UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

GHANA’S 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: A STUDY OF ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA.

BY

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JULY, 2018
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis is my own original work produced under supervision. All references cited have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has neither been presented in whole nor in part to any other institution for the award of any degree.

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ABSTRACT

Political Parties across the world have in recent time’s integrated social media as part of their campaign strategy to woo voters online. This is because social media has proven to be an effective medium for electoral communication given its several features like photo sharing, status update, tags, post sharing, likes, live videos, video sharing among others. Most importantly, social media facilitates access to political information and its networked structure enables users to create interest groups, interact with each other and engage in political debates. This study explores the various ways social media is revolutionizing political campaigns in Ghana using the 2016 election campaigns as a case study. It argues that the extensive integration of social media tools particularly Facebook in the 2016 electoral campaigns has introduced newer forms of campaigns in Ghana. Although social media was used extensively in the 2016 election campaigns in Ghana, it did not replace the traditional media rather it augmented the parties’ efforts to reach many voters.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my brother Mr. Emmanuel Aidoo for his massive and significant support.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to the Almighty God for his grace and divine mercies and for seeing me through the completion of this research.

I express my heartfelt appreciation to my supervisors, Dr. Kojo Opoku Aidoo and Dr. Michael Kpessa-Whyte, for their counsel throughout this research. I also want to thank all the Research Fellows, staff and librarians at the Institute of African Studies (IAS) for their great support in making my academic journey a success.

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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>Cable News Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPP</td>
<td>Convention People’s Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICTs</td>
<td>Information and Communication technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IWS</td>
<td>Internet World Stats</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDC</td>
<td>National Democratic Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPP</td>
<td>New Patriotic Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>PFP</td>
<td>Popular Front Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Progressive People’s Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>UGCC</td>
<td>United Gold Coast Convention</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the early times, political mobilization took the form of face-to-face communication among party members and voters and mass events and rallies (Norris, 2000). The second or ‘modern’ era of electoral campaigns were characterized by a more impersonal channel occasioned by the introduction of the mass media, especially the Television (Norris, 2000). Electoral campaigns in the last two decades however has taken a new twist due to the introduction of the internet and the expansive growth of information and telecommunication tools, more specifically the emergence of social media (Rommele, 2003). With the improvement and growing significance of social media, many political parties, organizations and institutions have leveraged the platform as it has become an essential tool for mobilizing and encouraging social media users to participate in political activities ranging from joining political groups online to volunteering, donating, sharing status, tweeting and retweeting political news, watching live videos on Facebook and YouTube as well as forwarding messages on WhatsApp. This research therefore investigates how social media is revolutionizing electoral campaigns in Ghana using the 2016 election campaigns as a case study.

Studies have shown the growing importance of social media as an essential part of civic discourse and communication in the contemporary society (Bohler-Muller & Merwe, 2011; Gyampo, 2017; Muntean, 2015; O’Morain, 2016; Owen, 2014; Smith, 2011). Its effects on advertising, e-governance and electoral communication is telling (Bastion, Stilz, & Herlitz, 2012). More recently, the importance of social media has been emphasized for the most part in politics, particularly its potential of having positive impact on political participation and
mobilization given the increasing number of social media usage and this research provides a Ghanaian perspective to the subject. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have in recent times become the number one internet activity online (Valenzuela, Jung, & Zu'niga, 2012). According to the Internet Live Stats, there were 3,885,567,619 internet users in the world as of June 30 2016 (InternetLiveStats.com, 2017). Out of this number statista.com reports that, 2.46 billion were active social media users with 51.7% penetration rate. They project that, the number will increase or reach 2.77 billion by 2019. Report on internetlivestats.com indicate that there were 388,376,491 internet users in Africa (making 10.0% of the total world internet users) as at the end of June 2017 with 31.2% penetration rate and out of this number, 160,207,000 were Facebook users. In Ghana, internet users in December 2010 were 1,896,783 but the number as at June 2016 has shot up tremendously to 7,958,675 with a penetration rate of 34.7% and a total of 4,000,000 Facebook users (InternetLiveStats.com, 2017). The figure below gives a pictorial view of internet usage in Ghana from 2010 to 2016.

Figure 1: Internet Usage in Ghana from 2010-2016

Given this background of the growing popularity of internet and web 2.0 tools (social media) in recent years, many political parties and presidential and parliamentary hopefuls have
turned to its use for their political campaigns (Smith, 2011). Political candidates incorporate the ever-changing social media innovations using multifarious media tactics together with traditional media management techniques to canvas for support online. Campaign reporting no longer lies within the confines of professional journalists, since it is equally being covered by bloggers and average citizens. Voters now increasingly source for information and participate actively in campaigns on social media (Owen, 2014). Therefore, research on electoral campaigns in the era of social media is significant as it explains important changes in electoral campaigns more specifically, electoral communication which in turn can serve as a guide for future studies on social media campaign effects on choices voter’s make putting all variables at par.

