7 Most Patronized Digital Platforms for political campaign

Interviewees maintained that the use of digital platforms was dependent on choice, convenience and patronage, although their observations were not scientific. However, narrations by Ahiabenu (Accra, 14/1/ 2018) on findings related to the issue (Penplusbytes, 2017), revealed a widespread use of Facebook by both political actors and the electorate during both 2012 and 2016, and that sought to settle on Facebook as the most patronized platform of all. According to him, Facebook

was widely used to share videos, pictures and audio visuals, because of its far-reaching implications, and for both 'good and bad' purposes, by the citizenry, especially for political motives. Doworkpor (Accra, 24/2/2018) and Agbenu, (Accra, 12/2/2018) agreed with Ahiabenu's observation, as they maintained that WhatsApp users, for example, might be motivated by the platform's advantages of interactivity and promptness, in contrast to traditional media. Their assertion sought to reignite the debate relating to some of the arguments that make the gatekeeping role of the traditional media defunct in news production. In effect, the traditional media's gate-keeping role has become defunct, thereby making it unattractive to most patrons, as Shabir (2015) argued, that, under the gatekeeping process, information is filtered for dissemination, the gatekeeper, or gatekeepers, fix on which information is relevant after sorting it out in a hierarchy that determines what they need. Emanating from Shabir's argument is the assumption that the gatekeeping process offers opportunities to the managers of media to control both the content and the form of vital information, in sharp contrast to social media, which literally have no bounds.

Equally attractive to patrons after facebook was Twitter. Sikanku (23/11/2017), explained that, Twitter had become a 'preserve' of a class of people with status, and the platform had been widely used, irrespective of seasons, even after the political campaign season. 'So, I will say Twitter has featured strongly, not just by the candidate or the parties, but by their surrogates, to send out information and mobilize' (Accra, 23/11/2017). This ties in with Adoli's (London, 5/3/2018) argument that Twitter was considered efficient because it was limited, in terms of the volume of text messages, and so users were forced to summarize their content and to be on point. What that means is that Twitter is advantaged by algorithms that tend to put messages together, either regionally or in terms of subject areas, and that has facilitated research on geographical terms, based on which issues were trending. This advantage fits into the interviewees' views on the platforms providing countless streams of videos, mainly songs, for various political parties' campaigns on YouTube, on which the videographers of aspiring candidates and political parties manage pictures and posts.

On the contrary, Yeboah (10/12/2017), the Editor of *graphiconline*, maintained that the most popular site, as monitored by his portal, was Facebook, in view of its flexibility and its uncontrolled space for users. For him:

Facebook has enabled everyone who wants to publish with virtually every tool you need, whether it is text, whether it is voice, whether it is video, whether it is an image, you can publish virtually everything, and you can also now select, pinpoint who reads what content you want to put up, so, reader aggregation is activated on Facebook, but beyond Facebook, we also have WhatsApp groups that are clearly monitored and YouTube as well (Accra, 10/12/2017).

Yeboah's response indicated that it was not only a matter of throwing a message out there and not knowing who was going to read it, but also that it offered an opportunity to build a readership profile on Facebook that was directed at specific targets in terms of message.

However, a response from other interviewees, particularly, Agbenu (Accra, 12/2/2018) and Ayiku (Tema, 14/12/2017), sought to suggest that the choice of network had no limitation, irrespective of the motivation. For example, Ayiku observed that:

... political actors are using Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and Twitter. Even though they had created video channels on YouTube, they also had audio channels on SoundCloud, photo galleries on Flickr and Picasa, which are connected to all these social media platforms, so, on their websites, it became possible to access Facebook and Instagram icons which they used for campaign activities (Tema, 14/12/ 2017).

The arguments above also give credence to the fact that various factors have motivated the use of the digital platforms, and these were most probably dependent on strategies adopted by prospective managers, but that must be based on empirical evidence, in addition to various concerns, such as the reliability and availability of the platforms.

Arguably, issues of the availability and reliability of digital devices generated another topical issue that was of much concern to interviewees. For example, the *1st Quarter Social Media Index Report of Ghana* by Penplusbytes (2017) revealed,

...there is no doubt that factors such as the quality of Ghana's Internet infrastructure, which is presently either slow or costly, have translated into low Internet penetration, making online activities a lot more cumbersome than necessary. These factors notwithstanding, Ghana's media brands are simply yet to make more pronounced their work in virtual space (ibid).

This is an indication of the extent of the deficit in digital facilities which has relatively posed challenges to the use of SNSs. For the interviewees, inadequate access to digital facilities had the tendency to limit the impact of digital media in the country's overall political activities. These

concerns are expressly echoed in Lilleker's (2006, p. 194) position on the impact of inadequate communication tools in the overall campaigning process. He opined that lacks of capacity, resources, professionalism, and firm policies influence the performance of the media, and this adversely affects the trends in, and nature of, campaigns in an electoral democracy. Similarly, interviewees bemoaned the inequality gap between the haves and have nots, in terms of mobile phones, computers, and other digital devices, which were key communications tools that powered digital channels, in addition to problems of illiteracy and poverty, which, they maintained, adversely compounded the challenges associated with the adoption of digital platforms for campaigning. Such challenges potentially adversely influenced participation, as against ensuring that democracy and equality are sustained in this new collective space (Archer-Lean and Pavitt 2011).

For example, Adoli, also a member of the NDC social media team, thought that 'Twitter had been hugely under-exploited, blogging is not very well exploited, concentration on YouTube and Instagram not exploited' (London, 5/3/2018). For him, all the digital platforms must be seriously considered by politicians so that their decisions will be meaningful, as they would be target-based. His concerns have a correlation with Yoo and Gil de Zuniga's (2014) assertion that although Facebook is beneficial, because its exposure appears to increase the issues and the civic knowledge of citizens, especially individual with a high educational level. This suggests that political actors must be strategic enough to determine the right platforms, based on the need and level of their audiences, because they might be dealing with different electorates from different backgrounds.

For Braimah (27/1/2018), those challenges were important issues, but the reality was that connectivity was expanding, day in day out. In his opinion:

...people who can access the Internet are expanding, the service providers are reaching out to areas where there is a problem. That move will potentially expand the literacy rate to the extent that more people would be engaged through the digital platforms, because they would have access to mobile phones, smartphones, and other relevant digital devices (Accra, 27/1/2018).

Braimah's position becomes more relevant because the devices are necessary tools to facilitate effective communication, in view of the fact that contemporary campaign techniques are contingent on advanced technology, as Campaign change suggested (Kavanagh 1995, p. 25).

Interviewees proposed a review in strategies to ensure that politicians realized the full benefits of digital platforms for campaigns. They were of the view that most challenges associated with digital platforms may be attributed to misconceptions and the value attached to the social platforms. As Ayiku observed:

...we lack knowledge and, if we are sending images that people need, a lot of data to download, what's the use? If the colors are not also appealing to the eyes, it can also be a problem. There are a lot of factors; the availability of Internet, does the target audience have access to Internet? (Tema, 14/12/2017).

The relevance of Ayiku's statement is premised on the fact that the content of messages must be kept very simple, precise, attractive, and as 'light' as possible, in order to catch the attention of the target audience (Hudson and Rowlands, 2007). While lamenting blatant misuse of digital devices, for example, their churning out of fake news for different purposes, interviewees believed only education and strict policy guidelines could influence the use of digital platforms for the benefit of politics and other human endeavors.

All these sentiments are challenges that relate to Farrell et al.'s, critical questions as to whether parties could be reasonably expected to respond fully to the demands of campaigning in a Digital Age, For example, 'have the techniques of modern campaigning really been so significant as to force parties to redefine their roles and call for the services of the consulting industry?' (2001, p. 12). Effectively, the challenges and questions espoused by scholars require concrete answers on the use of digital tools in political campaigning in Africa, especially in Ghana.

The answers may be derived partially from Kavanagh (1995), in the notion that he advances for changes in campaigns, that: 'today, by contrast, the national leaders are supported by research and professional help, fight media-oriented, particularly television-oriented, campaigns, 'target' groups of voters, 'pace' the campaign and fight on the agenda' (pp.25-26), This requires the involvement of members who have undergone some kind of specialist training, and the development of an occupational code of practice that is administered by a separate and self – regulating associated body (Herzog et al., 1990). Political actors, especially political communicators and strategists, thus needed to evolve all-involving strategies, including the use of professionals to help to further their campaigns, if they are to achieve success in political campaigning in the digital era.

8.8. How were Digital Platforms Used for Campaigns in Ghana's 2012 and 2016 Elections?

There is no doubt that political actors used digital platforms extensively for their political organization's and campaign activities, at least on the basis of their preferences, if not those of all of them, as Kreiss (2016b) evidences, that most political campaigns often use social media platforms, for example, Twitter, to shape debates, and to influence and help frame issues within the campaign process. This was also evidenced in stories sourced from digital platforms in various media (print and electronic), both outside of and during the political campaign seasons in the Ghanaian context.

Almost all political parties were, to some extent, visible on social media as complements to the traditional media (Penplusbytes, 2017), because the transformation of social networks into one of the most relevant means of mass communication has not gone unnoticed by the specialists in the field of politics, who take advantage of the opportunity to reach out to voters (Androniciuc, 2016, citing John, 2013; Kaid, 2009; Chadwick, 2010; Cogburn, 2011). The conduct of Ghana's political actors has been no different from that of their counterparts in Western democracies regarding their choices of media for political activities; and that they have been exposed to the benefits accruing from the use of social media. It is thus useful to elicit views from experts in terms of how the platforms were used from the perspectives of leadership, political parties and other stakeholders, with emphasis on the effectiveness of usage, and what digital platforms hold for future political campaigns that are relative to the traditional media.

There was consensus among the interviewees that the role of digital platforms in the 2012 and 2016 electioneering campaigns could not be discounted, but they shared different views on the impact they made, in view of the outcome of the elections and how social media were used in various political activities and spaces.

Sikanku observed, in response, that digital platforms were used 'to acclaim their achievement, they used it to attack and sometimes they used it to defend. But I think that most times, in Ghana, the social media are used more to acclaim, out of all the three functions' (Accra, 23/11/2017). His observation sought to suggest that digital platforms were, to some extent, used by political actors to flaunt themselves, to talk about themselves, their achievements and their

accomplishments, and this is very typical in political campaigning. Although Sikanku's (Accra, 23/11/2017) observations were not scientifically proven, he believed that, like Dimitroval and Bystrom (2013) who researched the functions of social media as a political communicative tool, the impact of communications tools, required some scientific basis or proof and, therefore, he based his measurement on public perception and, to some extent, through recall, to determine how much people were able to recall messages on Facebook, and what they were able to use them for. It can be argued, therefore, that the platforms, to some extent, have created space for discourse. For Yeboah, such spaces were efficiently maximized by political parties and their leadership. In his view:

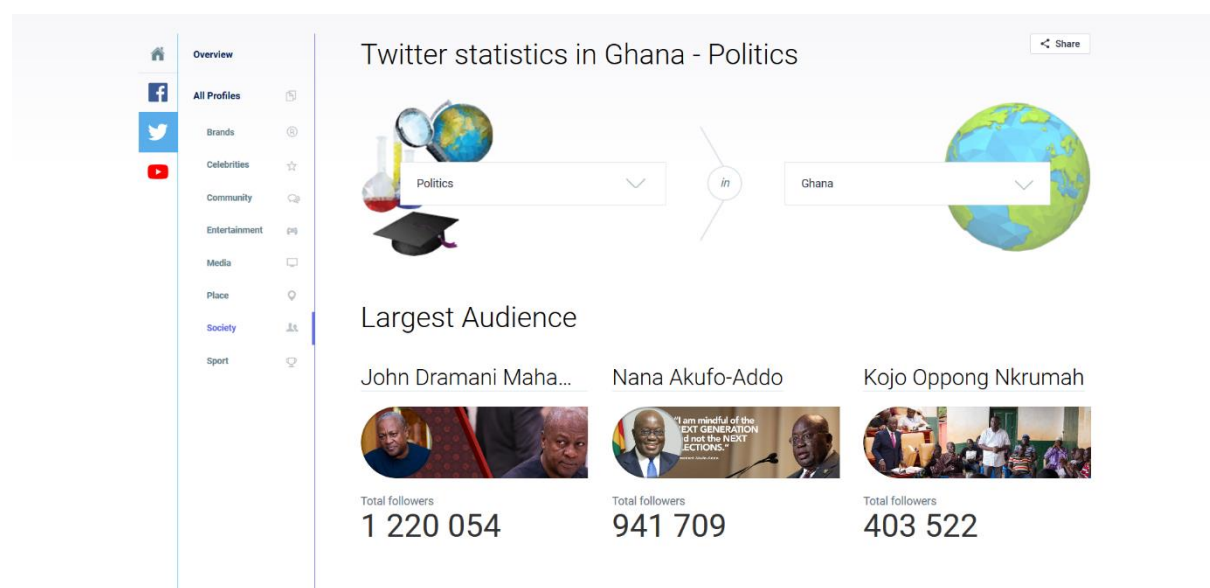
... the platforms were seriously used and, at the end of the day, you could also see political parties working hand in hand with media houses, pushing messages to publish, and these were the measured messages we think got the result for the parties, in terms of communication (Accra, 10/12/2017).

Yeboah's position presupposes that there may be a healthy connection between the sources of stories in the context of digital and traditional media, as suggested by Bright (2017), in his study *Does Campaigning on Social Media Make a Difference? Evidence from Candidate Use of Twitter during the 2015 and 2017 UK Elections*. His findings provided evidence that suggests that the impact of Twitter is mediated through other channels, such as the mainstream media.



Figure 12. Below: an online story from the Volta Region, the stronghold of the then, ruling NDC making the headline. Courtesy, *Ghanaweb.com*

This was clear in most of the traffic on news portals, in that personal and party communications channels were choked with heavy traffic on political news. Besides, remarks by political actors, notably public interest groups and political parties, on post-campaign and post-election evaluations, has suggested that messages disseminated via digital platforms sunk deeply into the minds of most of the electorate. Alidu (Accra, 3/1/2018) agreed with this assertion, opining that interactions with a number of political actors, and constant monitoring of the media, established that messages from most political actors and parties did not go in vain, they hit the targets they were supposed to hit. Alidu's argument was based on the premises that, for example, most 'serial callers' and regular contributors to phone-in programs made references to messages normally contained in statements by political actors and vice-versa, as published in the mainstream or social media. These connections establish, to a large extent, the symbiotic relationship that exists between the newsmakers' sources and their impact on audiences, and that they potentially impact heavily on the electorate in relation to their preferences in terms of their choices of leadership and political parties. The observations above seek to suggest the extent to which political actors have relied on digital platforms, for example, with a smart phone, political parties could record videos and put them on social media. This researcher and the interviewees observed that a number of politicians and other political stakeholders, especially Presidential and Parliamentary aspirants and some CSOs had social media accounts, notably, Facebook and Twitter accounts, where they interacted with the audience to court sympathy and support for their cause. Archer-Lean and Pavitt, in a study on the examination of the potentials of Twitter in political activities



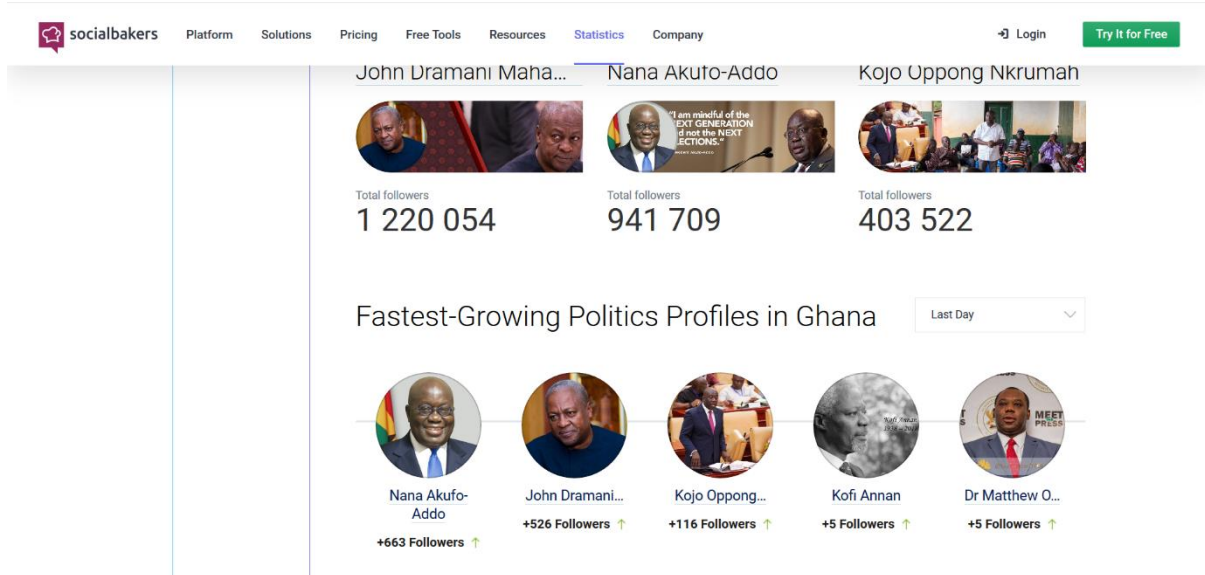


Figure 13. Above: statistics of Twitter accounts, indicating those politicians with ‘large audiences’ and those with the Fastest-Growing Politics Profiles in Ghana. Source. Socialbakers (2016) in Australia notes, for example, that ‘the dialogic and conversational aspects of twitter has been shown to be the most beneficial functionality of twitter for politicians, as constituencies are aware of the ‘spin’ inherent in simply using twitter to broadcast’ (2011, p. 4). This establishes the probability that digital platforms may be beneficial to political actors, as projected by Doworkpor, who wrote: ‘*as of election 2016, I saw something around 50-50 but I believe that from the way things are going, by 2020 we will reach 70% - 30% in favour of new media*’. (Accra, 24/2/2018), apparently comparing the impact of social media and the traditional media within those periods. However, confirming how digital media were used in the 2012 and 2016 election campaigning and went beyond the use of smart phones and other digital devices, because both digital and traditional media depended on each other as sources of information, especially television and radio, to transform mass communication’s effects on political campaign (Benoit, McKinney and Stephenson (2002); Kaid, (2004); Moy, Xenos and Hess (2006) and Baumgartner and Morris (2006) In the opinion of these scholars, advertisements, political information and campaign messages, channeled through the traditional media, had equally impacted on the electorate, both old and young. For example, Ahiabenu (Accra, 14/1/2017) believed the impact was not only in monitoring the campaign activities of political parties and the estimated expenses incurred by political parties in campaigns, but also the amount of money involved in political party campaign activities. His position was that:

... if you look at the spending on political campaigns, we saw a remarkable increase, and politicians spending money on Facebook, so what we are seeing are the ads, so we monitored those ads and it has increased across the board, so there is significant expenditure, at least at the national level, the presidential candidates spending money on those channels a lot more than even compared to the previous election (Accra, 14/1/2018).

In effect, the expenses that covered political party advertisements, promos, in fact, the content of political party campaign programs, such as rallies, interviews, press releases, all on various digital platforms, is convincing enough to endorse the argument that political parties patronized social media with good reason.

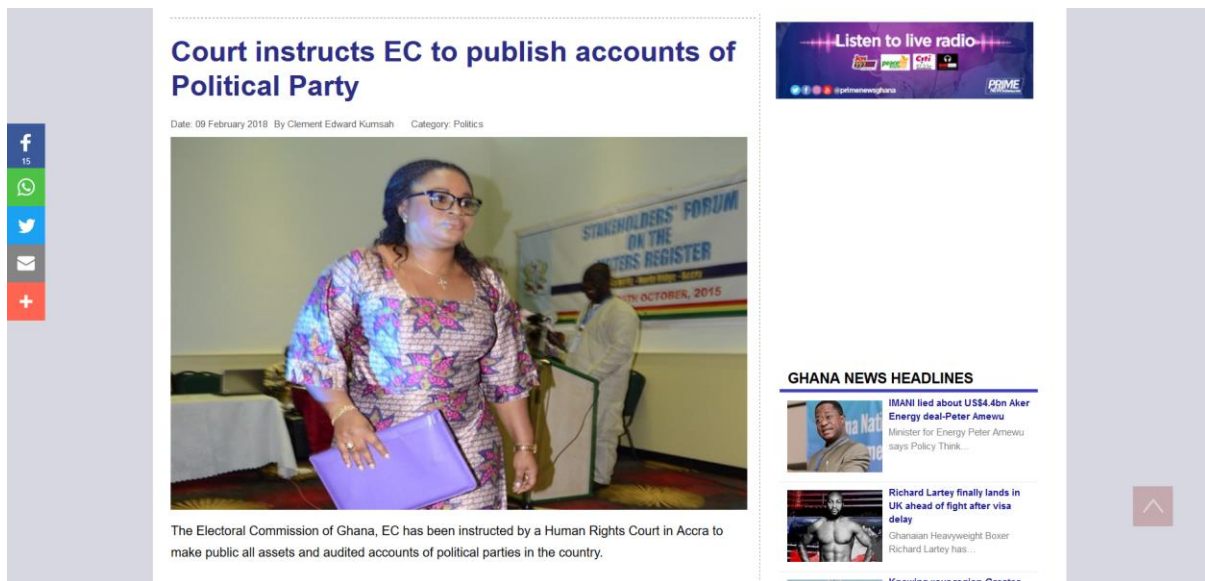


Figure 14: Above, Madam Charlotte Osei Ghana's EC for the 2016 elections being instructed by a court in Ghana's capital, Accra, to publish the accounts of the political parties.

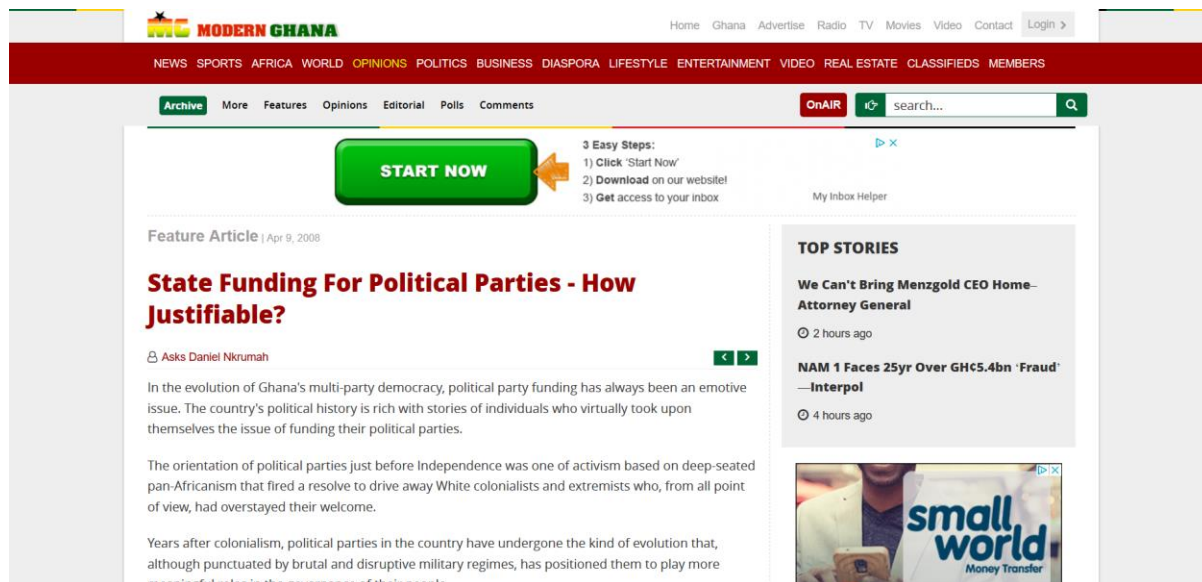


Figure 15. Above: an article by a lecturer/journalist, Daniel Nkrumah (PhD). The article provided analysis on ‘State Funding for Political Parties in Ghana’.

The observation is that there has been a paradigm shift from the mentality of political actors, in terms of their approach to the media, because most politicians combined both traditional and digital media. Hitherto, only financially wealthy politicians could afford to advertise in the traditional media, but the situation is entirely different in the current political campaigns’ dispensation. Agbenu agrees with me that:

Today, most politicians have accounts on social media platforms; they manage to campaign using those platforms, and also display what they have done and can do in pictures, audio and in video. Similarly, parties set up video channels, photo galleries and audio channels and they use them to campaign (Accra, 12/2/2018).

This largely confirms how politicians were making use of digital platforms, and the inference or possibility that challenges of affordability, in terms of funding, had been negated by the virtual inexpensive space that is provided by social media platforms and their creation of horizontal spaces of communication, against otherwise hierarchical political campaigns that were controlled by the elite in the broadcast era of politics (Jensen, 2017). For example, huge sums of money are expended on rallies by political parties, and these attract debates on social media, where individuals express freely their thoughts on democracy, especially their rationale for choices of political parties and the potential leaders to stand for the presidency and, in view of the parliaments.

The debates are extended to the traditional media, because proceedings at such events make headlines, and, in view of pronouncements by speakers, these broaden the deliberation and enhance participation in multi-party democracy.



Figure 16. The scene at an NDC rally at Ghana's national stadium in the capital, Accra, ahead of the December 2016 elections, as captured by *myjoyonline.com*.



Figure 17. An NPP rally at Ksoa in the Central Region of Ghana, ahead of the 2016 elections, as captured by *myjoyonline.com*.

There is every indication that funding plays a critical role in a successful campaign. ‘Candidates spend to increase their vote share’ (Nagler and Leighley, 1992), inform voters (Freedman et al., 2004), and, in the case of incumbents, they keep control of the office they hold (Green, 2006) by reason of the power they wield as leaders. Even though spending *per se* does not equal higher rates of turnout in the aggregate (Geer and Lau, 2006; cited in Richey and Taylor, 2012). This is an indication that funding is indispensable in political campaigning, because campaign resources influence outcomes: the more money candidates have, the better they do (ibid).

One interesting revelation that also resonated in the interviews was the respondents’ appreciation of the interactive nature of social media, at least politicians had received instant responses from their electorates on the things that they had done. That underscored not only the meaning of social media as platforms for:

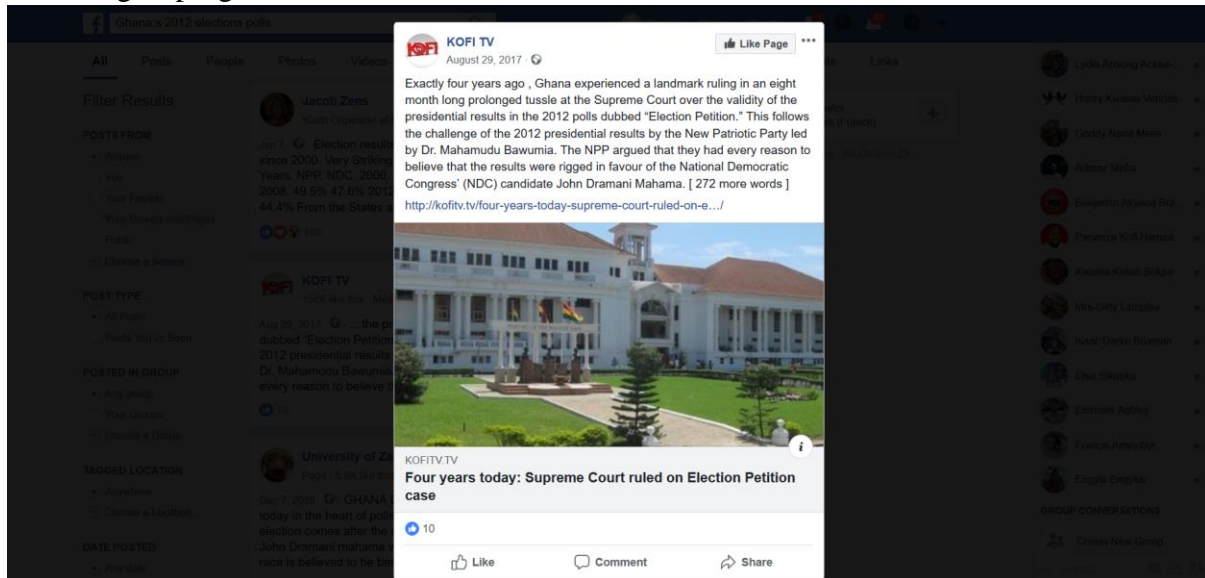
...dialogue, interactivity, and feedback (Xenos and Moy, 2007; Sweetser and Larisey, 2008), but also, the essence of social media, as platforms

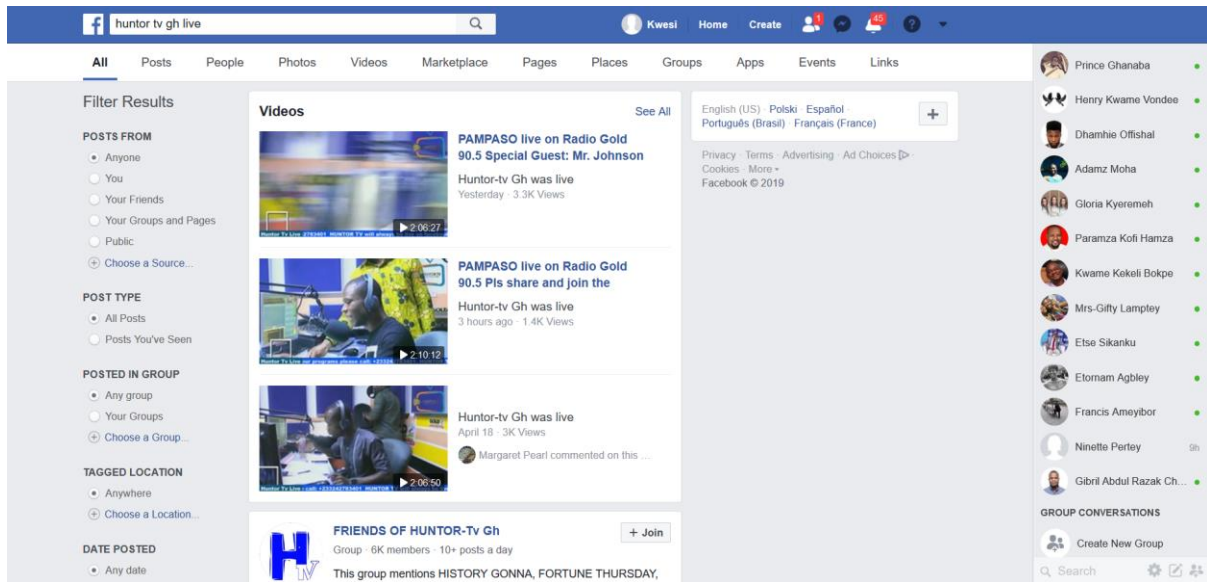
that facilitate accidental exposure to news and political content and permit all users to publicly show their agreement or disagreement through posting content and commenting (lilleker and Koc-Michalska 2017, p25).

That, again, suggested that the social media have created a useful space for both political actors and electorates, based on the ‘likes’ and ‘dislikes’ options that are provided by the platforms.

I observed that the space also provided an opportunity for individual journalists to broadcast a live stream of political parties’ programs, without recourse to funds from those parties. These broadcasts always generated huge debate among the citizenry outside the traditional media. ‘That is our contribution to democracy’, Kofi TV and Hunter TV told this researcher during informal interviews with a couple of citizen journalists.

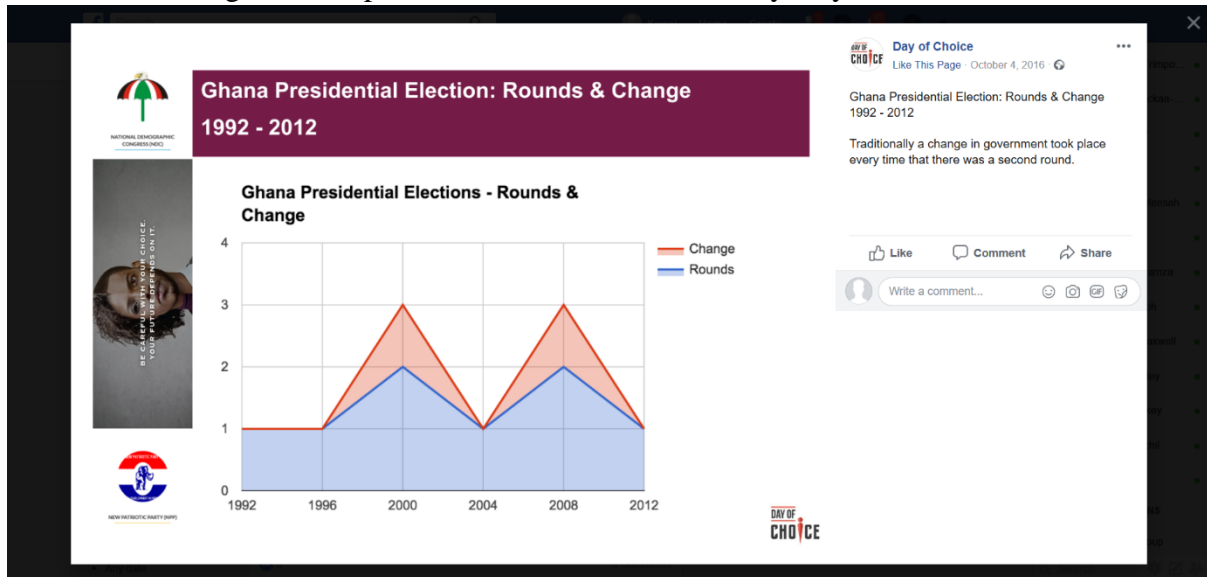
Figure 18. Below: Kofi TV and Hunter TV examples of individual broadcasters in the live streaming of programs on Facebook.





Akwetey (Accra, 27/2/2018) stated, for instance, that if political actors campaigned on Facebook, they were able to get instant comments from the electorate to either say that yes, they agreed, or that they disagreed. It also offered an opportunity for them to use polls on these platforms to test the waters and solicit for votes. What became topical in this theme was the interviewees' interests in which political parties and leaders effectively used digital platforms.

Figure 19. Display of Presidential Elections' rounds and the change from Ghana's 4th Republic to 2012. The image formed part of the electoral education by Day of Choice, an NGO.



8.9 The Use of Social Media: Preferences for Political Parties and Leadership

Interviewees gave different rankings as to which political party and political leadership fully patronized digital platforms. Most of the responses point to the view that there was no proper coordination between leadership, especially among Presidential and Parliamentary aspirants and their political parties, and this, to some extent, influenced the way they used digital platforms. These lapses had the tendency to negate the democratic participatory process.

That assertion concurs with Dimitrova et al.'s, (2011) position that, beyond the context of elections in the United States, other studies, like one on the 2010 Swedish elections, established that social media use, as well as visiting political party websites, significantly influenced political participation among voters. This assertion seeks to suggest that a lack of co-ordination in the party structures would have minimal effects on participation in the campaign process.

However, my observation indicates that, in the 2012 and 2016 election campaign seasons, most websites and SNSs belonging to both Presidential and Parliamentary aspirants had no links or connections with the main parties and their affiliated groups. The websites and the SNSs, like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, functioned separately and in parallel to one another, this largely limited the impact of these platforms in the context of information dissemination, campaign organization and campaign mobilization. For example, the NDC Party managed platforms separately from those of their Presidential Candidates, aspiring Members of Parliament (MPs) and the numerous political groupings that were established by individual party members who were affiliated to the party's ideology and beliefs. Although all these parties launched very active and vibrant campaign programs, it was likely that they did not synchronize them, thereby rendering them ineffective in their campaign efforts in the 2016 elections. Besides, a lack of coordination possibly deprived the party of valuable networking among the various groups, particularly initiatives by individuals to effectively utilize spaces created by social media platforms. This has potentially created a deficit in terms of the uniformity and consistency needed for effective political education. However, Jensens (2017) doubts the merit of that assumption, because there is clarity, in terms of the extent to which social media communications might be incorporated within campaigns.

Ironically, 2016 marked the proliferation of these groupings and, probably, assumed one of the most vibrant and visible political entities, symbolizing hope for the NDC and NPP. Failure

to utilize this opportunity triggered disaffection among a section of the party faithful, who thought that the activities of those groupings contributed to the defeat of the NDC, although other reasons may have caused the party's defeat, as hinted in Professor Kwesi Botchwey's report on NDC's performance in the 2016 elections. The NDC set up a committee (the Kwesi Botchwey Committee) to investigate the cause of their defeat, but the party did not make public the findings of the report. This generated apathy within the NDC, and media speculation that suggested that those party groupings did not make the needed impact because the majority of party members opposed their formation.



Figure 20. The General Secretary of NDC, Johnson Asiedu Nketiah, expressing his party's position at a press briefing in Accra to defuse media speculation on Prof. Kwesi Botchwey's Report. His reaction generated a huge debate on social media.

Braimah (Accra, 27/1/2018) confirmed that most political parties did not use the digital platforms extensively, as against their candidates' usage. He observed that some digital platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and other SNSs accounts that were owned individually by some of the political party leaders, had no active links to their main parties. Besides, interactions with political parties suggested that most of them did not recognize the potency of the digital platforms as a major political campaign tool, although they were using them. This position was shared by Nii Narku Quaynor, an ICT expert (Accra, 8/2/ 2018) and, according to him, the situation created the impression that there were no deliberate and conscious efforts by most parties to pay attention to

their digital platforms, and parties needed to show more commitment to their pages, especially on Facebook and Twitter, and strategically dedicate themselves to using them to run the campaign, respond to issues, pose questions, and interact with people. He doubted if the political parties and their leadership had strategies for digital platforms, and this raised questions as to how effective and efficient political parties were in executing their social media strategies.

For Okujato (Accra, 14/12/2017), a Deputy Minister for Information and a former Deputy Communications Director of NPP, the NPP won the 2016 elections because the party had a well-organized Social Media team, well-coordinated across Ghana, with the responsibility of setting the agenda, monitoring and responding to issues of concern to the Party, especially on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram. ‘There was a vast improvement regarding the use of social media for the 2016 political campaign on that of 2012. This time around, we increased budgets and re-strategized for social media, and from all indications, it worked for the Party’ (Okujato, Accra, 14/12/2017). This confirms Gainous and Wagner’s (2014) position, that politicians use SNSs to control the flow of information about their campaigns, and that those that excel in this regard tend to have electoral success. According to them, Twitter, for instance, creates a perfect environment for message control, and candidates who use the site correctly can reinforce the pre-existing views of their followers and explain to them how they should consider new political information (ibid). This is an indication that the correct management of digital media, potentially yields results that lead to the success of a campaign.

On the contrary, the NDC seem not to have given serious attention to the use of social media. Although the party’s Presidential Candidate, and its affiliated groupings, were visible on the Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp platforms. Ayiku (Tema, 14/12/ 2017) and Adoli (London, 5/3/2018), maintained that the NDC social media army lacked co –ordination, besides, the army was fragmented and needed to come together to make their strategy effective. For example, Adoli regrets that although the NDC had one of the best social media strategies, it lacked the necessary funds to do follow-up education programs for the army. For him, that limitation adversely affected the execution of the party’s social media strategy.

Awuku (Koforidua, 10/1/2018) and Sikanku (Accra, 23/11/2017) agreed that the two presidential aspirants, John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo Addo, on the tickets of the NDC and NPP, respectively, were very active on social media, regularly updating

the electorate on the rationale for their aspirations. Sikanku argued that his investigations confirmed that 100s and 1000s of messages were posted on the social media pages of both leaders, and that created an opportunity for them to engage with a section of the electorate.

For me, the Internet and the new media have caught up with Ghana: one, on the media scene, and, two, when it comes to politics, more specifically to this particular one (2016 elections). On political campaigns in 2016 we saw the same thing. All the candidates had websites, they had social media pages, they had YouTube pages, there were videos and all of that, they were constantly posting. When you go to Nana Addo's page, when you look at literature, when you look at all the functions of political communication that social media are to perform. When you look at literature, the findings indicated that, yes, indeed, the Ghanaian politicians were able to use social media for political communication, in terms of the functions that they needed to perform (Sikanku, Accra, 23/11/2017).

This is an indication that some leaders are realizing the role of digital media as a major campaign tool, because digital technologies have the potential to offer a range of new means for engaging in civically oriented forms of behavior (Lilleker, 2017).

However, Agbenu (Accra, 12/2/2018) expected that more than both parties and leaders, CSO moved beyond the issuing of press releases and pro-formal information to actually use the platforms to effectively engage the electorate, even beyond the social media. He argued that online conversations were going to have a lot more impact when they lead to activism offline, and therefore political actors must make conscious efforts to maximize the fruits of social media. Agbenu's expectation reflects the idea that direct engagements between political actors and the electorate potentially influence the outcome of voting, to some extent, as confirmed by Vaccari (2017), in that such engagements promote direct appeals and motivate voters to participate in deliberations, although scholars had doubted the impact of direct appeals on social media (Boerman and Kruikemeier, 2016; cited in Bright et al., 2018)

The deduction therefore required leaders and their parties to evolve more effective strategies to deal with unending sophistication in contemporary political communication, because, just having the conversation online, just having the # tag, just having a conversation on social media, will not bring about change, will not influence people, will not impact upon people at the end of the day. It boils down to political activism for future campaigning.

The youthful population that dominates the voting population in Ghana presents even more of a challenge to warranting changes in how digital platforms are being used in political campaigning in Ghana in the context of demography. Dzisah shared this opinion, and argues that the majority of the youth now in the political parties prefers to move the engagements onto digital platforms and to slug it out among themselves by posting political messages, responding to political issues about their opponents, and that trend must be a guide to political actors. Other interviewees, like Asa Asante (Accra, 26/3/2018) and Mensah (Accra, 30/10/ 2017) stated that Candidates Mahama and Akuffo Addo's presence on Facebook and YouTube was an effective strategy for opening the media space for participation and for closing the communication gap with the youth. Their assertion corroborated the consensus among the interviewees that that move by the two aspirants potentially gave the majority of the youth an opportunity to engage the political class, in that sense. The youth become relevant here in view of their craze for social media. For example, a study by Lusoli and Ward (2004) on users of the Liberal Democrats and Labour Party intranets, revealed that although their members were checking party websites infrequently, and a significant minority not at all, there were some glimmers of hope in terms of attracting younger voters through the Internet, and there were increasing levels of activism, at least amongst those who were already active (cited in Gibson and Ward, 2009).

The observation of this researcher is that, for example, Mahama, had his Twitter space followed by a lot more people, and he was constantly engaging young people, he was also on YouTube, where he invited young people to Flagstaff House for political engagements. In the same way, Akuffo Addo was predominantly on Facebook having conversations, therefore their interactions brought the politician much closer to voters than ever before because, in the traditional sense, there was a structural process that created a mediation. The advantage is that such contacts can create the necessary space for direct engagements between leadership and voters, because voters may also be well informed about the characteristics of the candidate that may help to sway their vote, (Margetts et al., 2015). Mensah (Accra, 30/10/2017) also described such mediation as very tight, in that it created space and convenience, because it took possession of 'your personal cell phone or your personal computer and the availability of Internet and power, and you have access to the politician'. That personal interaction opened up the debates and enhanced participation, with the possibility of influencing voters in terms of their preferences of leadership and parties.

The above arguments seek to establish the findings that all political parties and political leaders, to some extent patronized digital platforms, depending on their respective strategies, and this reflects Kavanagh's (1995, p25) position, that contemporary campaign techniques are contingent on advanced technology to effect success.

However, there were some disparities that differentiated the extent and level of patronage by users. For example, the position of Ayiku (Tema, 14/12/2017) was that the NPP maximized its Facebook presence by streaming programs live, as evidenced in most of their campaigns. They also posted a lot of their activities in pictures on Instagram and uploaded a lot of videos on their YouTube channel. Again, they made sure that their main website, which was *nanaakuffoaddo.com*, was linked to their Twitter accounts. According to Ayiku, the NDC also used digital platforms to engage the electorate, but not in a similar mode. Other parties used it for their own propaganda, in terms of churning out rumors, lies and half-truths. He claimed he was satisfied with the 2016, but not with the 2012 elections because, in 2012, a lot more parties were spotted actively using digital platforms.

Another profound reaction from interviewees was the impact the digital platforms were perceived to have made on the two elections being discussed. In as much as interviewees agreed there was no scientific basis on which to evaluate those landmark events, they equally consented to the idea that the standard, in terms of the application of digital platforms, could be reviewed to achieve the utmost dividends.

Professor Karikari was convinced about the potentials of the digital platforms in the 2012 and 2016 elections. For him:

...it is difficult for me to say, because I haven't seen any study addressing that question, but certainly it must have had some significant impact, you see, because if you remember, many people were using the social media as a source of finding out the results of the elections, you know, so for the campaigning, also, a lot of information from the Party's candidates was going on the social media and people were using them, especially WhatsApp, Twitter, and so on. So, yes, the parties were using them effectively. I think the use of these technologies had increased from 2012, as in 2012 it had increased over 2008, so, incrementally, the parties and the candidates will more and more use this social media, especially, also as more and more in society come to use them as sources of information and news and all of that (Accra, 4/1/2018).

Professor Karikari's position equally suggests that there was a lot more impact that could be derived from digital platforms, but the needed recognition should be given to the platforms as more of a complement to campaigning politically, rather than to an individual on his own to campaign. That goes in tandem with Sikanku's position, that political actors must be more strategic. For example:

...when you go there, sometimes you take a video of a campaign and they put the whole video there. There is no preamble to the video, there is no explanation to what has happened, it's so dry. There is no call to action to whoever is posting the video. There is no strong teaser for people to comment, so it's just like people are just dumping the materials there (Accra, 23/11/ 2017).

These sentiments are further deepened by Kpessah-Whyte's doubt about the extent of use of digital platforms. He was of the opinion that political actors had not fully maximized the use of digital platforms, bringing into focus the various classifications of digital media. According to him, quite a significant portion of the population were still using phones that are not smart phones, and so all they can do is make calls and send text messages (Accra, 7/11/2017).

Arguably, there are still challenges. People are using these old GSM phones, many of them are in the older bracket, for some financial reason, or perhaps they just don't think this technology is their thing. This tends to suggest that there is always a ripple effect, because those who were getting the information through the platforms transmit information through discussions. The impact of social media on political campaigns and discourse therefore goes beyond the direct usage, an indication that there is room for improvement as far as digital platforms and political campaigns are concerned, and probably parties at the center should self-consciously adopt campaign strategies and employ professional communications advisors to help them (Kavanagh 1995, p26).

The arguments above notwithstanding, it will not be far from right to posit that the Internet and the digital media had featured in a dominant way in Ghana's political campaigns and political space, in that all political leaders and political actors made good use of them both to advance their campaigns in both the 2012 and 2016 elections. They thus enhanced participation and deliberation, as described by Zuniga, et al. (2010), this was 'certainly, one of the key elements of social media is participation'. In effect, social media promote interactivity, and that has broadened the scope of deliberation, participation and political communication in the context of political campaigning in

contemporary democracy. These benefits notwithstanding, other scholars believe reliance on technology portends a danger for multi-party system because ‘parties, along with other intermediary state structures, would simply erode or be drastically pared down as the new interactive media revived the system of direct democracy’ (Robson and Ward, 2009 p. 88).

8.10 Messages, Credibility of Sources and Language in Political Campaigning

Interviewees acknowledged challenges, such as a lack of control of content, diction and abuse of free speech, as setbacks to the potential merits that are associated with digital platforms, stressing that they largely questioned the authenticity of news in politics, as they trend on social media. However, that is contrary to what thrives in the traditional media, as pointed out by Paul Manning: ‘journalists may make their own news, but they do not make it just as they please under conditions chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and determined by the rhythm of the news organisation’ (2001, p5). This suggests that social media platforms are without bounds and controls, as they are not limited by organizational dynamics, the pressure of deadlines and the gatekeeping process, as pertained in traditional media. In other words, those freedoms possibly influence the citizenry in their choices of language.

Professor Karikari (4/1/2018) posits that foul language and disrespect for the elderly are at variance with the culture and tradition of the Ghanaian, and therefore messages that are replete with foul language and incorrect diction that, although they may be viral on social media, tend to discredit the sources. His expectation was that politicians would explore the merits of social media to advance their campaigns by relying on decent language and credible sources to attract the electorate. For him, the essence of messages also requires sources to be credible and valuable, especially to journalists and producers in the overall production process; pre –production, production and post-production, to win the trust of citizens. Professor Karikari’s position on messages is in line with an aspect of Arye’s (2017) conclusion, in *Ghana's Elections of 7 December 2016: A Post-Mortem*, that:

If the message of the NDC was not appealing to the electorate, then there is a need for political marketing to be taken seriously by the political parties as they are competing in an election market place, where their products, such as performance, manifestos, candidates and messages must be appealing to discerning voters (2017, p. 15).

This confirms Gans' (2010) position, that if citizens pay proper attention to the news they receive they will become properly informed citizens, and that will make them responsible in their duties as citizens in any democratic environment. This means that political stakeholders need to put a premium on effective political campaign messages, as potential determinants of success for political entities in political campaigns and the general electoral process in a contemporary multi-party democratic system.

In the opinion of Kpesah-Whyte (3/11/2017), recognition for decent language must form one of the key elements in the information delivery process if messages are to attain their full value in political communication. This implies that messages are discredited, to some extent, when sources are corrupted with indecent or foul expressions, because they potentially dent the credibility of the messenger. Messengers, therefore, must not only be guided by reputation and posture to win the trust of audience, but must also be mindful that the credibility of sources must consider other challenges, like educational status and levels of comprehension, in view of the recognition that society has attached to the messenger, because, if society thought that the messenger were knowledgeable, they could rely on, and trust, the source, so as to give an analytical view on issues, and this makes credibility key and, indeed, a major facet that must be navigated by political actors. For instance, in the latest campaigns (2012 /2016), a lot of fictitious news stories trended on social media and these made waves, although later events negated the authenticity of such stories, because they were untrue, most Ghanaians believed them because of the sources of those messages (Figure 21).

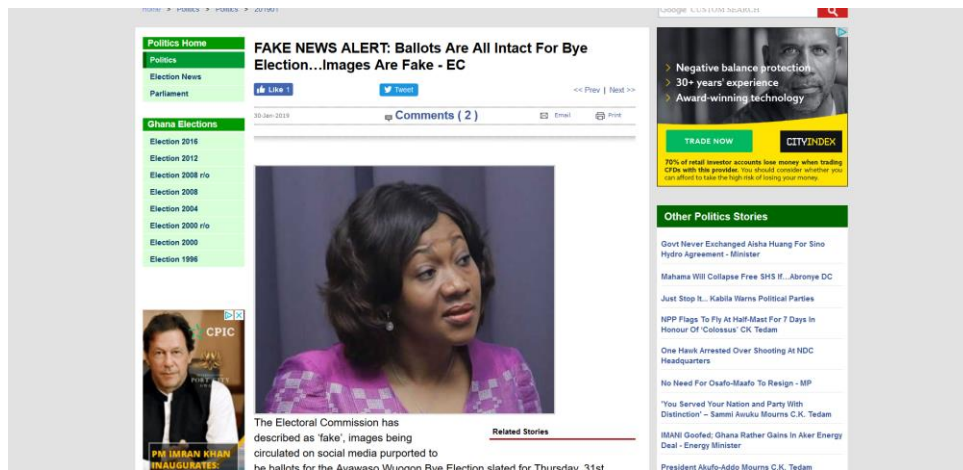


Figure 21. An example of fake news trending on social media.

Agbenu (Accra, 12/2/2018) and Yeboah (Accra, 10/12/2017) believed that the lack of effective policy guidelines to regulate the use of digital platforms had rendered digital platforms vulnerable to ‘fake stories’, and the unwarranted defamation of the citizenry, and that portends a gloomy future for the country’s politics.

In effect, people do not ask what is credible anymore, because they have a mental frame already, they just accept the news and feed it onto the mental frame. In fact, credibility and originality are problems, because people lifted what others have said without fact-checking, and then run with them. In most instances, either facts are not cross-checked with sources or stories are not put in context as they are hurriedly aired or uploaded because sources are reluctant to respond to requests by media houses or individuals without recourse to basic journalistic ethics and recognition of the country’s press law. Victims of such conduct suffered serious consequences, including prison sentences, in accordance with the laws of the country. A typical example is the ‘Muntie Trio’ saga (Muntie Three). The concerns of interviewees were that messages from political actors were essential information that constituted news, and they must be handled with care. That confirms Muller, Schneiders, and Schafer’s (2016) position that news about current affairs has become an integral part of the content that is shared on the platform.

However, Malik (18/2/2018) believed social media had become part of reality now, and there was a need to evolve pragmatic policies as pertained in other jurisdictions, as in the the US, where they had the facts-checking system to deal with falsehood and untruths, amongst other things. For example, Facebook is altering the way people access news (Muller, Schneiders and Schafer, 2016). Admittedly, as the findings establish, whatever messages one put out could potentially be put through this fact checker, and this is an important measure that should be encouraged as far as the nation’s use of social media is concerned. Lacy et al. (2013), in a study of sources used in news coverage of local governments by 198 radio stations, argue that not only do the electronic and print media have diverse news sources, but the Internet also provides sources of information. What political actors must thus realize, is that new technology had influenced dimensions in the sources of news and a review of their strategies on information dissemination is required, especially for the Internet and SNSs, as they create complexities in news determinants. Hence, it is important to give recognition to the value of news.

The sentiments above further trigger the argument on the credibility of messages, sources, language use and impact on political communication, as they relate to political campaigning, more especially, as ‘serial calling’ becomes entrenched in the Ghanaian political communication system.

8.11 From ‘Veranda Boys’ to ‘Serial Callers’: Their Role in Ghana’s Political

Campaigning

The old practice of leading political parties was to hire enforcers, people who could rough up the public on behalf of the party. The so-called ‘veranda boys’ could also educate and defend on the party’s behalf. Today, these have become ‘serial callers’, gaining recognition in Ghanaian politics, in view of their contribution to political communication. As argued in Chapter Two, their role of participation is likened to the ‘spin doctoring’ in Western politics, and they operate on a partisan basis. They are very loyal to the ideologies and policies in which they believe. A key feature of ‘serial callers’ is their vertical mode of communications, mostly on radio. Their effectiveness in communication becomes questionable in that most of them are not articulate and they are limited to the use of local languages. Cowan (2012) argues that effective performance, both as oratory and in print, may be central to the success and persuasiveness of speech. This underscores the multi-faceted nature of the skills for spin, which are not limited only to ‘skilled oratory’, and ‘to distinguish between form and content only obscures the purpose, the effectiveness, and indeed the meaning of a speech for audiences’ (ibid). It therefore becomes useful to elicit expert opinions on their (‘serial callers’) role in political campaigning in the wake of advances in communications technology.

These activists, according to interviewees, are not strangers to Ghanaian politics, their argument, language and partisan nature make them noticeable in the communication space, in fact, ‘serial callers’ operate like spin doctors by relaying skewed messages so as to advance the agenda of their paymasters. However, with the evolution of technology, some political experts are expressing doubts regarding their efficiency in projecting their ‘paymasters’ agenda. These concerns are reflected in Manning’s (2001, p7), expectations of spin doctoring, thus, ‘the crucial art for a spin doctor is to understand how to bargain with information: how much to release, when it should be released to optimise its value and what can be secured in return for the release of

information'. This suggests that 'serial callers' activities must meet the audience's expectations and targets, in terms of the basic principles in information dissemination, which are akin to journalistic practices and principles. In Goltz's (2012) opinion, all spin doctors, conventionally, are burdened with the responsibilities of defending the positions of their institutions, conscious of the consequences in that, in spinning a story, they are merely doing their job, contrary to the expectations that 'journalists covering a crisis are supposed to be wary of dramatic press releases and partisan reporting, balloon stories and disinformation, as well as blatant lies'' (ibid). This clearly confirms, to some extent, the role of 'serial callers' as communicators, whose prime duty requires that they maintain loyalty to their parties. Similarly, *in extremis*, the responsibility of a serial caller will include supplying a diversionary story, in the hope of removing the headlines (Geber, 2001).

Mensah (Accra, 30/10/2017) is not far from the truth with his argument that 'serial callers' are largely incoherent, which handicaps most of them in their attempts to project issues that people care about, but they are very useful to a certain class of the electorate, particularly at the base. Arguably they very relevant, conforming to their norm, appealing to the base to satisfy the expectations of the leadership, partly in the belief that a large number of them are comfortable with the dialects, and, this creates doubt about their educational level, because there is an incorrect assumption that most people in the lower classes are not enlightened. However, Agbenu (Accra, 12/2/2018) claims, ironically, that political communications strategists were being tactical in their resolve to rely on 'serial callers' to disseminate information to their target (base), who are purely the rural and farming majority of the voting population, so that they may come to be influenced to achieve their desired end in two ways; through the message content and the delivery style.

Interviewees argue that political actors can look at voters in different categories and say which are most likely to be influenced by 'serial callers', and it is almost always those who are emotionally predisposed towards a political party, due to certain factors, and so they are most likely to be influenced by 'serial callers.' Such voters are vulnerable in regard to misinformation from spinning, which Goltz describes as propaganda. However, the 'serial callers' also influence activists, because they give them the 'weapons'. Mensah believes that, these doubts notwithstanding, political actors' maximize the structures in the 'serial callers'' set-up:

... if the leadership says something the serial caller spreads it and then the activist who is in the village or a particular suburb, also carries it forward, so it becomes the conveyer belt through which the political communications travel and it will definitely have an influence on some voters (Accra, 30/10/2017).

Monney (Tema, 18/11/2017) confirms that 'serial callers' played a role for those who largely used or patronize the traditional media. His observation was that some parties and leaders deployed special callers, who phoned-in to comment on topical issues, and the consistency in messages, articulation and direction of arguments left no doubt that such operatives had been,

...hired to launch serious arsenals at their political opponents. Most of these exercises were typical on local language radio stations with huge listenerships and wider coverage. What I detest about the serial callers is their 'raw language' and subjectivity (Tema, 18/11/2017).

Monney's argument raises a lot of issues on free speech, citizens' responsibilities and editorial policies, because radio stations lack the devices to 'delay speech' on air. This potentially constitutes an abuse of free expression, and potentially taints the credentials of the country's fledgling democracy. Okudjato (Accra, 14/12/2017) thinks that not only do such activities endanger free speech, but they also put political communication in danger. However, this problem is likely to be compounded in the wake of a rising interest in digital platforms in the Ghanaian political campaign context. Doworkpor (Accra, 28/2/2018), shared these problems with Okujato, and noted, further, that the subjectivity of 'serial callers', in terms of information dissemination, raised a lot of issues about the authenticity of the messages. His position confirmed arguments advanced by interviewees, that most of the reactions of 'serial callers' were for propaganda purposes. This gives credence to Goltz's defense, that propaganda is the job of a spin-doctor, and such an individual (or institution) cannot be ethically or morally blamed for meeting his/her job description (2012). Braimah (Accra, 27/1/2018) shared the sentiments in the arguments above, but insisted that so long as radio continued to be there, there would still be 'serial callers', because they fit into a category of audience, notably, people who cannot read or write but who can speak their own language, and, radio offered them opportunities to express themselves and make contributions in their own language in order to enhance participation.

However, Ghana's deficits in digital connectivity invariably pose challenges to participation ahead of her future political campaigning as the nation embraces digital media. For example, although satellite and wireless connectivity in Ghana are reliable, and present good ways

to connect to the Internet through dial-up also presents the challenges that are presented by Broadband4U services, mainly because they also use these same copper cables, which are inadequate in the Ghanaian context. ‘This means that communication within networks works well, but the Internet access speed is limited, and there is very little bandwidth left for a voice network, while video is completely left out’¹⁸(Akakpo, 2008). Arguably, these challenges also raise more questions, in terms of serial calling and democracy, because a subjective approach to communications confirms critics’ claims about the role of spin doctors, in that, ‘it devalues politics by substituting style for substance’ (Franklin, 2004). The import is that the ‘serial callers’ will continue to be part of the system, and once connectivity and access to the Internet also expand, it may be that the phenomenon of ‘serial callers’ will be reduced, and a lot more people will migrate to the digital media. There is, however, every indication that their contribution to participatory democracy cannot be discounted, hence the need for them to be integrated into party communication strategies as democracies embrace digital campaigning.

8.12 Digital Platforms, Strategies and Choice of Political Parties and Leaders

Strategies are major elements in communication, and can be considered crucial to political actors, especially political communicators, in the execution of political campaigning. ‘In the context of strategic political communication, the strategic goals of political parties and campaigns are thus, crucial’ (Strömbäck and Kioussis, 2014). This reflects the political actors’ motivations to commit a huge premium to strategies, especially in the wake of the digital revolution and its ramifications for future political activities. This currency, accordingly, served as a basis for probing the relationship between political parties/leaders and the choice of communication strategies, in the context of social media.

Interviewees’ appreciation of, and reactions to, the way that political parties executed their strategies were predominantly on how political parties ‘psyched up’ the electorate to the country’s prevailing socio-economic and political developments. For example, Awuku (10/1/ 2018) claimed the NPP had been psychologically prepared and strategically positioned to win the 2016 elections.

¹⁸ *Rural Access: Options and Challenges for Connectivity and Energy in Ghana*. A study carried out for the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) and the Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS) by Jonnie Akakpo, Consolidated Solutions Limited (CSL) Jointly published by GINKS and IICD in 2008.

All communications, including social media, were therefore skewed towards winning public support against the ruling NDC's eight years in administration. His party capitalized on the assumption that, in some African countries, people think that the opposition doesn't win an election, it is the ruling party that emanates power, so they made the citizenry believe that the NDC had failed to improve citizen's lives and carried them along with the campaign. 'I had a stint with the campaign in Nigeria that brought Buhari to power, I had a stint with the Kenyan elections recently, and I had a stint with Tanzanian politics some few months ago' (Koforidua, 10/1/2018). In effect, the 'African assumption' was realistic, culminating in the victories of opposition parties in elections held in those countries. His experience was that the NPP's strategy was to campaign on both traditional and social media, as opposition parties in those countries did; using briefs, infographs, audio-visuals and digital pictures to project the flagbearer of the incumbent NDC President and various allegations of corruption against his government. The NPP were visible, mainly on the Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp Platforms, as well as YouTube, where the voice of the then opposition leader, was heard making a very emotional appeal to the electorate to give him a try, because the incumbent ruling party, the NDC, had failed the nation. This presupposes that their strategy was very effective, because it won the election for his party, as Cheeseman et al. (2017) confirm, saying that, socio-economic and political issues dominated political messages that informed decisions by the Ghanaian electorate in the 2016 elections, and that the outcome confirmed the willingness of the electorate to vote out poorly performing governments. The political elites realized that they had to play by the rules of the game, and that culminated in another step forward for Ghana's fledgling democratic consolidation process.

Ayiku's (14/12/2017) responses, which suggested that there be probing into political parties and communications strategy, however, seem to question Awuku's position. Ayiku argued that, strategically, most communications by the political parties were not very effective, because they failed to adopt different strategies for different types of media, more so when dealing with new media or digital platforms, a position with which Agbenu (Accra, 12/2/2018) agreed. The consensus was that strategies executed by the political parties failed to factor in salient questions, such as; what do you use the platform for? Who are your targets? Implying that:

...as strategic actors, political parties and campaigns continuously adapt to changes in the environments in which they operate. They adapt to changes in societal structures, to changes in communication technologies,

and to changes with respect to voters' political attitudes and behaviours (Strömbäck and Kioussis, 2014, p. 117).

This means that, strategically, political communication strategists must determine, for example, if the target audience are technologically savvy or not, and there should be separate strategies that are consistent, not only with well-crafted messages, but also very interactive and proactive in setting the agenda, giving prompt responses to issues around prime concerns, especially in the context of fake news.

This argument, further raises doubts about Awuku's (10/1/2018) claim of the NPP's dependency on digital media for victory in the 2016 elections, because other studies have questioned the impact of technology on party activities. For example, findings regarding parties' external electorally related uses of technologies have questioned whether campaigning online actually has any impact on voters' decisions and the outcomes (D'Alessio 1997; Bimber and Davis 2003; Gibson and McAllister 2006; Lusoli 2005; Rainie et al., 2005, cited in Robson and Ward, 2009). According to Robson and Ward (2009), while verdicts about the effects on digital media differed across national contexts, there is general agreement among authors that the scope for any effects is small, given the limited audience for party websites (ibid).

The arguments above reflect the interviewees' positions that there was more room for political parties to improve on their digital platforms' communication strategies, e.g.. Sikanku (23/11/2017) and Quaynor (Accra, 2/2018) expected political parties to build the capacity of social media teams, if they existed and were well-coordinated, so all campaign programs would be live and extensively publicized. Sikanku thought that 'they should do more and, the social media strategy should be part of the overall strategy. The medium is the message and whoever masters the medium masters the message' (McLuhan, 1964, cited by Sikanku, Accra, 23/11/2017), implying that the political parties must efficiently use the media to shape the electoral mind-set. In effect, political parties should be able to fine tune their message to go with the medium of the day, and they must redefine their strategies to meet the exigencies prompted by the advent of digital platforms. This is because, although some of the parties, as I observed, had social media teams that were very responsive to issues, they were fragmented in their operations. The NDC was typical of this example, in which the operations of its campaign affiliates and groups sang a different chorus, to the detriment of the party's communication strategy of synchronizing messages. Invariably, Kpessah-Whyte (Accra, 3/11/ 2017) thinks political parties were strategically incomplete in terms

of collaboration, judging from an observation that individuals in political parties took the role upon themselves, making social media an important part of a campaign at their level, as against the level of the political parties themselves.

Arguably, political parties needed to be proactive in evolving pragmatic social media policies and strategies, as well as in creating an entire unit charged with the responsibility of effectively and efficiently monitoring, responding and sharing information on the social media. The implication is that although political parties were making the effort, more efforts needed to be channeled into reviewing their social media strategies, probably tapping into rich experiences of countries that were more technologically savvy and that had been successful in using digital media for political activities, especially political campaigning.

Agbenu (Accra, 12/2/2018) and Doworkpor agree with these sentiments, but they expressed concern about the involvement of foreign political communication and technological experts in local political activities. They cited a number of countries that had been allegedly rife with technological electioneering fraud, e.g., there was a case in the US that was being investigated in regard to the extent to which Russia was involved in a Facebook matter concerning the US 2016 Presidential Elections. So, again, that is another level of danger: that external actors might hijack the political process and manufacture a candidate in an image that is probably not truthful. Similarly, a *BBC NEWS Africa Report* on December 8, 2016, the second of Ghana's 2016 voting days, claimed, 'hackers have targeted the website of Ghana's electoral commission as votes are counted after tightly contested elections', alluding to the headline: 'Ghana election commission website hit by cyber-attack' (*BBC News Africa*, 2016). Ghana's Electoral Commission, through one of its officials, had also told a local radio station, *Joy FM*. as published on its online portal, *myjoyonline*, that, 'the Electoral Commission results transmitted electronically were tampered with, leading to a delay in the release of the presidential results of last week's election' (*myjoyonline*, 2016).

These reports not only generated agitation from political actors, who considered them a recipe for creating fear and panic in the country, but also resulted in tension and mistrust of the Electoral Commission, thereby tainting the credibility and integrity of the results. Besides, although Ghanaians accepted the results, the EC has a responsibility to win the confidence placed in it by the citizenry by ensuring transparency and proper management of the electoral process. As

Ayee observed: ‘the EC-and more specifically the election management body-will need to continue to win the trust and confidence of the stakeholders, particularly the political parties, through the implementation of its communication strategy and the strategic plan’ (2017, p. 15).

Fallouts from arguments, above, tend to suggest that political parties in Ghana were conscious of the advantages of social media platforms and therefore patronized them for their campaign activities, in the context of the elections in 2012 and 2016. However, they needed a more effective strategy to maximize the full potentials of social media as a contemporary tool for political campaigning in the digital era.

Our Figures Changed Anytime they were Keyed into System- EC

Source: Nathan Gadugah, Ghana. *Myjoyonline.com* Date: 15-12-2016.



Figure 22. Ghana’s EC Chairperson for 2016 General Elections, Mrs. Charlotte Osei.

As Ahiabenu (Accra, 14/1/2018) contended, ‘what we are not seeing is that they have a written strategy, or they have done it in [such] a manner that you can actually verify some of the activities or the roll out of their strategies’. This observation raises more issues on strategies and their impact on social media for campaigns, thereby generating further probing into the impact of using both digital and traditional platforms in political campaigning, as it questions the potency of those tools in strategic terms.

8.13 Variation in Political Communication and Campaign Strategies

There was consensus that the changes in communication strategies and advances in technology have had a huge impact on political campaigns and other political activities, in spite of challenges associated with the use of social media. This revelation ties in with the belief that although the impact of campaigning on social platforms has been limited to cross-sectional data sets from one election period, which are vulnerable to unobserved variable bias, the platforms continue to be a routine part of political campaigns worldwide (Bright et al., 2017). As in the Ghanaian situation, empirical evidence on the effectiveness of political social media activity is thin (ibid), hence the motivation to explore the ramifications emanating from variations in strategies in the context of digital platforms.

Interviewees posit that the digital media have offered a lot of choices, making it possible for news to be personalized, although its boundless perimeters pose daunting challenges to political communications and free expression in Ghana.

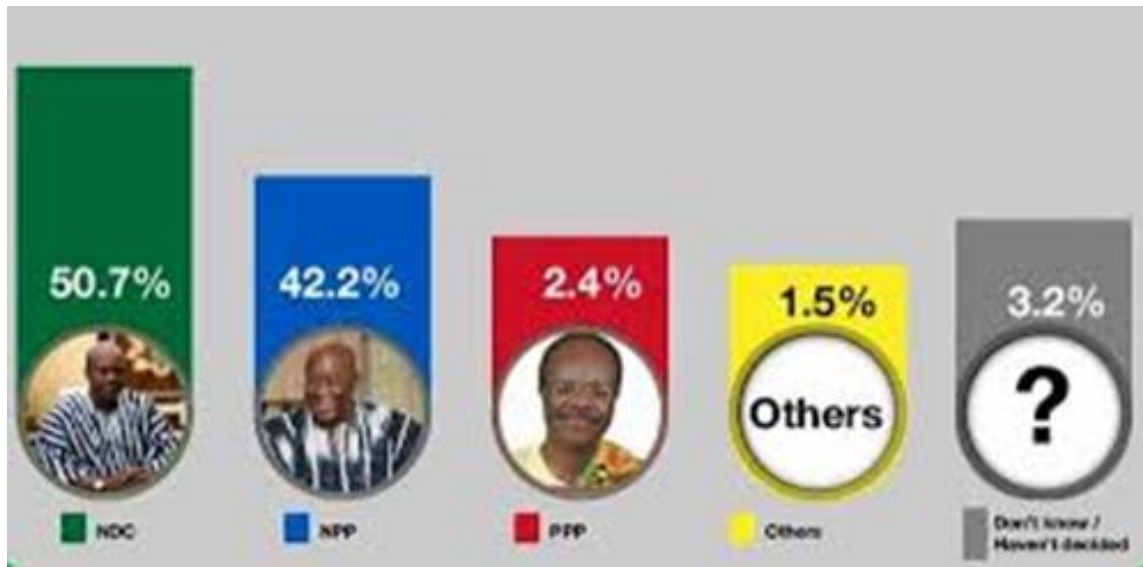
However, they would not agree that the impact of social media in 2012 was the same as that in 2016, based on the premises that the two periods presented two different scenarios in terms of developments in digital media devices and the extent of their adoption by political stakeholders. They shared the view that political actors used social media more in 2016 than in 2012, because the political parties improved on their mode of publicity, modes of fund mobilization, the organization of rallies and other party activities, because more people had realized the usefulness of the platforms, and more features had been added to smartphones and other digital devices, which served as channels of communications. For example, parties displayed more refined infographs, used digital posters, electronic billboards and raised funds through social media. That was contrary to the situation in previous elections, where the traditional media dominated the channels of visibility for political party activities.

Some Digital Images of Ghana's 2016 Elections.



Figure 23. Digital images of aspirants for Ghana's 2012 Presidential Elections, as shown on Social media.

Sikanku (Accra, 23/11/2017) maintained that developments in political processes in 2016 marked improvements over previous years, particularly in 2012. His assertion was reflected in all the responses, as interviewees cited how social media had changed American political activities since 2008.



National Results For Elections 2016

Presidential Results			Parliamentary Results			
(4,568) 0.29%	(1,554) 0.10%	(991,946) 43.27%	(16,224) 1.02%	(879,300) 55.07%	(2,276) 0.14%	(1,945) 0.12%

Reporting 59 out of 275 constituencies.
These results are YET to be certified by the Electoral Commission of Ghana.

Figure 24. An infographic showing the results of Ghana’s 2012 and 2016 Presidential Elections, as seen on social media.

Similar reference could be made to the then Candidate, Donald Trump. Trump utilized all the technologies in his campaign, however, technology was not necessarily the answer to every solution to challenges when it came to political campaigning, because the use of the most sophisticated model does not guarantee victory in an election. What the political parties needed to do was to recognize technology as part and parcel of the whole political campaign process, and not necessarily as an end in itself. For example, ‘experimental studies of two legislative campaigns in 2012 found that exposure to Facebook ads had no impact on voters’ name recognition or vote choice’ (Brookman and Green, 2014, cited in Aldrich et al., 2016). This suggests that advertising,

which is classified as being key in political campaigning, is not as effective on social media as we are made to believe, and therefore there is the need for political parties to explore more effective strategies in order to concretize the campaign process to ensure success. Besides, the focus of strategies for campaigning should not be predominantly on these new tools, but also on the tactics of professionalized campaigning, noting the environment, prevailing circumstances and the expectations of the electorate, as mediated by research.

The arguments above notwithstanding, Agbenu (Accra, 12/2/2018) insisted there should be a focus on technology, and political parties must be able to employ professionals, as well as build capacity as best practice. Citing the Kenyan election case, Agbenu argued that Uhuru Hebata Dandinga not only presented himself on Facebook, but used the platform extensively to inform his campaigners and voters. The import is that Uhuru was sharing his personal life with voters through using pictures and videos, and he was very personal about it. The implication is that, consequently, both the electorate and the leadership were able to feel a sense of ownership and felt part of the campaign, thereby ensuring a level of authenticity. Although not scientific, it is probable that Uhuru's messages and presentation may have attracted a huge number of voters who were on social media. Agbenu's (Accra, 12/2/2018) position agrees with Gibson and Römmele's (2009) suggestion for the adoption of professionals so as to ensure the successful execution of political campaigns. Such a strategy, according to these scholars, must consider, among other things:

- (1) the adoption of new tools and tactics (high-tech and computerized) and the intensification of existing methods (opinion polls, focus groups);
- (2) a shift in the overall style of campaigning to a more capital-intensive, aggressive or attack-oriented and continuous mode;
- (3) a reorientation in the relationship with the electorate towards a more interactive and individualized engagement; and, finally,
- (4) the restructuring of power relations within the party, with an increasing centralization of power, particularly in the person of the leader, as well as some resurgence of the local level, specifically in relation to mobilizing local turnout.

The scholars' prescription largely portrays a variation in strategies as a springboard for effecting changes in political activities, as mediated by digital platforms. However, it is pertinent to point

out that strategies would be meaningless unless executed with tact and focus by professionally inclined operatives who were ready to commit themselves to nuances associated with political campaigns and politics in general, because the outcomes of their implementation are mixed.

In Braimah's (Accra, 27/1/2018) opinion, digital platforms, as used in Ghana's 2012 and 2016 elections, were quite influential, both negatively and positively. Positively, to the extent that they served as platforms that allowed for a diversity of views so people could express themselves without going through a journalist or an editor, as in previous campaigns. The deduction is that political actors had varied their strategies by using surrogates on social media to project political leadership and parties. In some instances, parties profiled candidates and elicited responses in more proactive and interactive ways, so the electorate 'liked' or 'disliked' them. Negatively, in the sense of using the platform to perpetuate falsehoods, hate speech, insults, lies, and so on, ahead of the 2016 elections. Those are the benefits of variations, the fact that they bring mixed results emanating from participation and a diversity of opinion for the development of multiparty democracy.

Mensah (Accra, 30/10/2017) thinks variations brought a lot of innovations in Ghanaian political campaigning mobilization, as well as bringing the youth further into the realm of ideologies. For him:

... the fact that I could have a conversation as a young boy with Mahama, and Mahama can retweet my tweet, I find myself excited and I think, 'oh wow! This man is cool!' So, certainly, the variations, as we look at it in political campaigning, the digital space is able to bring it to light much more prominently than the traditional media would do.

Mensah's position makes plausible the argument that variations potentially create more spaces, not only for enhancing interactivity, but also for closing the gap between political actors and the electorate, because leadership has become approachable. Besides, the fact that, within the digital space, political actors could create segments of manifesto without writing something in a newspaper, and so target those people who were relevant, and then promote it, itself created much more prominence for the variation. This confirms the argument that other elements in the media system equally contribute to the success of communication in campaigns. For instance, Strömbäck and Kiouisis (2014) cite the use of direct contacts, text messages and telephone conversations as

complements to both the traditional and digital media, and, these are key in facilitating information dissemination for political campaigns.

However, the gains from variations and technological evolutions notwithstanding, political actors in Ghana will still have to contend with what most interviewees described as ‘deep –seated political inclinations and ideology’. Some interviewees made an allegation of the existence of a very deeply rooted tribal and religious loyalty within the Ghanaian political culture, which political communicators and strategies needed to work assiduously to break, because that culture went beyond technology. In the opinion of Braimah (Accra, 27/1/2018):

... in Ghana, Volta Region would, for a long time, if not forever, remain the strong hold of the NDC, Ashanti Region will forever, or for a long time, remain a strong hold of the NPP and its tradition....once you are born into it and indoctrinated, and it is everywhere in the world, I believe in the US there are people that are in the Republicans because they were born into a family that was dominated by Republicans.

This suggests that some of the electorate, with a stringent bond to their tribes and culture, were bound to defy even the power of technological innovations, ideology and policies, that were trumpeted by political communicators in the interests of tradition. It might take education, enlightenment via mass media, so that more access to information with divergent views may enhance engagement with divergent and diverse views and opinions.

Of equal concern to respondents were the challenges posed by the operations of ‘serial callers’, whose role (discussed earlier) has become a new phenomenon in Ghanaian political communications. Their *modus operandi* is ubiquitous, in view of their subjective approach to issues and, arguably, this defies ethics in communications and all rules of engagement in political communications.

8.14 Traditional and Social Media in Perspective

Interviewees were convinced that the traditional media remained as the dominant channels, particularly radio and television, due to their accessibility and multiplicative power. They described them as being very effective in rural areas, which are normally dominated by the illiterate population (*Ghana Demographic Survey, 2010*). This is beneficial to the course of the parties’

campaign projects, in view of the increasing number of local radio stations that broadcast in native languages and dialects. It is an indication that local languages have a huge impact on the voting population, especially in rural communities, as Blankson (2005) confirmed. For him, local dialect and culture express the identity and should not be overlooked by media policy-makers (cited in Mu-azu, 2016). A study by Mu-azu on *The Impact of FM Radio Broadcast in Local Dialect on Rural Community Development in Ghana*, also reaffirms Blankson's position:

... [the] majority of respondents (69.40%) preferred radio broadcast in their local dialect. Only 30.6% could understand radio programmes in English. This means that radio programmes in English would have less listeners, as against those who listened to radio in local dialect (2016, p. 120).

This argument renders the interviewees' consideration of the traditional media as dominant channels, and generates debates on the potency of both (digital and traditional) in political campaigns, as it becomes difficult to determine which media appeal to the electorate, due to demographic patterns and their ramifications in the context of the voting population in the country. The country's demographic profile indicates that Ghana has a young age structure, with approximately 57% of the population being under the age of 25. This is beside those who are within the 25-54 age bracket. For example, the contents of the manifestos of Ghana's two main political parties, the NDC and the NPP, were virtually the same, apart from their policies on youth, and those in Senior High Schools (SHS). Both parties focused on youth, in that they constitute a majority of the nation's voting population, and so they were the main targets for various campaign messages, particularly those concerning education, with a view to capturing their support (Debrah et al., 2013). Arguably, social media resonates with the youth, most of whom are not much interested in the hard news that is put out in the traditional media. Moreover, their indulgences in technology naturally influence their preferences for smartphones, computers, and iPads to access the Internet and to access social media, particularly Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and YouTube.

Responses from Dzisah (Accra, 23/10/2017) and Ahiagbenu (Accra, 14/1/2018) reinforced the youth's confidence in social media, e.g., Dzisah insisted that digital platforms had been evoked particularly by the youth, mostly either secondary school students, University or tertiary students,

and, to some extent, the educated middle class. However, Sikananku (Accra, 23/11/2007) notes that the biggest differences between traditional and social media are that the audience was used to the old media, especially the state-owned ones, as against the new media. For him, although social media is gaining prominence, the Internet is the biggest platform ever to have preceded the media revolution, and that resulted in changes from the websites and blog eras respectively. Moreover, as the social media consist primarily of user-generated content, users may be able to encounter ideas and opinions that are not well represented in traditional news media (Gillmor, 2006).

One thing was clear in their responses, that there was some intercourse between social media and traditional media, because information came from traditional media to new media and *vice versa*. This suggests that they complement each other, which likely enhances participation, and interests in democratic engagements in the context of information dissemination.

I, observed that sometimes political stakeholders set an agenda via the use of new media and it was then translated into the traditional media, and *vice versa*. Examples abound in the Ghanaian media space where traditional media such as newspapers feed on news items from the new media platforms. This is typical of ‘one cannot be bigger than the other’ relationships, in terms of influence, but it is necessary to have separate strategies for the usage of both in any public sphere. This requires that more time and resources must be invested in both media forms if political actors are to realize the full benefits in terms of audience expectations.

The difference again, Malik (18/2/2018) pointed out, is that it becomes very easy to control the traditional media using the gatekeeper principle and other elements, including censorship, and this potentially influences information dissemination and management. Such an occurrence literally endangers free speech and free expression, because it creates the opportunity for the manipulation of content backstage. This is contrary to the digital platforms’ ethos: interactive and difficult to control, especially in the era of ‘citizen journalism’ and ‘fake news’. Arguably, digital platforms go further to:

... lower transaction costs by removing obstacles to participation, generate new and more efficient forms of bottom-up organization and coordination, and create new forms of participation to complement the existing repertoires (Theocharis and Lowe, 2015 p. 1466).

This further confirms the ubiquitous nature of social media, as Kpesah-Whyte (Accra, 3/11/ 2017) indicated in his response. He argues that the freedom associated with social media use, besides enhancing participation in a democratic setting, also encouraged ‘citizen journalism’, a practice that would most likely define the course of political communication in the future of political campaigns. For him, the leverage for the use of digital platforms was not without blemish, because, for example, there is the undeniable challenge that social media can thrive only in a society where people were well read and analytical. We need to probe this argument in view of the assertion that a large section of Ghanaians is gullible, and levels of illiteracy and poverty high; and people are ready to believe anything without critical thinking. These deficiencies may render social media a big disservice, as society was currently witnessing. There has been a public outcry and criticism against how a section of society use digital platforms; as intrusive of privacy, as an abuse of free expression for fraud, etc.

However, Karikari (4/1/2018) believes, as expressed by interviewees, that the two: the traditional and the social media, complement each other, thereby enhancing the media’s role in political campaigns. He argued that both channels had antecedents as tools to champion a cause in a specific era. For him, the role of the newspaper ‘as a tool that people fought’ as a medium to express themselves, is the same thing as the way radio and television, etc., are being used to communicate freely without any force, interference or limiting of speech. His position reflects Gunther and Diamond’s (2003) conception that the mass media have, since their evolution from the print through to the electronic media, engendered major shifts in how parties operate and communicate with their electorates.

Effectively, modern communications technologies, including social media, are not too different from the traditional media, the only difference is that technologies today are so ubiquitous and so individualized, that they have not come under the strict confines of organized communications. Besides, traditional media are organized communication, in that they are organized for a purpose, and are subject to the dictates of an organization or an individual, but social media platforms are not organized, they are individualized, and that is where freedom of expression is, devoid of censorship, unless governments introduce laws that potentially regulate the use of digital platforms. This ties in with Uwom and Alao’s (2013) argument that harnessing

different media outlets in any country should be contingent on the need for a policy to guide their operations so that they can work towards a common goal.

Similarly, the act of information dissemination ceases to be the preserve of media houses, according to Okujato (Accra, 14/12/017), in that political actors were managing their own social media platforms and SMSs, including Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, etc., on the Internet. These were used as organizational tools, both internally and externally, for political activities, including campaigns and resource mobilization, assuming that: ‘technology, and particularly communications technology, can act as a key driver of party change’ (Gibson and Ward, 2009, p88). This suggests the possibility that more space could be created for effective interaction between electorates and political actors, but as to whether the traditional and digital media influenced electorates in their choice of candidates in the 2012 and 2016 elections, this remains a question that has to be answered by research.

8.15 Future of Political Campaigning in Ghana: The Digital (Social Media) Factor.

This theme is motivated by sentiments espoused by the interviewees as they forecast the prospects for Ghana’s democracy amidst increasing technological development. The forecast is relevant, because technology is transforming political campaigns to a very sophisticated level, so there is a need for political actors to re-strategize in order to deal with accompanying challenges. Stakeholders involved in political organizations, notably, political parties, political institutions and political campaign experts, are exploring new strategies to mobilize supporters, particularly online, by providing interactive spaces to enhance participation and engagement (Bimber et. al., 2012).

This situation attracts thorough discourse on challenges like inadequate connectivity, unequal distribution of digital devices, changes in political communications strategies and the lack of policies, etc., which are associated with Ghana and are likely to influence the effective use of digital platforms. These concerns have provoked a range of responses from interviewees, for example, they expected political actors to review their strategies and evolve a more pragmatic way of raising funds to manage political party activities, especially political campaigns. These expectations tie in with Stromer-Galley’s (2017) argument that the relevance of a political campaign, for example, is for political entities to raise enough money to build adequate

organizations to target the right kinds of voters, who will turn out to vote for the candidate on Election Day. The consensus among respondents was that challenges like inadequate logistics, policies, regulations and human resources, etc., which militate against the effective use of digital platforms in the wake of technological advancement, must be addressed through funding.

For Sikanku (Accra, 23/11/2017), a successful political organization and mobilization, project a great future for democratic engagement and participation because, from a social connectivity and interpersonal point of view, digital platforms will become the major contributor to Ghana's democratic participation. His projection is reflected in a review in Skoric (2016). Skoric agreed with Lars Willnat and Annette Aw that,

... social media promotes political participation across both democratic and non-democratic Asian societies, i.e., by bringing new sources of political information, opening up new venues for political expression and discussion, promoting government transparency, and providing tools for collective action and “self-mobilization “ (2014, p80).

These scholars' arguments were among the considerations of other deficiencies which possibly deter the uses of social media in some parts of Asia. As they put it:

‘...use of the platforms create[s] disaffection within the political system, and, lack of political trust in Hong Kong, fears of government surveillance in Singapore, low media literacy and a digital divide in India, Malaysia and Thailand, defamation laws in Singapore and Thailand; etc. (ibid, 98).

These challenges may reflect pointers that are likely to define the course of social media in most developing countries, especially in Africa, where the craze for digital media is rife. Social media are not sacrosanct, they are equally bedevilled with challenges which require effective strategies to manage their impact on the socio-economic and political aspirations of society. In particular, those policies on political party development must give serious consideration to the demographic implications for digital platforms, because digital technology has been seized by the youth, judging from the gradual increase in the youthful population in most African countries, including Ghana, as indicated in her population pyramid. Karikari (4/1/ 2018), agrees with this projection, in view of the sophistications associated with the evolution of technology. He argues that:

...social media influence the reactions of electorates, as evidenced in the 2012 and 2016 elections, where levels of hostility or animosity among political parties were waning, because of the stability of democracy

emanating from education mediated by discourses in spaces created by social media (Accra, 4/1/2018).

Karikari's argument suggests that the demographics of society are changing, so the next generation of people are likely to engage in certain kinds of political communication, perhaps slightly different from today's, because the demands of tomorrow are going to be different, since more people are becoming formally educated and more open to the world.

Similarly, Kpessah-Whyte (Accra, 3/11/2017) foresees a full-blown move to social media campaigning. His prediction is premised on the argument that political mobilization and participation were likely to be dependent on the extent to which the country took up responsibility for computer or digital literacy, because they were going to be the vehicle of political campaigning, and the vessel that would house political campaigns going forward. Effectively, as more and more people are hooked into the various platforms provided by digital media, it will become easier to reach people individually, so that political parties will eventually learn the ropes and adapt and, in adapting, they are likely to learn to provide to the public the means of separating the truth from the falsehoods. By this, digital platforms will become check points for both the citizenry and political actors.

The consensus among interviewees was that political campaigning will be ever more professional, ever more refined, going forward, with the advent of digital spaces, because the digital spaces need some core skills, and the current generation of predominantly political actors will have the opportunity to sharpen their skills.

8.16 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the procedures for collecting data, with emphasis on the application of the thematic analyses technique for the study. The discussions centered on eight thematic areas, and comprised; 'Politics, Political Communication and Political Campaign in Ghana', 'Political Campaign Development in Ghana', 'Political Actors, Digital Tools and Contest for Power' and 'How were Digital Platforms Used for Political Campaigning in Ghana's 2012 and 2016 Elections'. 'The impact of Messages, Credibility of Sources, Language in Political Campaigning', 'Digital Platforms, Strategies and Choice of Political Parties and Leaders' and 'Digital Era and the Future of Political Campaigning in Ghana', were also discussed to arrive at the findings.

Politicians, political communicators, media practitioners, communications experts, ICT experts, and social commentators, plus the views of some youth activists, ‘serial callers’ and a selection of the citizenry, were also sought through focus group discussions in order to gather the data. Responses from the interviewees, which formed the basis of the discussion, were interspersed with quotations from authorities on political communication, media and communications, ICT and political campaigning, etc., as shown in the literature review. Relevant images, for the purposes of content illustration were used to enrich the discussion. They include, among other things, screenshots of political actors, political parties’ activities and infographs from the Internet and social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other SNSs. The images facilitated interpretation and provided a visual explanation of the text by creating more space in which to accommodate information.

It was clear in the findings that interviewees were concerned about effective and efficient uses of digital media (social media), as potential drivers to further transform political communication and information dissemination in the trajectory of Ghana’s efforts to consolidate gains in her multi-party democracy. Discussions also revealed interviewees’ concerns about challenges such as the lack of innovation in strategies, inadequate resources in digital infrastructural development, inadequate education, and a lack of urgency in tapping into the full potentials of digital devices, and the lack of improvement in network services, the inaccessibility of digital devices, and the lack of policies to regulate the use of digital media. The discussions established that a successful electoral process in Ghana’s democracy would largely be contingent on how strategically the nation deals with the exigencies of the media (channels of communication), political communication, political campaigning, and organizations that are caused by technological transformation. In effect, the use of media to engender debate and assist in the formation of opinion, within the democratic, political and social public sphere, has dominated the themes that were engendered by the demands of the research questions and the objectives.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION AND AREAS OF FURTHER RESEACRH

9.0 Introduction

This chapter attempts to conclude the thesis by giving an overview of the major findings. The findings were discussed in the context of Ghana and in relation to the global situation. Moreover, this chapter provides reflections on the study's contributions to participation theory, knowledge, political campaigning and political communication, and it offers recommendations for future studies.

9.1. Overview of Major Findings

This thesis has raised several issues covering the media, participation, political campaigning and political communications, as they relate to multi-party democracy in Ghana. Key findings are based on the themes generated from the processes that facilitated the collection of the data. The themes, discussed below, reflect the key objectives and research questions that underpin the study. They include:

9.2 Politics, Political Communication and Political Campaign Development in Ghana

Exploring the correlation between political communication and political campaigning in the context of Ghana's politics became expedient, in view of their impact on electoral democracy. This concern attracted the attention of this thesis in order to determine how political communication is impacting on political campaigning from an historical point of view. It was clear from responses that political communication has influenced Ghana's democracy, judging by the level and extent of communications exhibited during political activities. The activities relate to campaign mobilization, campaign strategies, campaign communications and messaging, and other media systems, particularly the connection between the traditional media, the Internet and social media.

The study established that, historically, Ghana's democratic journey has been dominated by agitation from political stakeholders, who considered the media an indispensable tool for reaching the electorate. Political actors realized that political communication is at the heart of the democratic process because citizens need to have an enlightened understanding of the choices at stake (Kriesi, 2011). Indeed, responses have also indicated that democracy has come to stay, and the only way to consolidate it is to adhere to the key tenets: free speech and free media, because: 'democracy faced reversal when people still desired to go back or regretted due to recurrence of uneventful situations, like, to re-embrace military rule' (Asa Asante, Accra, 26/1/2018). Similarly, the study established that building democracy required discipline and sacrifices from stakeholders, 'that is a challenge that we must work towards, but overall, I think that politics in Ghana has arrived. We need a little bit of fine-tuning to get it right, especially when it comes to the operation of democracy.' (Awuku. Accra, 10/1/2018). These are highlights of the inherent threats to democracy, but citizens are re-assured that the country's democracy is secured by the existence of vibrant media, CSOSs and the Constitution. Arguably, the media, e.g., the uninterrupted and interactive nature of social media, assures the political stakeholders, and the citizenry in general, of unmediated and inexpensive platforms from which to critically communicate issues pertaining to the economy, probity, accountability and political stability, which hitherto were considered 'taboo', in an apparent reference to the media culture that existed under military rule before the Fourth Republic.

This is an indication that democracy has created an opportunity for the re-establishment of a new political environment that promotes free speech and free media, about which all efforts must be made to ensure that it is deeply entrenched in the Ghanaian body politic. Effectively, it has been a transition, from a culture of silence to a situation of liberal and participatory governance, with the associated benefit of creating more opportunity for the citizenry to be fully deliberative on socio-economic and political issues in a new media sphere. All of the interviewees' responses on politics, political communication and political campaigning point to the relief that the post-military era has been replaced, and that 'past political confrontation and violence had before her independence, resulted in clear partisan lines, known as the 'Danquah-Busia' and Nkrumah axes' (Lindberg and Morrison, 2005 p. 566).

The theme thus becomes relevant to the thesis, and the responses have provided the opportunity to assess the availability and accessibility of media channels, both before and after the reintroduction of democracy in the context of politics and political communication, and how these channels were maximized, by key political actors, for political campaigning and other political engagement. How the media, (including the Internet and SNSs) have influenced Ghana's political history, with respect to political communication and political campaigns, also becomes critical in the discourse of transition in Ghana's political transformation. As the GJA President stated:

Ghana is a politically active nation and the media's dominant subject is politics. Our obsession with politics is such that, especially the media, is influenced by the culture of the over-politicizing of issues, because they know that the Ghanaian is hyper-active when it comes to politics (18/11/2017).

Being politically active placed a herculean task on the media, when political stakeholders, and especially political communicators, had to strategically and actively communicate with a very 'political society', because 'democracy has become the only game in town, which is on the lips, the hearts and minds of everybody, and that it gives hope as to the country's direction in terms of consolidation' (Asa-Asante, 26/1/2018). It is obvious that the media had changed the trend and nature of political communication, and this subsequently has a ripple effect on the overall politics, because political stakeholders, especially parties, would have to diversify their style and mode of 'politicking' to suit the politics of the day, as mediated by the conduct of the citizenry. The findings established this as being very reflective of the fact that political communications and other opportunities and incentives that are generated by changes in the functioning of political parties, technological innovation and professionalism, and the media will encourage political actors, including political communicators, to exploit political communication for political benefit (Korzi, 2004; Klinghard, 2005, 2010). It is also a confirmation that free expression has created a congenial space in which the media operate, there is thus an enhancement of deliberation and participation. This has given meaning to political communication and campaigning and this will potentially impact positively on the country's political situation. These achievements have created the opportunity for the Ghanaian to talk critically about human rights, political parties, the economy, and all of the other sensitive issues which were impossible to discuss freely before the Fourth Republic.

These positive developments do not negate the fact that politics in Ghana faces challenges when it comes to political communication, as established in the study. In fact, there have been some negatives in the context of performance, and that has affected progress in the democratic journey. Respondents' concerns for the media, in connection with 'exposés' on allegations of abuse of power by state authorities, reports of corruption, and incidents of the blatant violation of the rights of individuals, among other complaints, evidently raise a lot of issues on democracy and politics which need critical examination. As most of these issues become political ammunition for political stakeholders, and can then be used to prey on their opponents during campaigns and on other political platforms, as most allegations have resulted in mistrust and disaffection in the country's political system, acts of vilification, animosity and acrimony, etc., and these have indirectly influenced political campaigning. The study reveals that, in a highly polarized media environment, it becomes crucial for the determination of the media's role in politics, as the allegations punch deep holes in arguments from politicians on campaign platforms, in defense of their positive contribution to the country's current political situation.

The interest in how developments in political campaign are influencing democracy in Ghana was motivated by the need to explore the role of political parties in campaigns and other political activities, because parties are the initiators and executors of political campaigns and those other activities. The revelations are that the success of political campaigns is determined by the seriousness a party attaches to its campaign programs, and that there is a tendency that efforts by the parties may have a direct reflection on the development of a campaign.

The direct responses justify the rationale for the formation of political parties and their contribution to efforts to mobilize and establish the requisite structure to administer the day-to-day activities of the political entity. For example, the response that 'parties form the foundation on which the administration of any country is built' (Kpessah-Whyte, 3/11/2017) clearly underscores the need for political parties to be well organized and structured so as to ensure efficiency in the realization of their goals and aspirations. This means that political parties are expected to be a source of human resources, with the requisite skills and professionalism to execute the party agenda in the context of campaigns, as Kpessah-Whyte argues, 'political parties manage the socio-economic and political agenda, which determine the success or failure of a country, to the extent of development in any democratic setting' (Accra, 3/11/ 2017). This clearly indicates that the

mandate of political parties in governance enjoins them to evolve strategies and comprehensive policies as guides on the trajectory towards capturing political power, and beyond. That is why ‘their manifestos are pregnant with plans and policies, mostly based on the needs and expectations of the electorates’, as stated by Dzisah (Accra, 23/10/2017). Besides, it is widely accepted as a norm and practice that political parties govern by the dictates of their manifestos (which are regarded as the blue print), in tandem with the state’s development and planning agenda for the state and for all political parties, irrespective of their ideology, could be development-oriented, based on the convention that politics is about the development of the people over whom the politicians have supervision. The study makes it clear that identifying with a political party’s aspirations presupposes that a political entity establishes an ideology that reflects the identity of the party in question, and this reflects Rogers and Storey’s (1987) position that every political campaign must have an identity and, in most cases, campaigns are identified via other basic elements. It stands to reason, therefore, that communications by the two leading political parties under discussion would potentially be geared towards the vision of not only persuading the electorate to imbibe these beliefs but, also, to ensure that various structures are developed towards providing resources that may possibly meet the exigencies associated with the visions and aspirations of a political entity.

However, reactions from the respondents, as indicated in the study, amply reveal that the two leading political parties, like their compatriots, lack the requisite resources to enable them to reach out to the electorate with regard to the possible debilitating effect on the development of the parties’ programs. So, what needs to be done is to explore legitimate funding for party activities, as advised by Farrell, Koldyn and Medvic (2011, p.18), so as to acquire the skills to meet the standards that modernize contemporary political campaign activities. This could be a possible solution, as the study establishes, concerning the funding of political parties, that resources to manage party activities, should be under a transparent and strict regulatory framework in order to monitor and ensure equitable distribution to all political parties. Empowering the parties also means enabling them to realize, at least partially, the goals that underline the formation of political parties. To make the mass mobilization of voters occur efficiently for several levels of officeholders (Aldrich 1995; Farrell et al., 2001, p.12) because, as Yeboah argued:

...political parties cannot make any headway in their campaigns if basic infrastructure, logistics and human resources are lacking, there should be

efforts to provide basic needs for the parties to effectively participate in the deliberative processes, especially in the area of political campaigns (Accra, 10/12/2017).

Compounding the problems that affect the development of political campaigns in Ghana is the absence of a policy on funding for political parties. The study clearly demands a policy, like the Policy Development Grants (PDGs) that are managed by the Electoral Commission of Britain, under the *Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA)* and Zimbabwe's *Political Parties (Finance) Act* [Chapter 2:11] of 2001, which cater for the activities of political parties. Such policies would help to improve capacity building programs and prohibit allegations of foreign donations to political parties and candidates, thereby providing some checks against financial malfeasance in party funding. As Sikanku (23/11/2017) opined:

... the desire for parties to recoup investments in party management and organization becomes inevitable, and this potentially creates a breeding ground and the motivation for people to engage in corrupt activities, Therefore, the need for broader consultation by the Inter Party Advisory Committee (IPAC), an organization formed by the stakeholders to manage party activities in the country becomes imperative, if electorates were to build a consensus on political party funding to resource political parties.

9.3 Political Actors, Digital Tools and Contest for Power

My focus on this theme was to elicit views on the relationship between power and media, and, establish how the leadership use power to influence the media and various media systems for political gain. This is because the crux of campaigning is to utilize platforms and other opportunities to enhance one's chances of winning the contest for power among the various contestants, and to gain the absolute legitimacy to rule the citizenry. As Stone (2012) argues, it takes opposing parties to contest for power, and it assumes that preferences are set, and power is that which determines the outcome in a straightforward instance of clashing wills.

The study has established the campaign as a means of reaching out to the electorate, and this validates, to some extent, the urge by political actors to evolve effective campaign strategies to hijack, or make maximum use of, all of the media that are available, believing that a leadership's ability to control the media will safeguard and boost their chances of excellence in the contest for power. In effect, the political parties and their leadership, at all levels, were very optimistic that

power, when acquired in all forms and on all levels, would equip them with the capacity to make things happen that otherwise would not happen (Stone, 2015). The political parties considered social media a very powerful tool, with the potential to yield excellence in their bids for power in any political contest, provided it is strategically used. They therefore capitalized on the persuasive, interactive and unmediated advantages of social media, as an appropriate forum for direct interaction with audiences, particularly the youth and the middle classes, who are digital media savvy. So, a leader's ability to capturing the social media, and the media in general, would significantly enhance the parties' chances of controlling both political engagements and communication space, notably, for press conferences, rallies, trainings, fund-raising and membership outreach, which potentially offer the needed platform for information dissemination, education and interaction.

The conviction of the interviewees ties in with the argument that:

... capacities for interaction in web spaces organized by campaigns may attract supporters but, ultimately, decisions over campaign messaging, policy, strategies, and tactics remain with the formal campaign organization (Jensen 2017, p. 25).

Besides, the control of the media invariably empowers the contestant, as revealed in the study:

... once they (political contestants) are empowered, they feel as if they are the ones in control and, messages emanating from them must be personalized, must be more engaging and interactive, especially on social media, since that media is supposed to close the gap and dismantle those vertical relationships and make it more horizontal (Sikanku, 23/11/2017).

The theme affirms one of the thesis' core objectives: exploring how political actors are maximizing the potency of media in the contest for power. It is not only about an entity or one's ability to control power, but also about the capability, resourcefulness and commitment to harnessing the platforms available. For example, Mensah's (Accra, 30/10/2017) argument that a leader must equally be amenable to the characteristics of digital spaces, clearly exposes the leadership and the parties to the lack of a certain capacity and abilities. Arguably, deficiencies in some of these leadership traits could possibly inhibit a leader's chances in a contest. Parse (2014) is explicit on this position, because power with social media, for example, reflects potential modes for the expression of power, whereby force emanates from the personal words, images, graphics, and pictures that are intentionally posted to the platforms, sites, blogs, and microblogs where

interactions occur. The argument that the parties and the leadership lacked certain capabilities and abilities seems to gain some currency, judging from the unanimous assertion by respondents that all the parties used social media, but needed to be more effective by integrating professionalism and innovations so as to meet the standards pertaining in developed democracies in the West. Although, in comparative terms, the use of social media for campaigning in Ghana may seem infantile, s/he should be motivated by the fact that, elsewhere, institutional political actors who had incorporated digital media into their communication strategies had engaged in a rapid process of adaption that potentially yielded good results (Vegeer et al., 2011, p479), thus, the social media could be described as a potential tool for contemporary political communication, which every leader must take advantage of in their bid for power. This optimism was motivated by the assumption that the proliferation of digital devices, including smart phones, for example, could make the Internet and social media accessible, thereby providing unfettered access for political leaders to deal with their audiences. This assumption found a very prominent space in the thesis, in view of the huge number of the citizenry using digital devices, most of whom were connected to the Internet, websites and SNSs of the parties and their leadership and other political stakeholders.

However, the fact that other demographic variables could influence the impact of digital tools on the electorate generates, as established in the study, the debate as to whether every user of a digital device is interested in politics. This is because users of mobile phones, laptops and other digital devices may have different backgrounds, e.g., income, education, access, age and their motive for using the devices could be entirely different to suggesting that they are using them for politics and to attract the attention of political content, which is very intrusive on the Ghanaian airwaves. Besides, as pointed out by Braimah (27/1/2018), people who were using digital platforms for professional communications, could be into client relations, customer relations and other commitments. The devices were thus being used for different purposes, including politics, and it becomes difficult to consider them as platforms that contestants can rely on to assess the impact they make on the electorate in terms of persuasion. As Aldrich et al., say: ‘mobile phones and platforms like Facebook are highly personalized mediums of communication, and unsolicited messages are likely to be regarded as more intrusive than a ‘cold call’ to a landline or flyer posted through the mailbox’ (2016, p.166), but this does not rule out the possibility that leadership could reap some benefits from the devices, because Ghanaians actively participate in radio broadcast

programs via the use of Twitter, where a local FM station, Citi97.3, creates space for the citizenry to contribute to various programs, including political discussions and political talk shows (Avle, 2017). It would be equally wrong to assume that audiences were not influenced by unsolicited messages that intruded on the devices of users, since evidence show that website traffic (as indicated in graphics online, for example, the monitoring of readership per publication), usually in terms of affinity and in-market traffic, especially during political seasons, as well as my observation that not only did most broadcast stations increase the number of political discussion programs a few months ahead of elections, but they also varied the existing ones with innovations to enhance quality in content. Again, as indicated by Ayiku (Tema, 14/1/2017), ‘holding a mobile device was not about direct politics, but people commented on things that could affect them that were being initiated by the politicians. Therefore, there could be some level of influence on participation in political deliberation’, and this can only be established through empirical evidence as in (Gainous and Wagner, 2014).

If audiences are partially influenced by the devices they use, then it behoves political stakeholders, especially the leadership who are contesting for power, to maximize social media by strategically packaging messages on all fronts so as to make the needed impact in political communications, because digital media have a democratizing effect on political campaigning, due to its interactive capacities and its potential to create a participatory architecture to facilitate interactions between campaigns and supporters that otherwise does not exist (Lilleker and Jackson, 2010).

9.4 How NPP and NDC Used Social Media in Ghana’s 2012 and 2016 Elections?

The consensus among respondents, that all the political parties actively used social media for their campaign activities in the 2012/2016 elections, underscores the premium they placed on the platforms. Arguably, this theme could be described as the nerve center of the thesis, and it has generated critical issues that are sought largely to respond to one of the key objectives of the study; how are political campaigners managing the seemingly new communication platforms that are being integrated into the electoral system? It also provides leads to which political party and leadership made good use of the platforms, as well as the impact that those platforms may have on future political campaigns, in view of the unending transformation in campaigns that has been

occasioned by developments in technology and their ramifications for political communications and the choices of the electorate.

The study confirmed Kreiss's (2016b), assertion that most political actors use digital platforms extensively for their political organization and campaign activities, at least on the basis of preferences, if not all, and their motivation for using the platforms may be based on the argument that the social media are more interactive, inexpensive, unmediated, and offer instant information dissemination and, possibly, create horizontal spaces for communication. This also establishes social media platforms as a new sphere of space that encourages inclusivity, in terms of ideas for deliberations that are crucial for the decision-making processes in participatory and multi-party democracies in a contemporary political environment. Effectively, they are very attractive to the political parties and political stakeholders in general, as evidenced in the responses. Penplusbytes' (2017) confirmation that all political parties were visible on social media, as complements to the traditional media, in both the 2012 and 2016 elections, gives equal credence to a justification for the integration of the platforms by users in modern electoral strategies, as the transformation of social networks into one of the most relevant means of mass communication has not gone unnoticed by specialists in the field of politics, who take advantage of the opportunity to reach out to voters (Andronicus, 2016, quoting John, 2013).

The study establishes that the two parties (NDC/NPP) widely used the platforms, primarily 'to acclaim their achievement, they used it to attack and sometimes they used it to defend, but I think that most, at times in Ghana, the social media are used more, to acclaim out of all the three functions' (Sikanku, 23/11/2017). The motivation falls within the expectations of every user, that the social media, like their traditional counterpart, can be an effective political campaign tool for purposes of publicity, which can be managed through advertising and public relations to project the political entity, with a view to persuading the electorate. Although the claim by the respondents may not be empirically substantiated, there is the possibility of the platforms impacting on the parties' campaigns, as evidenced in heavy traffic on most news portals, remarks by political actors, and, notably, public interest groups and political parties on post-campaign and post-election evaluations. The US example suggests that 'although there is little consensus on what effects these technologies have, beyond increasing use and excitement among the electorate, a growing body of U.S. and international research documents generally, indicate positive effects' (Bakker and de

Vreese, 2011; Boulianne, 2009; Hendricks and Denton, 2010; Kenski and Stroud, 2006), cited in Dimitrova and Bystrom (2013).

All these sources establish that the platforms have created some space for enhanced deliberation and participation, and that has possibly influenced the electoral process in different ways, depending on how they were used, and on who used them properly to get positive results, as would be expected in political communication. What matters most may be to explore further the extent to which these platforms were used, and how effectively and efficiently political stakeholders, especially the two leading political parties, put the devices to use.

It has been established that the platforms were used extensively for publicity and promotion purposes: as key channels for information dissemination, education, party organization, mobilization and management. From all indications, they were used as complements to the traditional media, with both serving as sources of information to newsmakers, media practitioners, the electorate and other political stakeholders. Doworkpor's reaction encapsulates the extent to which the parties used the platforms: 'as of Election 2016, I saw something around 50-50 but I believe that, from the way things are going, by 2020 we will reach 70% -30% in favor of new media' (Accra, 24/2/2018). The comparison on the impact of social and traditional media in those periods clearly demonstrate that the use of social media in the 2012 and 2016 election campaigning went beyond the use of smartphones and other digital devices, it affirms the positions of respondents, as argued by Benoit et al, (2002); Kaid, (2004); Moy et al., (2006) and Baumgartner and Morris (2006), that the complementarity between digital and traditional media, especially television and radio, has an equal role in transforming mass communication effects on political campaigns. The combined usage of both types of media enhanced advertisements, political information and campaign messages in a cordial environment that was reminiscent of the dividend that emanated from the combined use of Twitter and mainstream media during the 2015 and 2017 political campaigning in the UK (Bright, 2017). Alidu's observation on the interdependency of both forms of media as sources of references by political stakeholders, notably, political communicators and serial callers, as well as regular contributors to phone-in programs, further affirms the impact that the social media have had on audiences and the electorate, and possibly on their preferences, in terms of the choice of leadership and political parties.

Largely, the two parties relied on social media; for example, with a smart phone, political parties could record a video and put it on social media. Their candidates at both the Presidential and parliamentary levels, and some CSO, had social media accounts, notably, on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter where they interacted with the audience to court sympathy and support for their cause. However, Ahiabenu's (14/1/2017) comments on expenditure in relation to campaigns raises concerns as to how parties are able to fund their activities. Possibly the lack of resources, including deficits in the communications infrastructure and funds for various activities in their campaigns, could influence the parties either way. This means that more funding was needed as a motivation or an incentive in order to make various aspects of the campaigns processes and channels of communication functional, and up to the expectation of stakeholders, in view of the invaluable benefits derived from the space created by the platforms. These expectations tie in with the revelation that all these channels served as conduits for media coverage on political party advertisements and promos, in fact, as the mouthpiece for political party campaign programs, i.e., rallies, interviews, press releases, were all on various social media platforms. Similarly, the two parties campaigned using those platforms, and they also displayed what they had done, and could do, in pictures, audio, and on video channels, photo galleries and audio channels, and they used them to campaign. Besides, space created by the platforms was not empty in the schemes of the two parties. In most instances, they streamed live political programs, without recourse to the frustration of contending with the huge bills hitherto incurred from advertisements and other affordances created by the traditional media.

Effectively, the two parties patronized social media, possibly by capitalizing on the profiles and credentials of the platforms, especially helpful were the advantages of affordability, virtual inexpensive space platforms, and their creation of horizontal spaces of communication inside otherwise hierarchical political campaigns that were controlled by the elite in the broadcast era of politics (Jensen, 2017). What could also have motivated the parties' way of using social media in the 2012/2016 elections may be the benefit of instant responses from their electorate on things that they had done. This ties in with the rationale for the uses of social media, which was arguably for 'dialogue, interactivity and feedback' (Xenos and Moy, 2007; Sweetser and Larisey, 2008), as well as rationalizing the essence of the social media as platforms that facilitate accidental exposure to news and political content, and that permit all users to publicly show their agreement or disagreement through posting content and commenting' (Lilleker and Koc-Michalska 2017, p. 25)/

9.5 Social Media: The Preferences of Political Parties and Leadership

A critical assessment of how the two parties used social media indicates that the choices of platforms by the political actors were influenced partly by the political communications strategies that underpinned the campaign processes, and this ties in with one of the thesis's expectations: the motivation for using social media for party political communications in the 2012 and 2016 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections. This was necessitated by the need to identify, in specific terms, the choice of platforms by political parties, noting the diversity of approaches, because preferences for platforms could possibly be informed by the parties' resolve to assess the impact of social media as used in previous political engagements. Besides, it was necessary to determine how strategies were executed and which party and political leadership fully patronized the platforms.

The revelation that there was inadequate intra-party co-ordination, especially between Presidential and Parliamentary aspirants and their political parties, in the context of social media usage, reinforces the need for proper internal collaboration amongst users in the parties. That would ensure the proper linkages to resources and expertise that would enable them to reap the necessary results from the platforms. The websites and the SNSs, function separately and in parallel to one another, and this has largely limited their impact, in the context of information dissemination and campaign mobilization. For example, platforms, like other SNS accounts that were owned individually by some of the political party leaders, had no active links with their main parties (Braithwaite, 27/1/2018). Arguably, parties might miss valuable networking among the various groups, particularly initiatives by individuals to utilize the space created by the platforms. This, potentially, may have created a deficit, in terms of the uniformity and consistency needed for effective political education and education, partly confirming Jensen's (2017) doubts about the benefits emanating from the extent to which social media communications are incorporated into campaigns.

However, these doubts run contrary to a study on the 2010 Swedish elections, which established that social media use, as well as visiting political party websites, significantly influenced political participation among the voters (Dimitrova et al., 2011). This report suggests that the lack of co-ordination in the party structures would have an effect on participation in the

campaign process. This reinforces the NPP's argument, from the party's former Deputy Communications Director, Okujato (Accra, 14/12/2017), that his party won the 2016 elections because they campaigned with well-organized Social Media team, which was well-coordinated across the country. For him, the team was charged with the responsibility of setting an agenda, monitoring and responding to issues of concern to the Party, especially on social media. He attributed this to a review of the party's budgets and strategy for social media. Although the NDC used Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram equally, the lack of co-ordination and the fragmented nature of the party's social media army, may possibly limit the influence of its social media strategy. These points raise further debate on the choice of platforms and their related benefits to campaigning among political parties.

The arguments above seek to suggest that the platforms have a role to play in the success of political campaigns if strategies are well formulated and executed. It is obvious that political leadership and parties make preferences, depending on the choice of media, as dictated largely by the potentials that are inherent to their preferred media, more so because they need the platforms to educate the electorate, as well as to control the flow of information about their campaigns. A typical example was the use of Twitter, which creates a perfect environment for message control, and, as argued by Gainous and Wagner (2014), candidates who use the site correctly may reinforce the pre-existing views of their followers and explain to them how they should consider new political information.

Besides, the preferences are reinforced by the frequency with which the two parties used the social media platforms, as evidenced from the findings, in that all the presidential, and some parliamentary candidates, had websites and social media platforms, including YouTube channels, to which videos were regularly uploaded and updated. This scenario clearly gives credence to the argument that political actors have given a thumbs-up to social media, as an equally effective tool that is capable of enhancing political communication in the overall campaign processes. Arguably, some leaders are realizing the role of digital media as a major campaign tool, because digital technologies have the potential to offer a range of new means for engaging in civically oriented forms of behavior (Lilleker, 2017).

However, there is also an indication that the preferences for platforms are partly influenced by the demographics of the electorate, and this concern need serious attention in the fashioning of

political communication strategies. As the study establishes, the youth are developing an interest, an incredible interest, in the country's political affairs, and they prefer to move their engagements onto digital platforms and to slug them out themselves, by posting political messages responding to political issues about their opponents, and that trend must be a guide to political actors. Certainly, the social media become the appropriate platforms for this digital savvy population, whose channels of preferences must be catered for. Their interaction with the candidates Mahama and Akuffo Addo's presence on Facebook and YouTube, for example, could pass as an effective strategy that could possibly open the media space for participation, and close the communication gap with the youth. As Lusoli and Ward (2004) opine, although party members will be checking party websites infrequently, and a significant minority not at all, there would be some glimmers of hope, in terms of attracting younger voters through the Internet and increasing levels of activism, at least amongst those who are already active (cited in Gibson and Ward, 2009).

Irrespective of the category of users, the fact remains that the two parties had preferences in their choice of platforms for political campaigns and other political engagements. They were strategic in using the platforms: they used Facebook by streaming programs live, and posted a lot of their activities in pictures on Instagram, uploaded a lot of videos on their YouTube channel, and made sure on their main website, for example, the NPP's, that *nanaakuffoaddo.com* was linked to their Twitter accounts. The parties also made preferences to ensure that they are comfortable in their quest of using the platforms for their own propaganda by churning out rumors, lies and half-truths. What becomes critical is the need to ensure that the platforms are effectively put to good use, as Sikanku argued, he suggests that political actors must be more strategic. For example,

... when you go there, sometimes you take a video of a campaign and they put the whole video there. There is no preamble to the video, there is no explanation to what has happened. It's so dry. There is no call to action to whoever is posting the video, there is no strong teaser for people to comment [on], so it's just like people are just dumping the materials there (23/11/ 2017).

9.6 Messages, Credibility of Sources, Language in Political Campaigning

This theme sought to elicit experts' views and opinions on the credibility of sources for information dissemination, with a focus on messages and their relevance in political communication. The

theme also responded to concerns around language usage among political stakeholders, especially their choice of diction and their expression of statements to convey messages to the electorate from diverse backgrounds, notably, educational and social status, and level of literacy. The study established that channels of communication influenced the choice of messages on social media, to some extent, as evidenced in the languages used on various platforms.

Findings underscored the relevance of languages in the formulation of messages for campaigns: that the choice and use of decent language was very necessary in communicating messages to the electorate. Of particular concern was the need for political communicators to be decent and decorous in their choice of diction on social media platforms, as audiences were likely to misinterpret the meanings of words and expressions to suit their interests. The burden was on political communicators to make their communication audible and to ensure clarity in the delivery of messages. Respondents advocate for decent language as a standard measure for communicators in political communication, and give huge currency to the need for parties to endeavor to manage platforms, such that messages are not discredited. Preferably, the sources of messages from parties must not be perceived as being corrupt, in terms of language, and, they must attach decency to their language on the platforms so as to earn the credibility and integrity needed to win the trust and confidence of the audience.

It is also imperative, as indicated in the study, that besides ensuring that they maintain a good reputation and credibility in order to win the trust of their audience, messengers were also enjoined to identify with the levels of education and the ability to comprehend discourses pertaining to politics, as well as issues that could potentially persuade the audience to accept their messages. It was possible that the audience would listen to messengers who are perceived to be knowledgeable and who command some level of respect in society, because knowledgeable sources could be relied on, and trusted as credible and authentic in giving an analytical view on issues that are of importance to society. This makes credibility key to information dissemination, it is a major thing that must be navigated by political actors. These expectations should not be limited only to newsmakers and political stakeholders, the essence of messages requires that their sources are credible and valuable, especially to journalists and producers in the overall production process: pre-production, production and post-production, so as to win the trust of citizens, in that:

... foul language and disrespect for the elderly are at variance with the culture and tradition of Ghana, therefore messages that are pregnant with foul language and wrong diction, although [they] may be viral on social media, they tended to discredit the sources (Karikari, 4/1/ 2018).

The findings also justify why the verification of sources, especially the type and nature of the languages used to draft messages, are considered crucial to the traditional media, at least in determining the veracity and relevance of the message, as against the latitude and unmediated nature offered by social media platforms. The justification is endorsed by Manning, who says that, in the traditional media, 'journalists may make their own news, but they do not make it just as they please under conditions chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and determined by the rhythm of the news organisation' (2001, p. 5).

Similarly, the findings brought to the fore some of the challenges that are inherent to the use of social media in relation to messages in political campaigning, that electorates are partly influenced by the language used by political actors, either positively or negatively. It was evident that those freedoms enjoyed by the electorate enrich deliberation and enhance participation, because there is no control of diction and expression, in addition to the audiovisual messages mediated by the 'citizen journalism' era. There was also the possibility of both political actors and the citizenry thriving on the same freedoms that are provided by social media to spread falsehood and propagate untruths, or fake news, to the electorate. The fact that respondents acknowledged some of these challenges corroborates that the parties were partly deficient in controlling the content, the diction of the messages, thereby creating fertile ground on which the citizenry can abuse free speech, to the detriment of electoral democracy. This confirms that the languages used on social media platforms are very important, and political actors must be circumspect and discrete in their choice of diction for their messages, especially in dealing with specific targets, because language has the tendency to influence the patrons of the platforms. Similarly, if citizens pay proper attention to the news they receive, they will become properly informed citizens, and that will make them responsible for their duties as citizens in any democratic environment (Gans, 2010), for example:

... if the message of the NDC was not appealing to the electorate, then, there is a need for political marketing to be taken seriously by the political parties, as they are competing in an election market place where their products, such as performance, manifestos, candidates and messages must be appealing to discerning voters (Aye, 2017, p.15). The

It is also obvious from the findings that the lack of adequate policies to regulate the media and channels of communication in general, render social media platforms vulnerable and open to abuse (fake stories). This generates more debate on the challenges associated with the messages churned out by stakeholders during political campaigns. Arguably, the social media have become part of today's reality, and there is a need to evolve pragmatic policies as in other countries, e.g., the US, where they have the facts-checking system to deal with falsehood and untruths, amongst other things, because Facebook, for example, is impacting on the audience by altering the way people access news (Muller, Schneiders and Schafer, 2016)

As revealed in the study, the social media have taken political communication, and communication in general, to a different level, which necessitates innovation in strategies to meet the exigencies emanating from such sophistications in order to deal with the threats posed to contemporary political party campaigns and party organizations. This is because new technology has also influenced dimensions of the sources and values of news, especially on the Internet and SNSs, which tends to create complexity in the determinants of news. This situation is further challenged by a new trend in political communication in Ghanaian political campaigns, by the emergence of 'Serial Calling', which is likened to the 'Veranda Boys' activism in the early years of Ghana's multi-party era.

9.7 'Veranda Boys' to 'Serial Callers': Their Role in Ghana's Political Campaigning

'Serial callers', as discussed in the previous chapter, play a crucial role in Ghana's political and electoral democracy. Their role is reminiscent of the 'Veranda Boys'¹⁹, who are described as hired

¹⁹ 'Veranda Boys' defies clear definition, but it's a term any Ghanaian will know, and although it predates independence, it is intimately tied to the establishment of Ghana as a sovereign nation. Having emerged at a time of transformation, it is no surprise that its meaning has shape-shifted over the years and continues to evolve. But it remains a unique element in Ghanaian political parlance: something foreign adapted to serve the local, and for all the unpalatable history of its origins, deeply Ghanaian' (Parkes, 2018).

According to Parkes, the term 'Veranda Boys' referred to groups of unemployed youth who took advantage of the influx of foreigners, mainly from the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA), to entertain them by modelling themselves as fixers. They indulged their guests, in everything from pimping and petty theft to small-time retail and music. Parkes' narration establishes that, in order not to miss opportunities, these young men loitered around and sometimes slept on the 'verandas' of supermarkets and trading houses. Their status, as people widely considered rootless and up-to-no-good, earned them the term 'Veranda Boys.' That was during the black-market economy that emerged during the Second World War, primarily in Accra but also in Takoradi, when these cities became staging posts for troops from the UK and USA on their way to the Pacific front (ibid). Possibly, the 'veranda boys' became easily available political campaign and organizational tools, in view of their angling and idling nature, which leading political parties in Ghana then hired as operatives (Veranda Boys) to rough up the public on behalf of their parties. Osagyefo Dr. Nkrumah is said to have utilized the services of the Veranda Boys throughout his party's (Convention People's Party, CPP) agitation for independence. He rallied them across the country to engage the locals, to propagate his party's independence struggle for the 'independence now' slogan. Additionally, Nkrumah's periodic organized mass rallies, were earlier roving talks

enforcers, whose core duties were to ‘rough up’ the public on behalf of a political party in the early days of the country’s multi-party system. They can be likened to mercenaries, whose job requires loyalty and commitment to schedules, in specific terms, and who could also educate and defend on behalf of the party. Their role in contemporary democracy is typical of modern ‘spin doctoring’ in Western politics, and they operate on a partisan basis, making them very loyal to the ideologies and policies in which they believe, and they are also very persuasive.

The study recognized them as conduits between social and old media, especially radio broadcasts, in view of the consistency with which they reacted to issues of interest on behalf of their ‘paymasters’. Political parties used them as an integral part of their political communications outfits and they were briefed to execute their role of information dissemination in a vertical form. They are typically vociferous on local radio stations so as to specifically relay information to the teeming illiterate population, most of whom will not be abreast with the discourses on social media platforms.

The recognition accorded them in the communications set up indicates their special role in political campaigns and mobilization, apparently serving the needs of a special segment of the electoral population, those who are cut-off as a result of the digital divide. Like spin doctors, the findings identified them as being very persuasive, symbolizing effectiveness in terms of performance, both as orators and in print. Their operations confirm their role as key sources of information to those in the electorate who were ‘cut-off’ by technology. They expose that category of the electorate to current political and social developments to enable them to make informed choices in the political decision-making processes, because they have the opportunity, by virtue of their relationship with the party communicators, to participate in deliberations on radio and television, based on briefings from political spokespersons and social media sources. The study establishes that, for example, ‘serial callers’ were largely incoherent, and that rendered most of them handicapped in their attempts to project issues that people cared about, but very relevant to a certain class of the electorate, particularly in the lower classes (Mensah, Accra, 30/10/2017). Serial callers; thus, lack certain qualities that make them impactful in their attempt to relay information to the audience. These concerns are reflected in Manning (2001 p. 7) , who says that:

which took place on the ‘verandas’ of prominent people, where the public, particularly the youth, gathered to listen to the ‘now-famous voice as it rose and fell and shadows moved with the spinning of the earth’ (ibid).

‘the crucial art for a spin doctor is to understand how to bargain with information: how much to release, when it should be released to optimise its value and what can be secured in return for the release of information’. Their operations therefore bring with them a mixture of fortunes to communications in Ghana’s body politic.

These challenges notwithstanding, political actors still realize some dividends from their activities, because they cater for a certain class and category of the electorate whose participation is relevant to the course of the campaigning process, specifically, because their role is to ‘massage messages’ in order to win support for their parties. This role is likened to Goltz’s (2012) description of the role of spin doctors - conventionally burdened with the responsibilities of defending the positions of their institutions, conscious of the consequences, and, in practical terms, they are scheduled to meet the expectations of their paymasters, and they are not under any compulsion to adhere to the basic principles of media practices. In other words, they cannot be compared to journalists, who have to be guided by ethical considerations and not be influenced by the dramatic actions of their sources (ibid) It is also a confirmation of the assumption that they are purely for propaganda purposes, as Goltz argues that ‘propaganda is the job of a spin-doctor, and such an individual (or institution) cannot be ethically or morally blamed for meeting their job description’ (2012, p. 187).

Besides, their credentials as communicators, full of raw language and subjectivity, raises concerns about their credibility and their commitment to issues relating to free speech, citizens’ responsibilities and editorial policies, because radio stations lack the devices to delay their speech on air. Okujato’s reaction to this description of ‘serial callers’ sums up the perception of the respondents, that; this potentially constitutes an abuse of free expression, and puts political communication in danger; (14/12/2017), Similarly, their subjectivity, in terms of information dissemination, raised a lot of issues about the authenticity of the messages, and tended to suggest that most of the ‘serial callers’ reactions were for propaganda purposes. However, ‘serial callers’ will continue to be part of the system and, once connectivity and access to the Internet also expands, maybe the phenomenon of the use of ‘serial callers’ will be reduced, and a lot more people will migrate to the digital media, but there is every indication that their role cannot be dismissed. Political actors must adopt strategies in order to cater for their services.

9.8 Digital Platforms, Strategies and Choice of Political Parties and Leaders

This theme resonates partly with Strömbäck and Kiousis' (2014) argument that strategies are major elements in communication, and, they are considered crucial for the execution of political party campaigns. Effectively, probing the connection between political parties' communication strategies and their impact becomes relevant to the objectives of this thesis, thus providing insight into the types of strategies that the parties deployed in the social media.

It was clear from the respondents that the political parties strategically used the platforms to 'psyche up' the electorate on the prevailing socio-economic and political challenges. All communications by the two leading political parties were thus skewed to using social media platforms to win the electorate's support. The revelation that the NDC could not win the 2016 elections, in spite of the party's achievements, as contained in the 'Green Book', as against the NPP's strategy of the 'African Assumption' raises doubts about the impact of their social media strategies, which were adopted for the election, because both parties seem to have adopted similar strategies in the 2012 elections, which went in favor of the NDC. This seems to give credence to the convention that no party in Ghana can run beyond two terms of eight years, which has been the experience since the country's Fourth Republic, which began in 1992. (NDC, 1992-2000; NPP, 2000-2008; NDC, 2008-2016; NPP, 2016-). This is based on the premise that democracy is meant to improve the lives of the people, therefore, logically, the two parties should have been given the people's mandate to continue even after their two terms, because they showed evidence of infrastructural developments and the other basic necessities that are meant to improve the lives of citizens. For example, the 2016 NPP victory sought to suggest that their strategy worked, because, in the opinion of Cheeseman et al., (2017), socio-economic and political issues dominated the political messages that informed decisions by the Ghanaian electorate in the 2016 elections, and the outcome confirmed the willingness of the electorate to vote out poorly performing governments.

Ayiku's (Tema, 14/1/2017) argument that, strategically, most communications by the political parties were not very effective, because that they failed to adopt different strategies for different types of media, even more so when dealing with new media or digital platforms, is worth considering, in addition to Agbenu's (Accra, 12/ 2018) optimism, that strategies executed by the political parties failed to consider salient factors, such as knowing what to use the platform for,

and who they were targeting. What is more crucial is the assertion that political actors and political parties must be more strategic and innovative in their campaigns, and in other political activities, by continuously adapting to changes in the environments in which they operate in order to meet the exigencies of the time.

These criticisms are crucial to debates relating to variations in strategy in that, as indicated in the findings, strategically, winning elections goes beyond the use of social media platforms, in view of the fact that other studies on social media use for political campaigns and other political activities have questioned the impact of technology on party activities. For example, findings regarding the parties' external electorally related uses of technologies questioned whether campaigning online actually has any impact on voter decisions and outcomes (D'Alessio 1997; Bimber and Davis 2003; Gibson and McAllister 2006; Lusoli 2005; Rainie et al. 2005, cited in Robson and Ward, 2009). This gives credence to the fact that, irrespective of differences in the impact of social media across national contexts, there is general agreement amongst authors that the scope for any effects is small, given the limited audience for party websites (Robson and Ward, 2009).

The findings further established that Kpessah-Whyte, Ahiabenu and Quaynor's arguments about perceived deficiencies, such as the lack of capacity, ineffective coordination and the lack of the requisite comprehensive social media policies from the parties, seem to give currency to the positions of the critics. Being successful in campaigns required not only that political parties redefine their strategies to meet the exigencies prompted by the advent of digital platforms, but also political parties needed to be proactive in evolving pragmatic social media policies and strategies that are capable of overcoming the deficiencies related to social media use. Effectively, although political parties needed to put in more effort by reviewing their social media strategies, probably tapping into the rich experiences of countries that were more technologically matured, and based on the successful implementation of social media policies, the deficiencies in strategies for social media use among Ghanaian political parties may justify some political communication experts' views that political parties need to incorporate professionalism in political campaign execution and management so as to attract the necessary expertise, as against sentiments from some respondents that the involvement of foreign political communication and technological experts would not be appropriate for local political activities. Problems of technological

electioneering fraud, as cited in the case of the US 2016 elections and the *BBC NEWS (Africa Report* December 8, 2016,) report on the cyber-attack on Ghana's EC's website during the 2016 elections, published by *myjoyonline* as a defense against the rejection of external experts' involvement in local elections generated more debate and raises more questions on the impact of strategies for social media use.

It is obvious from the study's findings that political parties in Ghana used digital platforms for their campaign activities, in the context of the 2012 and 2016 elections. However, they needed a more effective strategy to maximize the full potentials of social media as complementary tools for political campaigning. The need for strategy that accommodates a mix of both the old and the social media, in order to provide the necessary variation for an effective campaign strategy, may be a potential option in sustaining campaigns in the evolving technological era.

9.9 Variations in Political Communication and Campaign Strategies

There is no doubt that technology has influenced society, including politics and the way it is managed. It is evident from the study that, in communication, digital media have offered a lot of choices, making it possible for political stakeholders to vary their political communication strategies in their quest to persuade the electorate to endorse their ideologies and beliefs. This is seen in respondents' acknowledgements of the changing trends, especially the sophistication of political campaigns and political management that is occasioned by technological development, and the impact digital media are having on political campaigns. Interviewees' assertions that digital media has offered a lot of choices, making it possible for news to be personalized, although its boundless perimeters pose daunting challenges to political communications and free expression in Ghana's democracy, ties in largely with the belief that although the impact of campaigning on social platforms has been limited to cross-sectional data sets from one election period, which are vulnerable to unobserved variable bias, the platforms continue to be a routine part of political campaigns worldwide (Bright et al., 2017). This is an indication of the role social media are playing, they have brought innovation leading to transformation in global political campaigning, and political party management in general, despite the numerous challenges that are associated with them.

Although the findings point to the fact that social media has compelled political stakeholders to vary their communications strategies, respondents' reactions, that platforms in the 2012 and 2016 elections differ, in terms of impact, establishes that variations and changes in strategies, and their ramifications for the overall campaign activities, have been progressive. This is clear in the examples that interviewees cited, that parties displayed more refined infographs, used digital posters, electronic billboards, and raised funds through social media. That was contrary to the situation in previous elections, when the traditional media dominated the channels of visibility for political party activities. These developments seem to bring to an end the dominance of politics by rich individuals and parties, who capitalized on their resources to monopolize the media at the expense of the majority of individuals and smaller political parties. Effectively, social media have nullified the 'big boys' advantages and have provided the opportunity for all political parties to improve on their mode of publicity, their modes of funding mobilization, the organization of rallies, and other party activities. Arguably, the platforms have broadened participation and enhanced deliberations by providing unfettered access to all the parties to interact with the electorate.

However, technology was not necessarily the answer to every solution to challenges, when it came to political campaign, as Sikanku (Accra, 23/11/2007) argued, because the use of the most sophisticated model does not guarantee success in an election. What needed to be done was to recognize technology as part and parcel of the whole political campaign process, and not necessarily as an end in itself. This was confirmed by the experimental studies on electoral campaigns in two legislative campaigns in America in 2012, which indicated that that exposure to Facebook ads had no impact on voters' name recognition or voting choice (Brookman and Green, 2014, cited in Aldrich et al., 2016). The findings, therefore, create doubts on the effectiveness of advertising, which can be considered, for example, a major platform for political campaigns. This suggests also that communications strategies for campaigning should not be focused predominantly on the new tools, like social media, but also on the tactics of professionalized campaigning, taking note of the environment, the prevailing circumstances and the expectations of the electorate, all mediated by research.

In other words, political stakeholders, as Agbenu (Accra, 12/2/2018) suggests, needed to vary communication strategies by exploring a mix of the old and social media as tools, with the

emphasis on building the requisite technology to enhance the strategies. This suggestion finds space in Gibson and Römmele's (2009) prescription for a mix of technology, policy and strategy, and, largely, to endorse variation in the strategies as a springboard for innovation that aims to effect changes in political activities in the era of digital transformation.

Modification of strategies, as established in the study, could potentially, if effectively harnessed, be an agent of transformation in political communication and campaigning, with significant results, and that was evident in the 2012/2016 elections. Braimah's (27/1/2018) and Mensah's (Accra, 30/10/2017) assessments on social media's 'two-edged' impact on the elections reviewed, also corroborate the relevance of variations in political communications and campaigning. Whether good or bad, it has become a phenomenon that needs efficient and effective strategy to execute its implementation, in that it has the potential to create space, encourage diversity and enrich deliberations in a participatory democratic environment. Invariably, the findings bring to the fore, as some of the interviewees agree, an inherent huddle of 'deep-seated' tribal, political and ideological inclinations, and the 'serial callers' phenomenon that political strategists would have to address to make political strategies meaningful and realistic in the course of democratic consolidation. The 'serial callers' phenomenon, for example, typically defies ethics in communications and all of the rules of engagement in political communications, and it poses a serious threat to democracy in view of their subjective approaches to issues and, in particular, their inordinate addiction to radio, and the fact that most of them are technologically challenged, suggest that they are susceptible to the 'zombie concept', where all they do is to obey their masters' briefings, irrespective of the substance or merits of the messages that they carry to a section of the audience, who are equally uneducated, and so cannot monitor proceedings on social media. Effectively, any lapses by the opponent to monitor and counter false messages becomes the truth, to the disadvantage of other opponents.

Variations in strategies are potentially designed to bring out a lot of innovations in Ghanaian political campaigning mobilization, as well as bringing the youth closer to the realm of ideologies, in that variations potentially create more spaces, not only for enhancing interactivity, but also for closing the gap between political actors and the electorate, because leadership is expected to become approachable. Political actors utilized the social media to create more space, which obviously broadened participation and enhanced deliberations on issues, to the advantage

of the electorate, according to the findings, and to possibly influence the electorate's choices in terms of leadership and political parties.

These arguments establish that other elements in the media system, beside the social media, are also a determinant factor in the success, or otherwise, of communication in political campaigns. As Strömbäck and Kious (2014) state, the profile of benefits relating to direct contacts, text messages and telephone conversations, as complements to the traditional and digital media, are critical in facilitating information dissemination in political campaigns.

9.10 Traditional and Social Media in Perspective

Discussions and conversations of all types are visible and audible on both traditional and social media, even the illiterate population can feel the presence of discussions, including politics, via the pictures they see on both social and traditional media. This observation attracted the theme, 'Traditional Media and Social Media in Perspective', with a view to, and the expectation of, eliciting responses to determine whether the two types of media are complementary and what their impact was, in terms of information dissemination and marketability for both party and candidates at all levels during the 2012 and 2016 elections.

The findings have established the connection between the old and the social media as being complementary, since most stories from the traditional media had a direct correlation with those on the social media and *vice versa*. This suggests that they complement each other, which likely enhances participatory interests in democratic engagement in the context of information dissemination.

The traditional media, particularly radio, remained dominant, due to their accessibility and multiplicative power, as indicated earlier. The findings that radio was very effective in the rural areas, where the majority of the population are normally illiterate (*Ghana Demographic Survey, 2010*), to some extent makes the traditional media, more precisely, radio and television, strategically the favored channels of communication for the parties. In other words, radio's potentials are commensurate with the political actors' strategy of utilizing a very 'local' channel that is accessible to their target audience, most of whom are familiar with the local languages, and the fact that an increasing number of local radio stations broadcast in native languages and dialects.

This assertion makes Blankson's (2005) argument that the local languages have a huge impact on the voter population, especially in rural communities, plus the fact that local dialect and culture express the identity, and thus should not be overlooked by media policy makers (cited in Mu-azu, 2016) more meaningful to the parties' campaigns. This means that 'radio programmes in English, and other foreign languages, are not appealing, as well as having fewer listeners as against those who listened to radio in local dialect' (2016, p. 120).

However, the country's demographic patterns and their ramifications in the context of the Ghanaian voting population raises debates, in that Ghana's demographic profile indicates that the country has a young age structure, with approximately 57% of the population being under the age of 25. This is beside those who are within the 25-54 age bracket²⁰. It is possible that the communications strategies of political parties factored these data into the formulation of their youth policies, as evidenced in the manifestos of Ghana's two main political parties, the NDC and NPP. In Debrah's assertion, both parties possibly focused on the youth, judging from the significant number in the nation's voting population profile. Arguably, every political stakeholder who is in contention would formulate communications policies with such a target in mind, when it comes to campaign messages, particularly those concerning education, with a view to capturing their support (Debrah et al., 2013), this runs alongside the revelation that social media resonate with the youth, most of whom are not much interested in the hard news which dominates bulletins in the traditional media. Moreover, their indulgence in technology naturally accounts for their preferences for smartphones, computers and iPads on which to access the Internet and the social media, particularly Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, and all of the other digital devices that facilitate their connection with the social media. Responses from Dzisah (23/10/2017) and Ahiabenu (14/1/2018) reinforced the notion of the confidence of the youth in social media, for instance, digital platforms were evoked, particularly among the youth, mostly either secondary school, University or tertiary students, and, to some extent, the educated middle class.

Arguably, there is every indication of the possibility of complementarity between the two types of media in view of differences espoused by respondents, who suggested that there was some intercourse between them, because information came from traditional media to new media, and *vice versa*, in most of the reportage in both traditional and social media. The bond between the two

20 (https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/print_gh.html). Accessed 23/6/2018.

opens up the creation of fertile platforms that are likely to enhance participatory interests in democratic engagement in the context of information dissemination. My observation attests to the fact that, sometimes, the agenda was set on new media and was then translated to the traditional media, and *vice versa*, a practice which inherently sought to satisfy the listening expectations of both literates and illiterates across the political divide.

Similarly, there are differences between social media and traditional media in their different forms and approaches. The arguments by Sikanku (Accra, 23/11/2007), Malik (Accra, 18/2/2018) and Karikari (Accra, 4/1/2018), tend to encapsulate this finding, that there is a significant difference between the traditional and social media, despite their complementary nature. Findings have established the difference, amongst other things, that the audience had been used to the old media, especially the state-owned media, as against the new media, with the Internet as probably the biggest platform preceding the media revolution, with changes from the period of websites, and then blogs until, currently, there are the social media. Moreover, as the social media consists primarily of user-generated content, users may be able to encounter ideas and opinions that are not well represented in traditional news media (Gillmor, 2006).

Again, it is easier, as the outcome of this study, to control the traditional media, using gatekeeper principles and other elements and, arguably, this has endangered free speech and free expression because it created the opportunity for manipulation of content backstage. Digital platforms; interactive and difficult to control especially, in the era of citizen journalism and fake news, are opposite to this, in fact, digital platforms go further to lower transaction costs by removing obstacles to participation, generate new and more efficient forms of bottom-up organization and coordination, and to create new forms of participation to complement the existing repertoires (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013 cited in Theocharis and Lowe, 2015, p. 1466).

The ubiquitous nature of social media enhances participation in a democratic setting and has encouraged citizen journalism, a practice that will most likely define the course of political communication in future political campaigns.

However, respondents' revelation that the illiteracy levels of many Ghanaians render them educationally deficient, and therefore lacking the requisite knowledge to utilize to the maximum the benefits associated with the new media platforms, and they delimit the advantages to political stakeholders, since users were expected to be very analytical in their approach to the use of the

platforms. Similarly, the assumption that, in Ghana, people were gullible, and levels of illiteracy and poverty were high, making the majority of the electorate susceptible to lies and propaganda, without critical thinking, seemed to encourage the notion that social media may offer a great disservice to society.

However, responses from interviewees, which were echoed by Karikari (Accra, 4/1/2018), that traditional and social media were complementary, thus enhancing the media's role in political campaigns, re-emphasize the need for political stakeholders to evolve a strategy that is capable of blending the 'two traditions'. References to the antecedents of both forms of media, regarding their genealogy as tools of transformation in technology, make them potential drivers for championing the course of political campaigning in the digital era.

The potentials above are reassuring for political stakeholders, in that, modern communications technologies, including social media, are not too different from the traditional media, the only difference is that technologies today are so ubiquitous and so individualized, and they have thus not come within the strict confines of organized communications, as indicated by Karikari ((Accra, 4/1/2018) and confirmed by Gunther and Diamond's (2003) conception that, the transitions of traditional media, as evidenced from the rise of the printing press through to radio and television, makes the mass media the potential agents of change, culminating in major shifts in regard to how parties operate and communicate with their electorates.

Effectively, the two traditions must be harnessed judiciously and managed in order to enable political stakeholders to reap their full benefits. The traditional media are organized communication, in that they were organized for a purpose and are subject to the dictates of an organization or an individual, but social media platforms are not organized, they are individualized, and that is where freedom of expression is, since it is devoid of censorship unless government has introduced laws that has potentially regulated the use of digital platforms. To harness the different media outlets in any country there is the need for a policy to guide the operations so that they can work towards a common goal (Uwom and Alao, 2013). This will possibly streamline the use of both media to make them more meaningful in the digital era.

Social media were used as organizational tools, both internally and externally, for political activities, including campaign and resource mobilization, assuming that, 'technology, and particularly communications technology, can act as a key driver of party change' (Gibson and

Ward, 2009, p88). This suggests the possibility that more space could be created for effective interaction between the electorates and political actors, but as to whether the traditional and the digital media influenced the electorates in their choice of candidates in the 2012 and 2016 elections, this remains a question to be answered by research.

9.11 The Digital Era and the Future of Political Campaigning in Ghana

Inadequate digital connectivity, unequal distribution of digital devices, and digital illiteracy, changes in political communications and the lack of policies, are among the key challenges that have been identified as possible threats to the effective use of social media as political campaign and political engagement tools with which to adjust to the rapid and continuous development in technology. Overcoming some of these challenges guarantee the availability of the physical infrastructure in order to complement the necessary socio-economic resources for the application of digital platforms for a successful political campaign. For example, Stromer-Galley (2017) posits that to concretize the relevance of a political campaign, political entities are enjoined to raise enough money to build an adequate organization that is able to target the right kinds of voters, who will turn out to vote for the candidate on Election Day.

The concerns above have partly influenced the future of Ghana's political campaign as digitalization evolves, thus forecasting the prospects of Ghana's democracy amidst increasing developments in technology. This study considered the forecast very relevant, since technology is transforming political campaigns so as to put them on a very sophisticated level that calls for corresponding strategies with which to deal with the exigencies related to them.

Again, these concerns were reiterated by respondents, as evidenced in their reactions to the need for political stakeholders to consider the future of social media application for political campaigning, as the country's democracy project in the digital era. Respondents expect political actors to review their strategies and to evolve a more pragmatic way to raise resources and to fund political party activities, especially political campaigns. Arguably, stakeholders involved in political organization, notably political parties, political institutions and political campaign experts across the globe, are exploring new strategies that include social media, to mobilize supporters,

particularly online, by providing interactive spaces within which to enhance participation and engagement (Bimber et. al., 2012).

The respondents' position that the availability of funds would potentially address all of the challenges, particularly the lack of logistics, policies and human resources, etc., as potential obstacles to the effective use of digital platforms in the wake of technological advancement, underscores their projections regarding the relevance of social media as a potential panacea for the daunting tasks ahead in future campaigning, and they thus expect that all of the bottlenecks that are likely to impede the effective use of social media must be removed.

Arguably, the future of political campaigning will largely be contingent on a successful political organization and mobilization, and the efficient use of digital platforms may be the driver that channels campaigns to success. Respondents agree with this assertion, as Sikanku (Accra, 23/11/2017) notes that effective social media strategy portends a great future for democratic engagement and participation because, from the social connectivity and interpersonal points of view, digital platforms will become the major contributors to Ghana's democratic participation. This ties in with Skoric's (2016) optimism on the Asian example, in which he says that the 'social media promotes [sic] political participation across both democratic and non-democratic Asian societies' (2014, p. 80). Effectively, the Ghanaian situation possibly projects the availability of new sources of political information, opening up new venues for political expression and discussion, promoting government transparency, and providing tools for collective action and self-mobilization (ibid).

The benefits do not render digital media sacrosanct as a panacea to future challenges for social media use, because there are several factors that deter the use of social media. Problems like 'disaffection with the political system and lack of political trust in Hong Kong, fears of government surveillance in Singapore, low media literacy and digital divide in India, Malaysia and Thailand, defamation laws in Singapore and Thailand, etc.' (Skoric, 2016, p.98), are no different from those in the Ghanaian situation that was indicated earlier.

What is worth considering as being crucial, as revealed in the findings, should be the impact of demography on the consumers of digital devices, which respondents believe must be dealt with via the evolution of policies on political party development in relation to the use of digital platforms. This means policies and regulations relating to social media must consider the

generation of those who are digital technology savvy worldwide, including those in Ghana, who may be the potential beneficiaries and consumers of advanced technology. Additionally, the attribution of waning levels of hostility or animosity amongst the political parties involved in the 2012 and 2016 elections, to vigilance in regard to digital devices, as observed by Karikari (4/1/2018), calls for a more pragmatic approach to strategies, in that technology was evolving, and the advantages of these developments tilt towards the next generation of people (the youth), who are likely to engage in certain kinds of political communication, perhaps slightly differently from those today, because the demands of tomorrow will be different, since more people are becoming formally educated and more open to the world.

Arguably, political activities, especially political mobilization and participation, are expected to depend on the extent to which the country took up the role of computer or digital literacy in the anticipation that these would be the vehicle of political campaigning, and the vessel that would house political campaigns going forward. These challenges are expected to compel political campaigning to be ever more professional, ever more refined, with the advent of digital spaces, because those digital spaces will be filled using some core skills, and the current generation of predominantly political actors will have the opportunity to sharpen their skills.

Debatably, as stated earlier, as more and more people embrace the various platforms that are provided by the digital media, it will become easier to reach people individually, so that political parties will eventually learn the ropes and adapt, and in adapting, they will learn to provide to the public the means of separating the truth from the falsehood. By this, digital platforms will become checkpoints for the citizenry and political actors.

9.12 Using Social Media for Political Campaign: Findings from a Global Perspective

This discussion highlights the findings of the thesis, including the use of social media for political campaigns and political activities in Ghana, in relation to other findings from research undertaken from global perspectives. Specifically, it compares how political parties use social media, with reference to strategies, preferences for platforms, and their impact on political communication and participatory democracy, in the context of the theory of participation. The comparison has become necessary in view of the innovatory nature of the platforms in African political party campaigning, and in politics in general, and the argument that (for instance, in Ghana's situation) most findings project social media platforms as the tools for campaign transformation in the midst of challenges

such as inadequate resources, notably, inadequate digital devices, computer illiteracy, network and digital connectivity, etc. This became evident in the findings of my study.

Arguably, the social media are greatly used for political purposes across the globe, and the trend is catching on in Africa, in view of its impact on socio-economic endeavors.

Today, the use of social media is not only changing whole sectors of society, it also offers numerous possibilities for modern, meaningful and equal participation and deliberation, as well as chances for new forms of transparency and accountability, in ways and on a scale that was until recently unheard of (Gyampo, 2017, p. 186).

In fact, their impact on political communication and political campaign cannot be over-emphasized, they have transformed grassroots mobilization, membership drives, and they are used as platforms for funding mobilization, in addition to the traditional mass communication uses of providing information, education and entertaining society. They have been acknowledged by political actors worldwide and they are being used for various political purposes. Political campaigning on social media has become a core feature of the contemporary world, culminating in a preference for it by political actors and individuals running for electoral office worldwide (Dimitrova and Matthes, 2018; Bright et al., 2019).

The impact of social media on electoral campaigns, and democratic elections in general, has attracted a lot of studies that have mixed results as their findings. ‘Initially a niche pursuit, now candidates from parties of all sizes and political leanings are making heavy use of these tools’ (Bright et al., 2019, p2). Effectively, not only are social media platforms widening the space for quality discourse, but also the dividends accruing from such interaction are attributable to the advantage of participation for a diversity of opinions. Literature on various findings has therefore become a credible alternative with which to rationalize the impact of the relationship between social media and participation in a broader context.

The findings of most of the studies on social media and participation have been related to the need for a tremendous transformation of the media, particularly the social media, as contemporary channels of communication with which to effectively harness the potentials of these platforms. In most instances, political actors are enjoined by political scholars to factor into their campaigns strategies that potentially create the opportunity for the citizenry to be both ‘owners’ and active participants in the electoral process by allowing their voices to be heavily represented

in the determination of those issues that affect them. For example, existing research on the effectiveness of social media campaigning has produced divergent claims, suggesting that social media use can increase vote share (e.g., Bene, 2018; Bode and Epstein, 2015; Kruikemeier, 2014; LaMarre, Suzuki and Lambrecht, 2013; Vergeer, Hermans, and Sams, 2011). Other studies have found no relationship (e.g., Baxter and Marcella, 2013; Kobayashi and Ichifuji, 2015).

Again, for example, although reliance on social media for political news has increased rapidly in America, misinformation via the social media tends to discredit the platforms, to some extent, as evidenced in media analysis and in the editorial opinions of some media (Garrett, 2019).²¹ According to Garrett, high profile news networks, Fox News, CNN, and major national newspapers, misrepresented the findings of surveys carried out by the Pew Research Center (Rainie et al., 2012; Rainie, 2012), and ‘that is troubling, as online social networks have frequently been used to share political falsehoods, both about candidates and about important campaign issues’ (Shin et al., 2016 cited in Garrett (2019, p. 2).

Dantani et al. (2017) concluded that the use of social media networks by both political candidates and the electorate in the Nigerian electoral system greatly promoted civic engagement, credible elections and democratic activism in the pre and post-election periods, in addition to the projection of Internet technology as an effective and critically vital para-human actor in most global election outcomes in the near future. Similarly, in Ghana, most of the findings relate to the impact of social media on political knowledge, efficacy and participation, especially among the youth, in view of the intensity with which social media is becoming a key feature in her democracy (Dzisah, 2018). There are also concerns about the need to evolve pragmatic politics in order to deal with the abuses of free speech and free media that are occasioned by the practice of citizen journalism and the problems of fake news. Although these phenomena encourage participation, they also pose a threat to the country’s democracy:

Major findings of a study point to the fact that the Ghanaian media landscape does not have systems, budgets and trained personnel dedicated to combatting the menace of fake news. Another revealing

²¹ In 2012, about two in five Americans reported using social media for political purposes, and about one in three said they had encountered messages on social media promoting one of the candidates in the month leading up to the election [3, 4]. Four years later, more Americans named Facebook as the site they most often used for political information in the month leading up to Election Day 2016 than named any other site, including those of high profile news organizations, such as Fox News, CNN, and major national newspapers.

finding is that fake news is mostly manifested as fabricated content and false headline without connection to content (Ahiabenu et al., 2018, p. 1).

However, the findings of a study conducted, again by Garrett:

... suggests that despite the prevalence of falsehoods on these networks, their influence on citizens' beliefs is relatively small. Social media use produced only a small increase in endorsement of falsehoods about President Obama, and had no effect on beliefs about his competitor in the 2012 election (2019, p. 14).

Although these findings seem a bit contradictory, the fact remains that misperception, fake news and the irresponsible dissemination of false news have the tendency to influence discourses in any participatory environment at the expense of the citizenry.

As argued in previous chapters, the advent of technology has transformed communications in politics, especially in political campaigns and mobilization, culminating in the need for research to determine the impact of the Internet and SNSs on participation. Literature on various findings across the global democratic environment indicate a mix of potentials, all pointing to the impact the platforms have on participation, efficacy and political knowledge. The need for empirical evidence is compelling, in view of the platforms' role in contemporary democracy, as Dantani et al. (2017) argue: contemporary democracy requires regular elections to enable citizens to exercise their rights, including participation to enable them to influence decision-making.

9.13 Summary of Key Findings

The themes cover the concept of media including social media and their ramifications for politics and political communications. They are the key findings generated by the objectives of the study. They (the themes) serve as matrices upon which to rationalize the findings, in the context of the deployment of social media and their implications for the performances of the NPP and NDC in the 2012 and 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections. These political parties are used as a baseline in this thesis from which to project the future of political campaigns in the era of social media, which are becoming prime platforms for campaigns in the global democratic ethos. The study arrives at the following findings, that:

1. Digital media (social media) have become a valuable tool for the dissemination of information in the ethos of political communications in global democratic practices, and their adoption portends a transformation in the Ghanaian political campaigning system, and politics in general, as evidenced also in other societal engagements. The Ghanaian situation reflects Ndlela and Mano's (2020) observation that the introduction of new communications technology has resulted in increased political change in Africa. For them, the Internet, and the social media in particular, are impacting massively in the mediation of political culture and power (ibid, p. 2)

2. As in the Botswana, Lesotho and Eswatini elections that were held between 2014 and 2018 (Mthembu and Lungu, (2020), the Social media were widely appropriated by political stakeholders, particularly political parties, in Ghana, as a complementary tool of communication. They were used as a complementary channel to the traditional media, and as dependent sources, since political stakeholders relied on both (traditional and social media) as channels of communication in their engagement with the electorate.

3. The findings identified effective media strategies as being key in the execution of social media campaign projects. Strategies should preferably be backed by professionally competent political communications and media personnel, with the capability and abilities to vary campaigns by evolving tactics to meet the prevailing exigencies that are dictated by technological evolution. This synchronizes with the contention that post-modern political campaigns require skills, potentially a mix of the communication strategy that is executed by professionals in various aspects of political campaigning. These are a mix of communication and advertising communication tools, powered by expertise in public relations, advertising, marketing and communications, which are described by experts as the professionalization or Americanization' of campaigns (Farrell, 1996; Mancini and Swanson, 1996).

4. The country's pre-and post-independence political history has influenced political party formation, style, and the way of politicking, including political campaigning. The belligerent posture, agitation, and the often confrontational nature that characterizes the campaign organizationz and strategies of the two (NPP and NDC) dominant political parties may be aligned with two political traditions affiliated to the political profiles of the pioneers of Ghana's multi-party democracy, the UGCC and the CPP, respectively, whose activities led to independence from the colonialists and ushered in a constitutional democracy in 1957. Arthur (2009) confirms this,

stating that ‘the axes and their traditions were in the forefront of political activity in the country before and immediately after independence, but for a greater part of the period since the 1950s, Ghana has been under authoritarian military and one-party rule (2009, p. 50).

5. Political stakeholders believe that the ability to control the media was contingent on how resourceful one could be. Primarily by being resourceful in terms of power and a strong financial base, and that control of power is congruent with one’s capacity to make things happen that otherwise would not happen (Stone, 2012). Invariably, dominance and influence over the media and channels of communication, like the social media, endow individual leaders and entities with absolute power, and that could possibly give them authority against any power in contention. However, ‘the distributed intelligence of social media is resulting in new hope for democratization, but has also become a thorn in the flesh for those in power’ (Mano, 2020, p. 61). Effectively, the level of free media and free expression that is enshrined in the 1992 Constitution has not only resulted in media pluralism, but has also enhanced participation and deliberation, and these have empowered both the media and the citizenry (Gyimah-Boadi, 2002; Koomson, 1997).

6. All political parties used social media in their campaigns, but preferences were based on the types of strategy that stakeholders adopted. The political parties preferred to use websites and the Internet as channels of communication, but they had huge deficits in terms of reviewing their application to suit the standards that are normal in the use of social media. Besides, their strategies did not give due considerations to the expectations of a prime target, like the youth who form the majority of the users of the platforms. This therefore requires a mix of strategy, whose implementation should be guided by empirical facts so as to rope in all of the relevant variables that have potential, for example, the inclusion of professionals to ensure the proper utilization of the platforms (Gibson and Römmele, 2009).

7. The choice of language in information dissemination played a vital role in political actors’ communication with the citizenry, particularly in the choice of diction in the process of communication with a specific target audience. Technically, messages are discredited and fail to make an impact when sources are corrupted by indecent and foul language or expressions, because they dent the credibility of the messenger. The leading parties were the worst culprits when it came to upholding the integrity and credibility of sources of information and news to the citizenry (MFWA, 2016), and this rendered most of their messages unappealing to most of the electorate,

and possibly also the floating and undecided potential voters. This situation is worsened by the activities of ‘serial callers’, whose tasks to satisfy their paymasters makes them the enemies of the basic ethics of journalism. They are subjective, directional, biased and, to a large extent, not objective to prevailing political discourses. Consequently, they were rendered propagandists, a terminology considered derogatory in the Ghanaian political communication context. It does not make messages appealing to the electorate (Ayee, 2017; Gan, 2011).

8. There is absolute intercourse between social and traditional media, and that upholds the notion of the complementarity between the two media types. This not only responds to the assumption of a symbiotic relationship between the two media forms, but also confirms the argument that they had antecedents as tools in order to champion a cause in a specific era. However, there is a lack of regulation to guide the results of the excessive abuse of social media, particularly on issues of intrusion into privacy, the abuse of free expression and fraud, and this threatens democratic principles. It is more threatening in view of the emergence of citizen journalism and fake news, described by Waisbord (2018, cited in Bosompem Boateng et al., 2020) as information that is divorced from reality, considering social media’s user-generated content’s advantage. However, it is obvious that social media’s added advantage of ‘lower transaction costs by removing obstacles to participation, generate new and more efficient forms of bottom-up organization and coordination, and create new forms of participation to complement the existing repertoires’ (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013 cited in Theocharis and Lowe 2015, p. 1466), makes them more attractive to future political campaigning.

9. The study projects the notion that future political mobilization, participation and campaigning were likely to be dependent on the extent to which the country took up the responsibilities for computer/digital literacy, because the digital and social media will be the vehicles of political campaigning, and the vessel that will house political campaigns. Successful political organizations and mobilization project a great future for democratic engagement and participation, because, from the social connectivity and interpersonal point of view, digital platforms will become the major contributor to Ghana's democratic participation. All these concerns are driven by rapid transformations in technology that are mediated by dynamism in social media algorithms (Ndlela, 2020), and changes in the demographics of society, with corresponding changes in generational

dynamics which present new forms and kinds of political communication that are needed to meet future exigencies.

10. The social media were widely used by all the political parties, more so by the NPP and NDC, motivated by their availability, within the remit of their meaning as platforms for dialogue, interactivity, and feedback (Xenos and Moy, 2007; Sweetser and Larisey, 2008). Similarly, by affordability, in terms of funding, commensurate with Jensen's (2017) argument, pertaining to the virtual inexpensive space that is provided by social media platforms and their creation of horizontal spaces of communication, against otherwise hierarchical political campaigns which were controlled by the elite in the broadcast era of politics.

The protagonists considered social media 'a complementary channel that created additional space to facilitate accidental exposure to news and political content, and permits all users to publicly show their agreement or disagreement through posting content and commenting', (Lilleker and Koc-Michalska 2017, p. 25). Prominent among the channels were Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and WhatsApp, which are used to 'acclaim, inform, educate, entertain attack and defend' (Sikanku, Accra, 23/11/2017) via pictures, audio and video, in addition to setting up video channels, photo galleries and audio channels.

11. Various factors determined the most patronized platforms for the two elections, although there was no empirical evidence to back the thesis's findings. It was established that issues of reliability, availability, convenience and the popularity of digital devices, amongst others, encouraged patronage of the platforms that is based on the communications strategies adopted for the campaign. For example, Facebook was considered the most patronized platform because it was widely used to share videos, pictures and audio visuals, in view of its far-reaching implications for the audience. Twitter was also widely used, as it was the preserve of a class of people with a status, notably the elite, middle classes and the literate population who formed the key target of the social media, and that the platform was widely used, irrespective of the political season. Besides, Twitter was considered efficient because it was limited, in terms of the volume of text messages, so users are forced to summarize content and be to the point. Similar reasons were cited for the choices of YouTube, Instagram and WhatsApp. as the most patronized media platforms. Again, the fact that there was no scientific data to determine whether or not every user of a digital network accessed

political information via the devices, also makes it difficult to confirm which platform was most patronized.

9.14 Conclusion

The findings affirm that communications remain an indispensable element, at all levels of human endeavor, including politics, and hence the need for more effective channels to strategically relate to the audience[s] in a very persuasive manner. The advent of social media occasioned by technological advancement seems to reinforce the assumption that the Internet and SNSs significantly remain potential game-changers in Ghana's quest for successful political campaigns and organizations in the attainment of democratic consolidation, in view of the impact these platforms are making on the electoral system. Successes regarding social media use in global politics, and in the Ghanaian situation, equally place a herculean task on political actors to create encompassing communication tools that hinge on the adoption of universally tested strategies that have the capability to deal with the challenges that are posed by technological development in contemporary global political campaigns.

It is obvious from the findings that challenges of inadequate resources, notably the digital divide, digital connectivity, and the lack of empirical data resulting from the inadequate and substandard appropriation of social media by the users, especially political parties, among others, need to be tackled through engagement and the services of more professionals with the requisite expertise and the capacity to deal with the nuances of media and politics, more especially in political communications and electoral democracies as they move into the future. More compelling are the challenges relating to the 'serial callers' phenomenon, judging from the assumption that their subjective, partisan and biased lenses in approaching public discourses discredit them, and dent their role in advocacy and participation. The lack of effective policies to regulate social media use also compound the problems that potentially militate against the use of social media for political engagement in Ghana, especially in the era of fake news and citizen journalism, with their latitudinal space and interactive features. Arguably, these add up to a nightmare that adversely affects political actors' attempts to fully reap the benefits that are associated with the use of social media platforms, thereby creating unhealthy and undemocratic spaces in the context of social media use.

However dark the challenges may look, anyone who imagines that political campaigning may significantly suffer in the digital era, may be far from correct. This is underscored by the extent to which political parties, especially the two leading political parties (NDC and NPP) have benefited from the platforms, notably Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp, although they were considerably under-utilized. The optimism is based on the fact that the two election periods (2012 and 2016) were fiercely contested on social media (Dzisah, 2018), and that more research must be anticipated into the use of social media in political campaigns, as revealed in my research findings, and confirmed by Gyampo (2017), research into political campaign activities in Ghana is insignificant in quantity.

9.15 Contribution to Theory of Political Participation

Social Network Sites (social media) are an emerging communication tool that is complementary to the traditional media and, as affirmed in the findings of this study, they potentially enhance protests, complaints, advocacy, campaigning, mobilization and organization, among others things, which are key elements of participatory democracy. Equally, social media has the potential to enhance democratic participation by equipping the citizenry with the requisite education, as well as generating the enthusiasm to allow them to become actively involved in affairs that affect them, in that they create more space in which the citizenry can actively participate in political discourses by offering alternatives, or by challenging decisions relating to consensus building and opinion sharing.

However, the social media are also bedevilled with some inadequacies, which make them deficient, to some extent, and this must be strategically and empirically evaluated in order to confirm how they impact on democratic innovation. For example, Loader and Mercea expect, ‘a more open, interpretive and contingent explanatory power, one that also recognizes the influence of social diversity, inequality and cultural difference’ (2011, p760). These expectations become realistic in an environment of equity, with recognition of all involved in the decision-making process, for purposes of diversity of opinion, irrespective of status, education, color, creed, etc.

These observations confirm the basic tenets that are inherent to contemporary democracy and promote participation of various forms, because they provide the impetus for interpersonal

discussions among the citizenry. Discussions among citizens have long been identified as a necessary condition for a healthy and functioning democracy (Scheufele, 2000).

As indicated earlier, the social media created space for political parties to operate, not only in the era of campaigning, but for organizational, mobilization and other relevant activities, but in moving towards victory or loss in the 2012 and 2016 elections, despite their demerits to the parties. Those spaces constitute a fertile sphere in which participation can thrive, in view of the forum that they offer to the Ghanaian citizenry; arguably providing the opportunity to make their aspirations impactful in the decision-making process. This contribution ties in with McLeod et al.'s opinions on the impact of new media on participation, that:

Forums, at least by intent, try to appeal equally to all sectors of the community, including those often excluded from the decision-making process. In contrast to the consensus prevailing in homogeneous groups in institutional participation, prospective participants in a public issue forum can expect to encounter people different from themselves and to have their views challenged should they express them (1999, p316).

That is, within the tenet of participation, typical in Western democracies, like the U.S. electoral democratic system, where studies demonstrate that political SNS use strongly impacted on both levels of, and the growth in, traditional political participation during the 2008 election (Bode et al., 2014). Developments in Ghana's political campaign, as evidenced in the findings, are in synchrony with the argument that SNSs have transformed participation to a level that portends a positive trend in efforts to consolidate her democracy. It is a transformation in participation that is fuelled by the power of unfettered space and access, and that is mediated by social media, which equip the citizenry with the capacity to make things happen that otherwise would not happen (Stone, 2012). Besides, participation has been boosted by the latitudinal space that is occasioned by accessibility to various digital devices for a diversity of opinions, as evidenced in the results of this study, because, the Internet, for example, lowers information costs and enhances people's sense of efficacy by its interactivity (Chadwick, 2006), and facilitates online mobilization (Earl and Kimport, 2011 in Tang and Lee 2013, p. 764). The Internet is equally described as a device that is pregnant with a high choice environment' that generates higher levels of audience selectivity (Bennett and Iyengar, 2008), and also 'facilitates the political junkies to stay even closer to politics, but, it also allows the uninterested to stay further away, thereby widening existing knowledge and participation gaps among groups of citizens (Davis, 1999; Prior, 2007). This is an indication that

the contribution to the theory of participation in the context of this study is of a mixed nature, but the benefits are geared towards a common cause of creating space in which the citizenry can actively participate in democratic decision processes.

Arguably, social media use is attracting a lot of research, in view of its contribution to participation. Yang and Hart (2016) assert that social media use has been connected with civic engagement and political participation in contemporary politics. For example:

Kim and Geidner (2008) showed that online social network usage explained 5.8% of the probability of voting of young people. Valenzuela et al. (2009) found that the intensity of Facebook use positively predicted civic participation, whereas the intensity of Facebook group use enhanced both civic and political participation. Baumgartner and Morris (2010) revealed that the SNS use positively predicted three online political activities, including posting political messages on blogs, signing an email or a web petition, and forwarding a political email or link (Yang and Hart, 2016, p. 3).

Similarly, in the Ghanaian context, not only has social media use enhanced participation, it has also encouraged a new wave of enthusiasm in political participation among the youth. As evidenced in the findings, the Facebook interactions and engagements between the presidential aspirants of the NPP and NDC and a section of the youth, particularly during campaigns in the run up to the 2016 elections, potentially closed the gap between political leadership and the youth. This revelation connects to the fact that SNSs currently boast more than half a billion active users worldwide, the majority of which are young people (Bode et al., 2014). In my study, respondents, recognising the impact of social media on participation and the invaluable contribution of the findings to participatory theory, encouraged political actors and stakeholders to evolve effective social media policies to enable them to realize the full benefits of their impact on participatory democracy. This is in tandem with recommendations by political scientists and communication scholars to politicians, to maximize fully their engagement with voters and campaigning via social media, in view of the potential for participatory democracy (Utz, 2009).

Participation is also reflected in the re-emergence of the old practice, by leading political parties, hiring enforcers, people who can rough up the public on behalf of the party, in the Ghanaian political communication context. The so-called ‘veranda boys’ could also educate and defend on behalf of the party. Today, these have become ‘serial callers’, gaining recognition in Ghanaian politics, in view of their contribution to political communication. They are likened to ‘spin doctors’

in Western politics, and operate on a partisan basis, as they are very loyal to the cause of the ideologies and policies in which they believe. A key feature relating to ‘serial callers’ is their vertical mode of communications, mostly on radio. Their operations via radio complement the role of social media, as they rely on both sources (traditional and social media) to execute their strategy of relaying messages and information to the grassroots citizens. This enables their targets to participate in political affairs through regular updates and exchanges on the electronic media, WhatsApp, and other SNSs. This form of participation is very typical in the African context, including in Ghana, where political parties form social media armies as mercenaries who engage their political opponents on all manner of issues pertaining to politics, and in defense of their ideologies, opinions and aspirations for their ‘paymasters’ and political inclinations. Some political campaign strategies are fashioned through participation by engaging the electorate on their doorsteps, otherwise known as retail or door-to-door campaign strategies, in addition to periodic, massively-attended, political party rallies that facilitate the assembly of political party leadership and followers at both the micro- and macro-levels. These gatherings create a sense of participation, involvement and belonging among the party faithful.

All of these are captured on both traditional and social media platforms and they attract huge debates among the citizenry, as projected by political communicators and para-media communicators, like ‘serial callers’.

9.16 Contribution to Knowledge

The empirical findings of this study are not only original, but they make a significant contribution to knowledge through the various analyses, as well as through the supporting theoretical arguments that are discussed and critiqued. In addition, the scholarship that has emerged from the study may be of value to Ghana’s democratic actors, and to other researchers who are interested in the nuances of emerging democracies in the wider fields of new media and political spokespersons. The study expands the research on SNSs by examining both what encourages people to express themselves politically in this realm, and what effects such expression may have on classic questions of political participation (Bode et al, 2014).

The findings show the social media to be alternative platforms for news and information sourcing for media practitioners and political actors, including political communicators, and they are unrestricted alternative spaces within which the Ghanaian electorate, and the citizenry in general, can express themselves. Effectively, the social media represent a buffer for all types of sources from which issues, particularly very sensitive political issues that are of interest, are revealed, away from the potential attacks or reprisals from both sides of the political divide and the state-controlled forces, thereby encouraging the free press and enhanced participation. This means that all shades of society stand to benefit from the buffer, especially in reference to policy-makers, political actors, researchers, civil society organizations and media practitioners, etc. Affirmation of the belief that sources of information are also determined not only by political actors, but also by the availability of the space that is created by the phenomenon of the social media, implying that audiences play a role in the appropriation of social media in sourcing information.

Although the impact of social media on political campaigns, in terms of this study, reflects some similarities that are akin to those in the developed electoral democracies globally, the mode of application and the challenges that are associated with the use of the platforms, make the study perfect in assisting more studies on the relevance and complementary nature of social media platforms for developing democracies, particularly in the African context. This revelation becomes more relevant for studies based on the acknowledgement of, for instance, ‘serial callers’ contribution to political communication, with reference to issues of literacy, partisanship, objectivity, subjectivity and fairness, among other values in news production and in dissemination, among media practices. These descriptions question the contribution of ‘serial callers’ to true democracy and true participation, especially in developing democracies, since such descriptions negate the core principles and canons of journalism, and in media practice in general (Ahuja, 2008).

Equally important for future researchers are the findings on the participation of the youth in politics in the digital era. Via the Internet, the youth can develop intellectual and social competencies, rendering it possible for them, as young people, to communicate more in relation to their surroundings, and thereby also to become more capable of fending for themselves in modern society, possibly more than one has seen young people do in the past (Bang and Esmark, 2007).

This establishes that there is a clear balance, as well as disparities, in the patronage of the types of channels, oblivious to the challenges of illiteracy and poverty, accessibility and the unavailability of the requisite structures that are likely to adversely influence the benefits of communication in the digital era.

However, it is pertinent to argue that revelations on ‘serial callers’ and ‘language use in political campaigning’, as highlighted above, appear to be key virgin areas that are worth discussing in detail, as indicated earlier, in view of their originality and the scholarship’s value to Ghana’s democratic actors, and to other future researchers who are interested in the wider fields of new media and political communication.

9.16.1 ‘Serial Callers’ or ‘Veranda Boys’- A Complement to Political Communication in the Era of Digitization?

The phenomenon of ‘serial-calling’ is worth considering, in view of its significant contribution to the stock of knowledge in the field of political communication, and of politics in general. It potentially provides a lead to communication scholars and researchers, in their quest to assess the complexities that are associated with emerging trends in political communication, which are mediated by technological advancement. My position, in consonance with the findings of this study, is that the group (‘serial callers’) is gaining recognition in Ghana politics, following their contribution to political participation. Not only do they facilitate the dissemination of information that is generated by political communicators, but they also engage in serious defense of their political parties via the electronic media, particularly radio.

‘Serial callers’ are easily identified with the old practice of the leading political parties in Ghana, during which political actors hired enforcers (‘Veranda Boys’), people who could rough up the public on behalf of the party. They are like the conveyer belts in a typical production line, and execute the ‘spin’ of their paymasters by using their utmost oratory skills, amidst the tact and their focus on the objective of ‘winning souls’ for their political parties. I am compelled to liken them to ‘spin doctors’ in Western politics, based on their style of operation – their partisan basis and their being very loyal to the cause, the ideologies and the policies that they believe in, especially through their vertical mode of communications. Besides, the angle of argument and the partisan nature of these ‘serial callers’ make them noticeable in the communication space in the

Ghanaian political communication context, particularly in the Fourth Republican Democratic dispensation.

The difference is that while ‘spin doctors’ are involved in, or actively participate in, the strategies in the crafting of messages and management of information in the political communication processes, the responsibility of ‘serial callers’, in the Ghanaian political context, for example, is, primarily to relay packaged information from the leadership (political parties/stakeholders) to the audience. What makes the ‘serial callers’ phenomenon researchable and demanding of scholarly attention is their role in participation and their contribution to discourses in the contemporary democratic participatory environment in the wake of digitalization.

Arguably, the origin of ‘serial callers’ in Ghana has been identified with their operations, which are predominantly through radio broadcasts, notably, by phoning-in to participate in radio discussions and radio talk show programs (Nunoo, 2015). A study by Nunoo reveals different narrations concerning the origin of serial calling in Ghana’s political communications landscape. According to this study, while respondents have linked the emergence of serial calling to the early inception of talk radio on private FM stations, others have noted that, prior to the introduction of private radio in 1995, some key events in the late 1980s and 1990s set the tone for the sort of media liberalization that gave rise to private radio (ibid).

Nunoo’s (2015) findings identified the era of interactive radio in 1995, the 2000 Presidential elections which ushered in interactive political talk shows, and the post-2000 elections, which culminated in the discovery of radio as a political voice as the possible origin of the serial calling phenomenon. These periods not only exposed the citizenry to the power of interactivity, but also empowered them with the required information that enhanced their deliberations and participation in the country’s political process (ibid). Effectively, the media space created by radio, as a result of the liberalization of the airwaves, the multiplicative effect and the assumption that radio was accessible and mobile, created the opportunity for the citizenry, irrespective of status and literacy, to phone in to radio programs so as to ‘speak their minds’ without fear or intimidation. For instance, it is the responsibility of ‘serial callers’ to spread information on sensitive issues of national interest, including allegations of corruption and malfeasance against government officials and party leadership, which otherwise would have been ignored by the citizenry for fear of victimization. Politicians are accused of being the sources of

the information on most of these issues, from which they have made a huge amount of capital since such issues attracted a lot of agitation and emotions among the citizenry. The style of operation of ‘serial callers’ is akin to the ‘Veranda Boys’²², who were other political activists who existed under Ghana’s First Republican Constitution in the 1950s.

I argue, therefore, that the emergence of ‘serial callers’ in Ghana’s body politics may be a ‘reincarnation’ of the ‘veranda boys’-they are distinguished from each other by their form and style of activism and operation, as dictated by the changing trends in politics and technological advancement worldwide. The two (‘serial callers’ and ‘veranda boys’) are characteristically similar, ostensibly, in the angle of their arguments, language use and partisan nature.

The ‘veranda boys’ are said to have engaged in a ‘door-to-door’ or ‘retail style’ of campaigning, amidst interpersonal or direct contact with the electorate and without recourse to modern technology. They resorted to the use of radio, notably in local languages, from the middle of the 20th century when radio became both popular and accessible. On the contrary, ‘serial callers’ are operating via both old and new media, including social media. However, what possibly distinguishes them from the ‘veranda boys’ is the militancy and grassroots style of activism that is associated with the ‘veranda boys.’ Besides, the era of the ‘serial callers’ has been enhanced by the liberalization of the airwaves, which has culminated in the setting up of so many local FM stations, of which stakeholders are taking advantage in order to transmit in local dialects. ‘Serial callers’ now overstep the boundaries of free expression, previously using talk-radio as a conduit through which to address social problems; they have now acquired a taste for controversial,

²² See, also, Chapters 8 and 9. The phrase ‘Veranda Boys’ defies clear definition, but it’s a term any Ghanaian will know, and though it predates independence, it is intimately tied to the establishment of Ghana as a sovereign nation. Having emerged at a time of transformation, it is no surprise that its meaning has shape-shifted over the years and continues to evolve. However, it remains a unique element in Ghanaian political parlance, something foreign that has been adapted to serve the local, and for all the unpalatable history of its origins, deeply Ghanaian (Parkes, 2018).

According to Parkes, the term ‘Veranda Boys’ referred to groups of unemployed youth who took advantage of the influx of foreigners, mainly from the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA), to entertain them by modelling themselves as fixers. They indulged their guests, in everything from pimping and petty theft to small-time retail and music. Parkes’ narration establishes that, in order not to miss opportunities, these young men loitered around and sometimes slept on the ‘verandas’ of supermarkets and trading houses. Their status as people who were widely considered rootless and up-to-no-good, earned them the term ‘Veranda Boys.’ That was during the black-market economy that emerged during the Second World War, primarily in Accra, but also in Takoradi, when these cities became staging posts for troops from the UK and USA on their way to the Pacific front (ibid). Possibly, the veranda boys became easily available political campaign and organizational tools, in view of their angling and idling nature which the then leading political parties in Ghana hired as operatives (Veranda Boys) to rough up the public on behalf of their parties. Osagyefo Dr. Nkrumah is said to have utilized the services of the Veranda Boys throughout his Party’s (Convention People’s Party, CPP) agitation for independence. He rallied them across the country to engage the locals, to propagate his Party’s independence struggle with the ‘independence now’ slogan. Besides Nkrumah’s periodic organized mass rallies, were earlier roving talks which took place on the ‘verandas’ of prominent people, where the public, particularly the youth, gathered to listen to the ‘now-famous voice as it rose and fell and shadows moved with the spinning of the earth’ (ibid).

scandalous and emotive arguments either for, or against, certain ideological and political positions. Today ‘serial callers’ have evolved into characters of public debate, sophisticated in strategy and operations and, more recently, they have been properly organized into different associations spanning most of the regional and district capitals across the country (*allAfrica*, 2014).

This suggests that the functions of ‘serial callers’ have gone beyond eliciting opinions on talk-radio and have transitioned into on-air lobby groups that are capable of undertaking strikes and protests against political parties, and sometimes the media outfits that refuse them entry to debate on their talk shows. They function also as political communicators, working for political parties, including the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and New Patriotic Party (NPP); to the extent that they now play an important role in the political planning during elections (*Ghanaweb*, 2012; Nunoo, 2015).

The implication is that serial calling activism has been transformed by modern technology, and what needs further exploration, which would significantly benefit future researchers, is their contribution to participatory democracy, in empirical terms, especially in the era of social media and of digitization in general. These concerns may be necessitated by doubts expressed by some political experts about the efficiency of ‘serial callers’ in projecting the agenda of their paymasters, as reflected in Manning’s (2001) argument on the efficiency of spin doctoring, for example, is that ‘serial callers’ must be equipped with the skills that will enable them to understand how to bargain with information, how much to release, when it should be released to optimize its value, and what can be secured in return for the release of information.

The contribution of ‘serial callers’, in terms of information dissemination to democracy must thus be empirically tested to ascertain their impact on contemporary political communication. This exploration is further necessitated by the assumption that most of them are not well educated and that they are technologically challenged. This suggests, that their comprehension of issues, especially in ‘foreign languages’ is questionable, as well as their subjective and partisan lenses for the analysis of political events. As Mensah (Accra, 30/10/2017) argued, ‘serial callers’ are largely incoherent, handicapping most of them in their attempts to project issues that people cared about, but they are very useful to a certain class of the electorate, particularly at the base. These drawbacks render them propagandists, a word with negative connotations in the Ghanaian body politic.

How ‘serial callers’ relay information to their audiences, especially to quasi-political communications operatives, becomes a relevant issue for scholars and researchers in their quest to determine the impact of these types of political communicators in relation to credible information and knowledge acquisition in a participatory democracy, and in the wake of citizen journalism and fake news.

Arguably, these challenges also raise more questions in terms of serial calling and democracy, because a subjective approach to communications, as exhibited in the operations of the ‘serial callers’ confirms critics’ claim on the role of spinning, in that ‘it devalues politics by substituting style for substance’ (Franklin, 2004). This suggests that, serial callers’, like spin-doctors, are conventionally burdened with responsibilities for defending the positions of their institutions, conscious of the consequences, because, in spinning a story, they are merely doing their job (Goltz, 2012). This would suggest that their task of relaying information to their audience must be executed with commitment and skills in oratory, since effective performance, both as oratory and in print, may be central to the success and persuasiveness of speech, which is akin to contemporary spin.

The import is that ‘serial callers’ will continue to be part of the system and, once connectivity and access to the Internet also expands, it may be that the phenomenon of ‘serial callers’ will be lessened, and a lot more people will migrate to the digital media. ‘Serial calling’ has thus become a virgin area for scholarly exploration, particularly in the developing democracies, most of whom are plagued by logistical inadequacy, illiteracy, the digital divide, illiteracy and poverty, amongst other problems. These challenges are drawbacks to the development of true participation in a democratic environment.

Future study will therefore offer the opportunity to assess the role of political communicators, and their affiliates, who are described in Ghana as ‘serial callers’, in the overall strategy for the success of political parties’ activities. Their activities, compared to practices in other emerging democracies, particularly in Africa, is to be a reference point for political communicators to determine the effectiveness of the strategies that potentially establish the success of political parties (who use the services of ‘serial callers’) in the dissemination of messages and the execution of campaign strategies.

Possibly, this study will contribute to the literature by illustrating the independent impact of various aspects of social media use and how the impact of these aspects may relate to each other (Tang and Lee, 2013). At the least, it becomes necessary to further explore whether or not every user of digital devices accesses information on politics. Besides the benefits derived for the academic world, the findings have advanced through the approval, or otherwise, of those narratives inherent to the innovations in political communication strategies and, presumably, that any such innovations further help to consolidate Africa's democratic practices. It is instructive to note that the fact that technology is expensive, and not everyone is connected, has not prevented new media/social media from making an impact in the African political setting. Amongst those who are connected, participation is high (Ndlela and Mano, 2020) as previous discussions indicate.

This study has again, in empirical terms, thus provided a litmus test for an assessment of the overreliance on traditional media and its impact on political communication: whether the traditional media are still reliable and have the potential to be a vehicle for the effective dissemination of information for political campaigns, and for politics in general, especially with the advent of the social media. Similarly, findings have established the effect of political campaigns and political communication on modern politics via digitalization, thereby affirming the assumption that digital technology, and, more precisely, social media, is a potentially transformative tool for the creation of alternative space in which to enhance the contemporary public sphere for political participation (Ndlela and Mano, 2020).

9.16.2 Success of Political Communication in Political Campaigning - the Language Factor?

The role of language in communication cannot be underestimated, language literally forms the basis of effective political communication and is a key element of successful political campaign messages. Its usage thus becomes an essential element which should be of prime concern to political stakeholders, especially the choice of diction and the expression of statements in messages to the electorate. The channels of communication equally influence the choice of language and the kind of messages that appear on social media and *vice versa*, to some extent, suggesting that other variables, e.g., literacy, status, environment and age, etc., must be factored into the choice of diction when dealing with the audience if campaign messages are to be impactful.

These revelations constitute significant knowledge that may potentially attract more scholarly exploration to establish the nuances of language usage and its impact on the electorate in relation to politics, especially the need for decency, decorum and civility, which evoke discipline in any social endeavor. Effectively, blatant disregard for civility is tantamount to bad manners and is a necessary precondition for impunity and chaos, as Ombaka (2018) argues, words pregnant with bad manners, incivility and impunity not only describe an attitude, but also define a culture in the conduct of public affairs associated with the people in a particular setting.

Language use thus becomes critical when it relates to politics, because the greatest offenders in the field of language misuse are elected politicians (Epstein, 2019). The use of foul language and disrespect for the elderly are at variance with the culture and tradition of Ghana, so, messages replete with foul language and incorrect diction, although they may go viral on social media, tend to discredit their sources (Karikari, 4/1/ 2018). Karikakri's concern reflects African views on language use, that it defines their tradition and identity, and so any act that seeks to denigrate the African through name calling, misconduct or expression via the use of foul language, and with impunity, may be tantamount to incivility. For example, Kenyans describe such acts as bad manners, incivility and impunity;

It is an expression of unequal power relations. It is a word that someone in a position of power (real or imagined) uses towards another person who s/he perceives as being relatively powerless. It is therefore a particularly open expression of bad manners, incivility and impunity (Ombaka, 2018, p. 685).

The quotation above suggests that misused language may be subject to all manner of interpretations, it may become political capital for users, because in politics it is always important to look beyond the words themselves to see how language is being used to create a particular effect (Sergeant, 2018). The impact and effects of words in communication should then be of utmost concern to scholars of politics.

This study thus not only provides leads to such an enquiry, but also has the potential to establish, in empirical terms a motivation for future researchers to explore and assess political message content's effect on an audience, particularly from political communicators and stakeholders. This is partly because language and politics are very much intertwined in most African countries. The formulation of an enlightened policy to define the relationship between

language and all aspects of politics, for example, has been set as prerequisite in South Africa (Majorie, 1982).

I argue that exploring the rationale for decent language, as a standard measure for communicators in political communication, further provides scholarly justification for Parties, it will help them to manage their platforms such that messages are not discredited. Preferably, sources of messages from political stakeholders must not be perceived as being corrupt, this may be achieved through the choice of diction, which evokes decency for the sake of credibility and integrity, which are vital in the quest to win the trust and confidence of the electorate and of the citizenry in general.

For me, ensuring the credibility of the messages' sources has the potential to draw some level of trust and confidence from the electorate, and this is very significant in political communication. It is possible that the audience will listen to messengers who are perceived to be knowledgeable and who command some level of respect in society, because knowledgeable sources can be relied on and trusted as being credible and authentic in giving an analytical view on issues of importance to society (Kpessah-Whyte, 3/11/2017). As espoused in my study, the recognition of decent language must be a key element in the information delivery process if political communication messages are to attain their full value. Effectively, messages are to some extent discredited when sources are corrupted with indecent or foul expressions, because they potentially dent the messenger's. Messengers, therefore, must not only be guided by reputation and posture so as to win the trust of audience, but must also be mindful that the credibility of sources is in tune with words that are civil and have the tendency to accommodate the education, status and levels of comprehension of the audience. This suggests that the audience are not treated with impunity, but are accorded the civility and respect that every decent citizen requires in contemporary democracy.

Invariably, questioning the level of audience comprehension becomes another area of navigation that must attract the attention of political science scholars and prospective researchers, so as to determine the impact of messages and ascertain, in empirical terms, a specific message that may be suitable for a specific target audience whose contribution to the public sphere or media space is equally needed for the enhancement of participation. In other words, the availability of data will help identify the levels of comprehension and influence on discourses in the public sphere

that pertain to politics. These expectations should not be limited only to newsmakers and political stakeholders, indeed, the essence of messages requires that their sources are credible and valuable, especially to journalists and producers in the overall production process; pre-production, production and post-production, in order to win the trust of citizens.

The recognition of language use in politics thus requires clarity, decency, civility and persuasion, plus an assurance of the credibility of the messenger, especially in the wake of social media and the challenges posed by the fake news and citizen journalism phenomena. Overcoming these challenges suggests the possibility of safeguarding the audience against misinformation and the misinterpretation of the meanings of words and expressions. These demands should encourage political communication scholars to explore the potency of messages for future political engagements, so that discourses pertaining to politics may be enriched in the interest of participation in. and the development of, democracy at all levels.

Using civil language for political messages thus becomes one of the key determinants of success in political campaigning. This must be based on empirical evidence so as to justify the verification of the sources of messages in order to determine their veracity, relevance, decency, etc., in both the traditional and social media, particularly in the social media, to guard against the abuse of free speech which may be mediated by their latitude and uncontrolled space.

Manning endorses the justification of message sources, sometimes, for example, in the traditional media, in which ‘journalists may make their own news, but they do not make it just as they please, under conditions chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and determined by the rhythm of the news organisation’ (2001, p5).

This justification, however, becomes crucial in the social media, in view of their availability in terms of the space, universality and freedom enjoyed by users of these platforms. As revealed in this study, those freedoms enjoyed by the electorate enrich deliberation and enhance participation, as there is no control of diction and expression, in addition to the audiovisual messages mediated by the citizen journalism phenomenon. There is also the possibility that both political actors and the citizenry thrive on the same freedoms provided by social media in order to spread falsehood and propagate untruths, or fake news, to the electorate. The fact that respondents acknowledged some of these challenges corroborates that the parties were partly deficient in controlling the content, the messages’ diction, thereby creating fertile ground for the citizenry to

abuse free speech, to the detriment of electoral democracy. A typical example, cited in my study is the ‘Muntie Trio Saga’ (Muntie Three) in Ghana.

This revelation is a major contribution to scholarship, motivating further study to replicate the argument on languages used on social media platforms and their ramifications for political campaigning in both developed and developing democracies. The data enjoin political actors to be circumspect and discrete in their choice of diction in their messages, especially in dealing with specific targets, because language has the tendency to influence the platforms’ patrons. Civil language has what it takes to attract the electorate’s attention to the messages they receive, to inform them correctly, and make them responsible citizens in any democratic environment (Gans, 2010).

I argue also that language use in political campaigns must be backed by adequate policies to regulate the media and channels of communication, in general, by safeguarding citizens from wanton abuse by users, especially on social media platforms which make the citizenry vulnerable and open to abuse (fake stories). However, this calls for more scholarly evidence, in that, even a developed democracy like the U.S., for example, is still battling with the menace of falsehood and untruths, amongst other problems, although they have the facts-checking system. Facebook, for example, is impacting on its audience by altering the way people access news (Muller, Schneiders and Schafer, 2016)

Complexities in language use in African political campaigning are further complicated by new trends in political communication, e.g., in Ghana, by the emergence of ‘Serial Calling’, which is likened to the ‘Veranda Boys’ activism in the early years of Ghana’s multi-party era. The revelation on language usage in political campaign made manifest in this study, is both scholarly and a significant contribution to knowledge since, in empirical terms, it may trigger more investigations into the veracity and impact of language use in political campaign and political activities, not only in Ghana, but in other democracies worldwide, particularly those in Sub-Saharan Africa.

9.17 Contribution to Political Campaigning

The findings of the study are a very important contribution to appreciating the relationship between the media and political campaigns, especially in relation to how the integration of the social media is rapidly influencing the political communications strategies for the transformation, advocacy and consolidation of participatory democracy in the digital era in Africa. The awareness of the engagement of professionals, notably, political communicators, and the need to streamline their affiliates' operations and capacities, like 'serial callers', may be an added advantage for efforts to standardize political campaigns in developing democracies globally. Although political parties are using the platforms, findings attest to a need to improve the capacities of social media users to meet global standards set by their users in developed democracies.

I argue that these expectations, plus the need to make resources available and to resolve challenges like the unreliability of networks, inadequate digital connectivity, digital illiteracy and the digital divide, militate against the effective use of the social media and, potentially, rationalize the deficiencies inherent to the platforms' use by most political parties. This is an irony, and is seen against the backdrop of political actors' preferences for social media's connections with traditional media, in view of the former's interactivity, which prompts feedback, convenience, availability and reliability.

As argued, again in the findings²³, although the adoption of strategies by political actors influenced the choices and preferences for platforms, the study did not establish any empirical basis for this so as to determine, for instance, the factors behind the determination of what were the most patronized platforms. The fact that there was no scientific data to determine whether or not every user of such digital networks accessed political information via the devices, also makes it difficult to confirm which platform was most used. The outcome thus encourages political actors

²³ For example, Facebook was considered the most patronized platform, as it was widely used to share videos, pictures and audio-visuals, and in view of its far – reaching implications. Twitter was also widely used, since it was the preserve of a class of people with status, notably, the elite, the middle classes, and the literate population who formed the key targets of social media, and that such platforms are widely used, irrespective of the political season. Besides, Twitter was considered efficient because it was limited, in terms of character limit for text messages, so users were forced to summarize content and be to the point. Similar reasons were cited for the choices of YouTube, Instagram and WhatsApp as the most patronized media platforms. Please see more on this in Chapters 8 &

to explore further which are the most attractive platforms; what constitutes the most patronized platforms, and what motivates their choice?

Knowing the past provides clues and answers, and also provides a better understanding of events, this relates to the appreciation of the rationale behind the conduct and nature of the campaign strategies of political actors. Literature on the behavior of the two leading political parties was considered in the short history of politics in Ghana, and this provides useful insights into the antecedents and ideologies of both the political leadership and entities. Besides, the history of agitation, vilification, and sometimes violence, that characterize the parties', campaigning is a confirmation of the assumption that power sometimes determines the level of authority and control over the media, because power empowers leadership to execute a more successful campaign.

I argue, based on responses from interviews, that the social media provide an alternative space in which the citizenry can invoke the tenets of free expression so as to enhance participation. The study therefore reignites debate on the sensitization to assertiveness by the citizenry on their inalienable rights to, and the privileges of free speech, a free press and free association, to gain the necessary information and education to facilitate their choices of leadership and Parties.

I have also argued, with reference to Brady et al.'s assertion (2010), that a successful political campaign must be conditionally contingent on effective preparations to facilitate smooth implementation. In other words, certain necessary arrangements, in terms of resources, logistics and personnel, must be factored into strategies by political actors, in the overall social media campaign processes. Similarly, the clarity of campaign messages and education must consider the ramifications for the beneficiaries, in addition to the intensity of the electoral period, media culture, and that all the conditions are not meant to be present in their entirety (ibid, 5).

Concerns expressed in the findings of this study are not limited to Ghana, they are unique global challenges confronting political campaigns, especially in developing democracies, in their attempt to integrate social media usage into political communication strategies so as to achieve decent and successful campaigns in the digital era.

9.18 Areas of future research

The study builds on other research and makes arguments on how social media have become an integral part of communication strategies for political campaigning in Ghana's contemporary governance system. It also identified ways in which social media platforms can be considered problematic in electoral democracy. As Dzisah argues, 'in Ghana, as in other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the contemporary wave of democratization, and social media evolution, among other new interactive media forms, have sparked debates on the extent to which the media can influence political discourse and instigate social mobilisation' (2018, p.43). This argument projects the media, especially the social media, as drivers of the wheels of Ghana's trajectory towards enhanced participation, in her bid to consolidate her fledgling democracy. This study thus recommends the following for future research and policy formulation. That:

1. Key challenges, such as computer illiteracy, inadequate digital connectivity, and inadequate resources revealed in the study must be addressed as potential obstacles that have the tendency to derail progress in the use of social media platforms. Social media have become game - changers in pursuit of success in participatory democracy, because the use of social media is not only changing whole sectors of society, it also offers numerous possibilities for modern, meaningful and equal participation and deliberation, as well as chances for new forms of transparency and accountability that were hitherto unheard of (Gyampo, 2017).
2. Continuous investigations need to be conducted by political actors and researchers into the impact that social media use is making on political campaigning, in the wake of the increasing use of digital devices and SMSs. No study has established the extent of this, nor whether or not mobile phone users use them to access information on political campaigning and politically related activities.
3. There is the need to explore and assess the media policies of political parties and their antecedents, in order to determine how they adjust to the media's dynamics in relation to democratic development. For instance, Gyampo (2017) quotes several studies by scholars that have interrogated the evolution, formation and administration of political parties in Ghana since independence, as affirmed by this dissertation's findings. 'Yet, studies on

political parties in Ghana have been silent on the effect of social media in shaping the activities of political parties' (Gyampo, 2017 p.188).

4. More knowledge and education are needed on the effective use of social media platforms, in terms of why, and how, they are assimilated by audiences, particularly in developing countries, e.g., the need for linkages between the leadership and party affiliates on platforms and websites, the need for the application of social media feeds by political parties as teasers to messages for the audience, etc. These deficiencies imply that users are not serious when it comes to using social media platforms, e.g., a study by Exeter University in the UK confirms that the NDCs' failure to recognize the power of social media played a role in the party's defeat in 2016. According to this research, the NDC was slower to recognize the potential of social media for electoral politics. The Party's 2016 social media campaign was relatively disorganized and sporadic (Asamoah, 2020).
5. The evolution of more efficient communication strategies that are audience and environmentally-focused to ensure the effective appropriation of social media platforms. Such strategies must be backed by professionally competent political communications and media personnel, with the capability and abilities to vary campaigns by evolving tactics to meet the prevailing exigencies dictated by technological evolution.
6. The contribution of 'serial callers' to political campaigns must be empirically tested to ascertain their usefulness in contemporary political communication. This exploration is necessitated by the assumption that most are not well educated and are also technologically challenged. Their comprehension of issues, especially in 'foreign languages' is questionable, as are their subjective and partisan lenses for the analysis of political events. These render 'serial callers' propagandists, a terminology with negative connotations in the Ghanaian political context, thereby raising warning flags regarding their role in enhancing participation.
7. Appreciation of diction in political campaigning that is relative to the audience and political actors, especially newsmakers, political communicators and their affiliates, like 'serial callers', need rigorous investigations to determine the impact that messages have on political campaigns, in view of the symbiotic relations between new and old media when

it comes to sources of information. Indecent language does not make messages appealing to the electorate (Ayee, 2017; Gan, 2011).

8. Further research is needed to engage in a comparative analysis to determine the rationale for the most patronized digital platforms and the extent of their use, so as to establish, in empirical terms, the impact digital platforms are making on contemporary political campaigning, and on politics in general.

The challenges and limitations notwithstanding, this study provides an invaluable insight into the relationships between the uses of social media, traditional media and political communication, and their ramifications for future political campaigns in Ghana.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Guide for Focus Group Discussions (FGDS)

My name is James Kwaku Asante, a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) candidate at the University of Westminster, London, in the United Kingdom. I am conducting research on political campaigning in the digital era. My focus is on how political parties, especially the two leading political parties in Ghana (NDC/NPP) used digital media (social media) as part of their campaign strategies in the 2012/2016 elections, and the impact of the Social Networking Sites (SNSs) on participation and campaigning in Ghana's future elections for the consolidation democracy. I wish to indicate that you fall within one of the categories of participants for the study. I would be most grateful if you could spend a few minutes (30-60 minutes) with me in an interview, to enable me to get your views on the subject. I also wish to indicate that the interview is voluntary, you do not have to participate if you don't want to, but if you choose to, the information you give will be used in writing the thesis for the PhD award. I assure you that the information you give is for the research only. The submission of the thesis is in fulfilment of a requirement for the awarding of a PhD at the University of Westminster. The University of Westminster will give you access to the thesis, if you desire to read it when it is completed.

I will seek your permission to record the interview to help me remember the conversation, in addition to taking some notes (by a research assistant, if necessary) so as to help me remain focused on the interview. The recording and the transcription of the interview will be kept confidential.

I would appreciate it if you could give me your consent, or otherwise, for the interview.

1. You have been monitoring the country's political situation for some time now, what is your assessment, in terms of development, particularly the development of democracy?
2. Do you see any connection between the politics of today and yesterday? What reasons can account for any differences between the 'two days'? By 'days', I am referring to the system of governments (both military and democratic) both before and after Ghana's independence.

3. There is the belief that political institutions, especially political parties, play a major role in governing a nation (Country). Do you think politics has made any meaningful contribution to the development of democracy in Ghana?
4. Are political actors living up to their responsibility for helping to govern the nation, e.g., in political party organization, campaigning and general political party administration, etc.?
5. What is your understanding of the media, and how relevant are they in society?
6. How do you assess the role of the media in politics, specifically, their role in political campaigning, organization, administration, etc., in Ghana's electoral system?
7. What are your favorite media (as used for political activities), especially for political campaigning activities by political parties? By favorite media, I am referring to preferences made in terms of Traditional Media (Radio, television and print) and Digital Media (Internet and digital platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, etc.).
8. Can you advance reasons for their (your) choice of that particular media?
9. Do you think the political actors are strategic in using both forms of media (traditional and new)? Elaborate on how they (your party) (optional question) used the media.
10. Can you be specific, on whether or not the parties (your party) had any strategy for social media use, and what impact did that strategy have on the execution of their (your) (optional question) political campaign programs.
11. Which of the social media platforms did the parties (your party, with emphasis on the NDC and the NPP) use most, and what might be the motivation for that choice.
12. The use of social media by political actors has attracted criticism from a section of the public, that the parties lacked the expertise, and that their strategies were not based on any research. Do you agree with such critics?
13. Were the parties' adoption of strategies for social media use influenced or controlled by any policy guidelines?
14. Do you think the media strategies the parties deployed had the potential to win over the electorate?

15. Were variations in political communication strategies and technological evolution, caused by digital media, influencing your Party's fortunes in the 2012 and 2016 campaigns?
16. What is your assessment of political communication (emphasis on 'serial callers') in terms of their contribution to political campaigning?
17. Did digital media influence political campaigning during the 2012 and 2016 elections?
18. With what effect are digital tools influencing the way political parties contest power (emphasis on the 2012/2016 campaigns)?
19. Were you satisfied with the choice of language and diction used by patrons of social media?
20. What is your assessment of political campaigning and media use (old and new) with respect to political campaigns before and after independence, especially during the Fourth Republic (i.e., beginning from 1992)?
21. Does the use of digital media (social media) portend any future for Ghana's political campaigns in the era of digitalization?

Appendix 2: Interview Guide for Political Party Communicators

My name is James Kwaku Asante, a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) candidate at the University of Westminster, London, in the United Kingdom. I am conducting research on political campaigning in the digital era. My focus is on how political parties, especially the two leading political parties in Ghana (NDC/NPP) used digital media (social media) as part of their campaign strategies in the 2012/2016 election, and the impact of the Social Networking Sites (SNS) on participation and campaigning in Ghana's future elections for the consolidation of democracy. I wish to indicate that you fall into one of the categories of participants for the study. I would be most grateful if you could spend a few minutes (30 -60 minutes) with me in an interview so as to enable me to obtain your views on the subject. I also wish to indicate that the interview is voluntary, you do not have to participate if you don't want to, but if you choose to, the information you give will be used in writing the thesis for the PhD award. I assure you that the information you give is for this research only. The submission of the thesis is in fulfilment of the requirements for the awarding of a PhD by the University of Westminster. The University of Westminster will give you access to the thesis, if you wish to read it after its completion.

I will seek your permission to record the interview to help me to remember the conversation, in addition to taking some notes (by a research assistant if necessary) so as to help me remain focused on the interview. The recording and the transcription of the interview will be kept confidential.

I would appreciate it if you could give me your consent, or otherwise, for the interview.

1. You have been in politics for some time now, what is your assessment of the Ghanaian political situation so far?
2. Do you see any connection between the politics of today and yesterday, and what reasons may account for any differences between the two days? I refer to the system of governments (both military and democratic) before and after Ghana's independence.
3. There is the general belief that political institutions, especially political parties, play a major role in governing a nation (Country). Do you think politics (including your political party) has made any meaningful contribution to the development of politics in this country.

4. What are the core objectives and focus of your political party, and do you think you are meeting the expectations of Ghanaians as far as party organization, campaigning and general administration are concerned?
5. The media are seen as being key movers in the development of a multi-party system of governance. To what extent do you share this view?
6. How do you assess the role of the media in politics, specifically, their role in political campaigning in Ghana's electoral system?
7. What are your favorite media for your political activities, especially political campaigning activities? By favorite media, I am referring to preferences made in terms of Traditional Media (Radio, television and print) and Digital Media (the Internet and digital platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, etc.).
8. Can you advance reasons for your choice of medium?
9. Do you have strategies for the use of both media (traditional and new media), and can you elaborate on how your Party used the two media?
10. Can you be specific, did your Party have any strategy for social media use, and what impact did that have on the execution of your political campaign programs (and other Party activities).
11. Which of the social media platforms did your Party use most. and what was the motivation for that choice.
12. Was the strategy for the choice of social media use based on any research?
13. What media strategies were deployed by your Party (Parties) to win over the electorate?
14. Was the Party's strategy for social media use influenced or controlled by any policy guidelines?
15. Did variations in political communication strategies and technological evolution that are caused by digital new media influence your Party's fortunes in the 2012 and 2016 campaigns?
16. Was your Party satisfied with the role of 'serial callers' in political campaign activities?
17. What is your assessment of political communication (emphasis on 'serial callers') in terms of their contribution to political campaigning?

18. Did digital media influence political campaigning during the 2012 and 2016 elections?
19. With what effect are digital tools influencing the way political parties contest power (emphasis on the 2012/2016 campaigns?)
20. Does the use of digital media (social media) portend any future for political campaigning in the era of digitalization?
21. Were you satisfied with the choice of language and diction used by patrons of social media?

Appendix 3: Interview Guide for Other Political Actors

My name is James Kwaku Asante, a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) candidate at the University of Westminster, London, in the United Kingdom. I am conducting research on political campaigning in the digital era. My focus is on how political parties, especially the two leading political parties in Ghana (NDC/NPP), used digital media (social media) as part of their campaign strategies in the 2012/2016 elections, and the impact on the Social Networking Sites (SNS) on participation and campaigning in Ghana's future elections for the consolidation of democracy. I wish to indicate that you fall into one of the categories of participants for the study. I would be most grateful if you could spend a few minutes (30 -60 minutes) with me in an interview, to enable me to get your views on the subject. I also wish to indicate that the interview is voluntary, you do not have to participate if you don't want to, but if you choose to, the information you give will be used in writing the thesis for the PhD award. I assure you that the information you give is for the research only. The submission of the thesis is in fulfilment of the requirements for the awarding of a PhD by the University of Westminster. The University of Westminster will give you access to the thesis if you wish to read it, after its completion.

I will seek your permission to record the interview to help me to remember the conversation, in addition to taking some notes (by research assistant if necessary) so as to help me remain focused on the interview. The recording and the transcription of the interview will be kept confidential.

I would appreciate it if you could give me your consent, or otherwise, for the interview.

1. You have been a keen follower of Ghanaian politics, what is your assessment of the current political situation?
2. Do you see any connection between the politics of today and yesterday, and what reasons may account for any differences between the two days? By 'days', I am referring to the system of governments (both military and democratic) before and after Ghana's independence.
3. There is the general belief that political institutions, especially political parties. play a major role in governing a nation (Country). Do you think politics parties have made any meaningful contributions to the development of politics in this country?
4. Are political parties meeting their core objectives, as far as the expectations of Ghanaians (emphasis on party organization, campaigning and general administration) are concerned?

5. The media are seen as being key movers in the development of the multi-party system of governance. To what extent do you share this view?
6. How do you assess the role of the media in politics, specifically, their role in political campaigning in Ghana's electoral system?
7. Can you identify political parties (emphasis on NDC and NPP) with a particular medium for their political activities, especially political campaigning activities during the 2012/2016 electoral campaign eras? I am referring to preferences made by political parties in terms of Traditional Media (Radio, television and print) and Digital Media (Internet and digital platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, etc.).
8. Can you suggest/advance reasons why the Party (Parties) preferred a particular medium for its (their) electoral campaign activities?
9. Do you think the Parties were strategic, in terms of the use of both types of media (traditional and new media)? Can you suggest how the parties used the media?
10. Do you think the communication strategies adopted by the Parties (social media) made an impact on the execution of their political campaign programs (and on other Party activities)?
11. Which of the social media platforms dominated the political parties' campaign programs, what may be the motivation for this?
12. Would it be reasonable to conclude that the parties' choices of strategies for the social media use were based on any research?
13. Do you think the media strategies deployed by the Parties played any part in their winning over of the electorate?
14. Were the Parties' strategies for social media use influenced or controlled by any policy guidelines?
15. Are variations in political communication strategies and technological evolution caused by digital new media's influence over the Party's fortunes in the 2012 and 2016 campaigns?
16. Were you satisfied with the choices of language and diction used by patrons of social media?
17. Were you satisfied with the role that 'serial callers' played in political campaign activities?

18. What is your assessment of political communication (emphasis on ‘serial callers’), in terms of their contribution to political campaigning?

19. Did digital media influence political campaigning during the 2012 and 2016 elections?

20. With what effect are digital tools influencing the way political parties contest power? (Emphasis on the 2012/2016 campaigns).

21. Does the use of digital media (social media) portend any future for political campaigning in the era of digitalization?

Appendix 4: List of Interviewees

Mr. David Agbenu	Editor, <i>Ghanaian Times</i>
Mr. Isaac Yeboah	Editor, <i>Graphiconline</i>
Mr. Michael Abass Daabu	Editor, <i>myjoyonline</i>
Mr. Kofi Adoli	ICT Consultant, Member of NDC
Mr. Charles Nii Ayiku	ICT Consultant
Nii Narku Quaynor (PhD)	ICT Consultant
Professor Kwame Karikari	School of Communications studies, University of Ghana (UG)
Michael Kpessah-Whyte (PhD)	African Studies, UG, and Member of NDC
Kobby Mensah (PhD)	UG Business School, UG
Akidu Seidu (PhD)	Political Science Department, UG
Kwame Asa Asante (PhD)	Political Science Department, UG
Wilberforce Sefakor Dzisah (PhD)	Ghana Institute of Journalism
Etse Sikanku (PhD).	Ghana Institute of Journalism
Affail Monney	President, Ghana Journalists' Association
Mr. Suleiman Braimah	Executive Director, Media Foundation for West Africa
William Doworkpor	Journalist, Entrepreneur and 2016 Aspiring MP for Progressive People's Party (PPP)
Mr. Sammy Awuku	National Youth Organizer and Deputy Communications Officer for NPP

Mr. Perry Okujato

Deputy Minister of Information, Deputy
Communications Officer for NPP

Mr. Kwame Ahiabenu II

Executive Director, Penplusbytes Ghana

Bright Akwetey (PhD)

Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG)

Appendix 5: Sample of Interview Transcripts

Interviewer: James Asante (JA)

Interviewee: Mr. Sulemana, Braimah (SB), Executive Director of Media Foundation for West Africa

JA: Good morning, Sir, like I said, I am looking at political campaigning in the digital era, but I would want to find out your opinion, your views, as far the political situation in this country is concerned, with particular reference to political campaigning?

SB: Well, I think that, traditionally, our campaigns over the years have been quite intense, particularly between the two parties, the two dominant parties, the NDC and the NPP, and, of course, when you have two big political entities, each of which could win an election at any time, you would expect that the competition would always be quite intense. However, I think we need to also look at how refined the intensity of the campaign is.

Is it crudely intensive, or something you know that is decently intensive? I think that we are still in between; where some political actors feel that the way to succeed is when you do it the crude way, in terms of attacking people viciously, you know, making false claims, allegations, and so on and so forth. Of course, there are others who also believe that the way to go is to be refined and focus on issues, and to try to make sure that those [from whom] you are seeking their vote understand your perspective and why you are the best. Of course, the 2012 campaign had its own issues, and even after the elections we all know what happened in terms of the opposition going to Court to challenge the presidential results.

2016 was also at a different level, because it was almost the case that the President now, who was then in opposition, obviously thought that if he doesn't win, that was the end of whatever ambitions he had for the presidency, and then the then President also felt like... may have been thinking ... that, well, almost every President did two terms, so why would I be the only to do a single term? And I believe that their political parties were also oriented in that way and so the campaign followed those lines.

And then, of course, these days, we are not only talking about rallies, and so on. The media are sometimes quite vibrant politically, divided and, of course, we now have social media that make

almost everyone a content generator, so people can express their views, which is positive. However, sometimes, too, the way people go about it, given that there are no gatekeeping functions, can be quite problematic.

JA: Generally, you and I will agree that the media has evolved, looking back at what happened between 1979 and 1992, '96, down to where we are now, do you agree?

SB: Oh sure, sure I mean there's been significant improvement, not just in terms of the numbers of media houses we have, or the diversity of the type of media we have, but also even in terms of freedom, for journalists to express themselves, to speak up, to write about what they think, and so on and so forth. I think people nowadays do things that, perhaps in the 70s, and so on, they would have been quite extremely dangerous to do that, so, in terms of freedom, in terms of diversity, diversity in terms of media content, and so on and so forth, I think there has been so much improvement.

JA: So, which of them, comparatively, the new, i.e., Internet and social media, and the old media, referring to print, TV and radio?

SB: Well, you see, because of our profile, the profile of the population when it comes to illiteracy and the fact that the majority of our people are still not literate, and even those who are literate may be JHS, SHS, and many people can't still communicate in English, and therefore reading English will become difficult, I think it makes radio a very vibrant platform, even though the media is coming up, but radio remains the dominant platform for political discourse and for public policy debate and, as I said, this is because radio offers the opportunity for people to express themselves in the language that they understand better. Radio, as they say, is portable, with the help of mobile phones people who are going to their farms, and so on, can carry their phones listening to radio, and so radio continues to be the most dominant platform, in terms of public discourse, in terms of political campaigning. Newspapers generally, and as is the trend globally, are continuously suffering from limited patronage and therefore the influence of newspapers are fast decreasing, and that is something that maybe people in the industry have to think about, and that is why perhaps every newspaper now has a website that supports the hardcopy things that they do. Social media, to the extent that it allows everyone to express themselves, is also an important tool, especially when it comes to campaigning. Through WhatsApp, people can record voices in their own language and share videos and audios that can go viral. Facebook people are doing all manner of

things, even those who have not gone to school, for the fact that they can write one or two words together, then they put it there or even pictures. I know people are not literate and yet they are on Facebook, you know, and they share pictures, and so on and so forth. I think social media, or the new media, is also coming up, but radio still remains the most vibrant and dominant platform for political campaigning for discussions, for policy debating, and so on

JA: What about TV?

SB: Well, TV not as much, as, well, of course, TV may be placed higher than newspapers, again because of the literacy issues, also given the fact that there are TV stations that are now operating in local languages, you know, like Adom TV, UTV, and so on, but access remains a challenge in many parts of the country. I believe that if you were in Bunkpurugu Yunyoo, those places' access to TV can be quite difficult. Of course, now there are digi-boxes people can resort to satellite access. Of course, it also comes with a cost. There are many households where you would still not find television and, apart from that, also if you go to, of course, there has been so much electricity expansion, but there are still several communities where electricity is a problem and you can't own a TV without electricity. Those days of 'black and white', you can use a car battery, and so on but, of course, we've transitioned beyond that point and, to that extent, if you look at it versus radio, no matter where you are now, there's one FM station or radio you can tune in to, and you don't need electricity. With a battery, you can always listen, and even on your phone, and so on. So, yea, it will be radio, maybe next will be television and social media, or the new media, websites and social media, and then the newspapers.

JA: Alright. Now in terms of the digital media, right, i.e., Internet and social media, for example, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc., which of them was dominant in terms of political campaigning, with reference to the political parties in the 2012 and 2016 elections?

SB: Well, if digital media would include digitally enabled television transmission, then I would say that it would be TV, because when I say digitally enabled, if you look at, let's say, the multimedia platforms, multi TV platforms, so people have multi TV decoders through which they can access JoyNews, Adom TV and a number of other channels and, to that extent, access to political messaging was quite high on television, but otherwise the next may be on social media: Facebook particularly

JA: Right, I would be most grateful if we can focus on the social networks' platforms, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. And do you think these social media platforms, as tools of communication, influential in terms of information dissemination, political marketing, publicity, etc., with reference to 2012 and 2016 elections?

SB: Yes, I would say yes. Those platforms were quite influential, negatively and positively. Positively, to the extent that it served as platforms that allowed for diversity of views for people to be able to express themselves without going through a journalist, or without going through an editor, and so on and so forth. Those were positives, because people could post things about their MPs, as to whether they like their MPs or not, as well as their Presidential candidates, so it was positively influential in that regard. Negatively, in the sense of using the platform to perpetuate falsehoods, hate speech, insults, lies, and so on, and you remember that, ahead of the 2016 elections, there were even issues relating to whether or not social media would be banned, and all of that, and we had to, you know, organize series of for a, including bringing people from Facebook headquarters, you know, to discuss the issues and give an assurance that the platform has the capacity to be able to deal with, you know, hate speech, and so on and so forth. So, negatively, it was influential in that regard, and is something that we have to continue to see how we can integrate it into our political campaigning but, of course, in terms of that complementary role enabling people to have voices, and so on, I think is something very useful

JA: From your point of view, and from where you are coming from, do you think political stakeholders, and the electorate in general, were fair, in terms of language, diction, messages used on these digital platforms?

SB: Wow! to some extent, you know, and as I said at the beginning there are people within the political landscape who believe that the way to go when you want to be successful in political campaigning is the crude way, you know, and so in terms of use of words, you know, people think it is when you use vicious words, biting words, and so on and so forth, that gives your message impact, or that makes you influential, or that ends up making you be seen as controversial and therefore becoming influential in the political game, and therefore that is why, for example, we do this campaign language monitoring, you know, is all because there are concerns about the kind of languages -- the kinds of words -- that people use, and I think to that extent, it is something that we would have to continue to battle with.

JA: In terms of power, do you think political stakeholders are using it effectively, responsibly, judiciously, in relation with the digital platforms?

SB: Political parties themselves? I would say no, but candidates may have their own political platforms, social media pages, Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, and so on, but I don't think there has been that deliberate and conscious effort to say this tool is going to be a major campaign tool for me to use. It is almost like: well now, these days you must have a Facebook page and therefore I also have it, but not as in a platform that they would say is a dedicated one, using it to run the campaign, respond to issues, post questions, interact with people, and so on and so forth. I don't think they've been as effective as that.

JA: So, in your opinion, what reason could account for political parties' failure to use digital platforms as sources of power to maximize votes, or win political contests?

SB: I think that there is perhaps the perception that more of our voters are still not online, you know, and therefore the way to be successful is to reach out to the people directly through radio. That is the dominant platform. Or through interface, by rallies, and so on and so forth, yea. But I think the Social Network Sites are power tools, and stakeholders have to come to that realization in their contest for power.

JA: Well, I have read a document from Penplusbytes on Ghana's Social Media Index? The document suggests that more Ghanaians are on social media. For example, in Ghana, about 27 million people are using mobile phones out of the population of about 30 million. Eight million of the 27 are on the Internet, and about 3 million are on social media. Does the access to the platforms suggest all users will be sourcing information on politics, or using it as platforms for politics?

SB: No, not at all. There are several people who are using it to do business for professional communications, they are into client relations, customer relations, and so on and so forth. They would want to engage, and to use it as a platform to engage with their customers, and so on and so forth. It is also because the social media is not as if -- when I joined Facebook today, everybody on Facebook becomes my friend, or everything that is said on Facebook I would see. I may be on Facebook, but I may have 50 or I have 60 friends, and that is my circle. I may be on Facebook because we have created an old school union, and that might be the purpose of why I am there,

and there are others, as I said there can be about close to a million people on Facebook who are just there because it is a trend, it is a fashion, and I have to be there.

JA: How would you react to the belief that the youth and a sizeable number of the middle class, especially the educated, are more attracted to the social media, and therefore politicians, should be more strategic in their campaign messages.

SB: Yes, of course, that is the global trend, social media predominantly, is for the youth, and the old people -- some are not even...they are literate, but may not even be computer literate. The young people today..... who are literate --- everybody is familiar with computers, social media, and so on and so forth and so that is the global trend.

JA: I may sound a bit repetitive, but I want to find out from you, do you think that the political stakeholders, Parties, CSOs, etc., are using the SNSs desired network connectivity effectively?

SB: In terms of connectivity, No, I don't think we are there yet, as I said before, for the political parties, many of them are not trending, where oh, social media, yes, these days we can't do without social media so they open accounts, you know the numbers? I remember when, in the 2016 campaign, President Mahama, on his Facebook account, had like a million followers, Nana Addo got a million followers, I think they paid for that to get the attraction. But ask yourself, what were they doing with these million followers, you know? Occasionally, a statement would be put out, they had people who were managing these pages, but I don't think that it was something that was powerfully used to the advantage of the candidates.

JA: So, in terms of strategy, what would you suggest the political parties do to enhance their activities, e.g., Campaigning, mobilization, etc.

SB: Well, I think that it shouldn't be that it is during elections that we are now creating social media accounts, it should be part of the overall political engagement strategy of all political parties. So, if, for example, as at now, the parties are using the social media to engage, Twitter, Facebook or whatever it is, that would in itself get more people to follow and to be conversant with the engagement via social media, and by elections, and I am sure that, then, you would have more and more people who are engaging via the digital platforms, but if it is election time, where everybody is busy, I don't think it will be as effective as they may want it to be.

JA: I am sure you monitored the political campaigns and other political activities ahead of the 2012/2016 elections, what is your assessment of social media uses by the political parties, especially the NDC and the NPP, who appear to have dominated the country's political parties' landscape?

SB: Well, I think that the NDC, NPP, PPP -- they all made some efforts in utilizing the digital platforms but I think I would say that, Dr. Ndoum, being the PPP's candidate, did it in a way that you could say this was being done consciously, in terms of audio messages that are being put out in terms of Facebook live engagement, and so on and so forth, but we know that his performance wasn't quite encouraging and, to that extent, then you would say that perhaps the use of the digital media did not inure to, or did not generate, the kind of impact that one would have been envisaging.

JA: Does it mean the PPP candidate was deficient, in terms of strategy, in using the platforms, for example, deficient in messages, language, I mean what was really lacking/missing?

SB: No, I think that it is generally about the fact that, in Ghana today, people are either NPP or NDC. So, very, very few people would vote on the basis of whatever campaign message or whatever manifesto, you know, people are born into families of NPP and NDC, and they are indoctrinated, so a few people may eventually grow and choose to align with other parties, but otherwise it is almost always like a family thing, and to that extent that may be the reason why, maybe that the whole digital media campaign did not catch up with the people, or did not generate that kind of vote that he may have anticipated

JA: Then it means that, strategically, the political parties are not doing well in their use of the digital platforms?

SB: Yea, I don't think they are doing well, and that is also because, as I said, we always wait until elections, you know, but between now and elections, this is the time that we can engage the people more, because people are open minded now, but around the elections, NDC persons minds are focused on the NDC, NPP are focused on the NPP, and nobody is prepared with an opened mind to listen and say 'oh, okay!' I think this guy is making sense, or something like that, yea.

JA: And do you see the digital media platforms dominating our political activities, especially in political campaigns in the near future?

SB: Going forward, maybe not the next elections, but eventually. It depends on the future of those platforms themselves, and the regulations that will come around them, but otherwise I think that they definitely would have a big role to play going forward. It would be the major platform around which people would engage, because on radio, you either have to call in or text in, and it takes the discretion of the producer or presenter to have your voice heard, but, with your phone, you can always say what you want and engage people, somebody responds and you reply, and so on and so forth. Going forward, maybe in the next elections, or in two, that, subsequently, the digital platforms may be the power players.

JA: Don't you foresee any challenges, looking at the issue of connectivity, looking at the issue of accessibility, and other resources, that turns to inhibit social media use for our political campaigns, especially where we are coming from, as a developing country?

SB: Well, errrh, I think those are indeed important issues, but the reality is that connectivity is expanding, day in day out, people who can access the Internet are expanding, the service providers are reaching out, you know, to everybody, to areas where there is a problem, television, I mean electricity access is expanding, literacy rated are, and to that extent, more and more people who come online will be able to engage through the digital platforms, of course, access to mobile phones, smart phones and the rest, are also increasing.

JA: There is an issue about 'serial callers,' right? I am sure you are very regularly on radio or TV, and other platforms, what is your opinion or evaluation on the role of 'serial callers' in the country's democracy, in terms of participation, and as far as digital media are concerned?

SB: Well. so long as radio would continue to be there, they would still be 'serial callers', and remember that many of these people are people who can't read or write, but they can speak their own language, and radio offers them opportunities to express themselves and make contributions in their own language, and so, to that extent, I am sure that they would continue to be part of the system, and once connectivity and access to the Internet and literacy also expands, maybe the phenomenon of 'serial callers' would be reduced, and a lot more people be migrating towards the digital media.

JA: Mr Executive Director, this should be my last question, if you would permit me. Would you agree, could the variations in the political communications strategies, obviously or partly

occasioned by technological evolutions, be an influence, or the key determinant, of the electorates' choices of leadership/parties and voting behavior?

SB: I don't think so, I don't think so yet, as I said, in Ghana, Volta Region would, for a long time, if not forever, remain the stronghold of the NDC, Ashanti Region will forever, or for a long time, remain a stronghold of the NPP, and this is a tradition. You would have said that 'oh! If forty years ago people in Volta were supportive of the regime, or the tradition that Rawlings, Nkrumah and Co., I mean forty years ago -- most people have died and gone, there is a new generation now, why hasn't there been a change? But, as I said, once you are born into it and indoctrinated, and this is everywhere in the world. I believe in the US there are people that are in the Republicans because they were born into a family that was dominated by Republicans, and so it may take quite a long time before that trend will change and where we would have individuals who would on their own say: 'look, I like the policies of this party I don't care whether my father was this or my mother was that'. It takes education, it takes enlightenment, not just well, of course, the social media platforms also contribute to educating people, enlightening people, getting people to have access to information from divergent views, and so on and so forth, and I think that may be years to come, those platforms for engagement allowing people to have divergent and diverse views and opinions may then get us into a situation where more and more people would be making their political decisions in terms of the conversation or messages that they've received on digital platforms, rather than [saying] my father or my mother is NDC or NPP.

JA: We hope, we hope, it happens that way. Thanks very much

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