1.2 Problem Statement

The importance of social media as a news media cannot be understated which is the reason why many politicians worldwide now utilize social media sites like Facebook and Twitter to reach and interact with their constituents and supporters. Studies conducted by (Baker, 2009; Carlisle & Patton, 2013; Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010) suggest that although direct links have not been drawn between a candidate’s presence on social media and victory in an election, there is a positive trend that these social media sites have influence on voters online. In Ghana, the use of social media for political purposes particularly for electoral campaign purposes has seen a remarkable increase from previous electioneering periods. For instance as of December 2012, statistics from socialbakers.com showed that the New Patriotic Party’s (NPP) presidential candidate had 100,000 likes on Facebook whiles the National Democratic Congress (NDC) candidate had 25,000 likes on Facebook. However in 2016, the presidential hopefuls for the NPP and NDC had a significant increase in the number of their following on social media. According to statistics from the 2nd Governance Social Media Index Report as of September 30, 2016 John Mahama, the presidential
candidate of the NDC had the most likes on Facebook with 1,007,595. The presidential candidate for the NPP followed closely with 981,057 likes on Facebook. Even though the NDC presidential candidate had over one million followers on Facebook, the report further indicates that the NPP candidate increased his following 265,341 as compared to NDC’s 125,175 three months prior to the publication of the latest report in September. This report shows that political parties in Ghana utilized social media to engage the electorate ahead of the elections in December 2016. Yet the nature of usage and how it is impacting on older forms of campaigns in the country is yet to be ascertained. Very little has been done by way of empirical research on political campaigns in Ghana in the era of social media. Much of the evidence that point to how political actors in Ghana utilized social media for their 2016 election campaigns are anecdotal therefore this research seeks to add up to the scanty empirical literature on social media and electoral campaigns in Ghana.

1.3 Research Objective

The prime objective of this research is to explore how social media is transforming electoral campaigns in Ghana.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives

I. To investigate the nature and form in which social media is transforming electoral campaigns in Ghana.

II. To investigate how political parties in Ghana used social media to campaign during the 2016 electioneering period.

III. To investigate the interface between social media and the traditional media in campaigns.
1.4 Research Questions

I. In what ways is social media transforming electoral campaigns in Ghana?

II. How did political parties utilize social media for their campaigns in 2016?

III. What is the interface between traditional media and social media in electoral campaigns?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study will enhance the current discourse on the use of social media for political campaigns as it provides a Ghanaian perspective on this still emerging topic. It will also add up to the scarce literature on social media and political campaigns in Ghana. Again research on social media and political campaigns is significant because it will help the political parties to explore more effective ways of utilizing social media for electoral campaigns in order to get the optimum benefits from it. The findings will also be useful to scholars, especially those who have interest in new media and electoral campaigns.

1.6 Organization of the Study

This study has been grouped into seven chapters. Chapter one comprise the background to the study. It briefly discusses the different phases of electoral campaigns and how these older forms of campaigns are yielding to newer forms of campaigns on social media. In addition to this, the chapter also describes the research problem as well as the research objectives and questions. The main research objective is to discover how social media is transforming electoral campaigns in Ghana. The overriding research question for this study is how political parties utilized social media during the electioneering period for their campaign purposes. This is then followed by the significance of the research and the organization of the various chapters. Chapter two traces the history of political campaigns in Ghana beginning from the 1951 elections to the 2016 elections. It discusses the changing
forms of electoral communication occasioned by the advent of a new media technology beginning with the newspaper, the radio and the television as a medium of electoral campaign communication and how these mediums are gradually yielding to social media. A successful review of literature is crucial to understanding the problem under study. Thus the third chapter critically reviews literature relevant to the study. The review is organized into three sections. The first section discusses studies on electoral campaigns. In detail, it reviews the literature on the concept of electoral campaigns in order to provide a basis to understand electoral campaigns in the context of social media. It discusses the various definitions given by different scholars and the various techniques and strategies used in electoral communication. Given that electoral campaigns are driven by the objective of mobilizing people to participate in politics, the second section of the literature review will delve into studies on political mobilization and participation.

Given that this work is interested in exploring how social media is transforming political campaigns in Ghana, the focus of the fourth chapter is on social media and how political actors are generally using it to further their political agenda. The chapter begins with discussions on the internet as a broader concept within which social media is embedded. It also because understanding the internet and how it operates provides a foundation to understand how social media functions. More specifically it discusses the structure and benefits of the internet, the debate on internet access and internet divide which some scholars suggest minimizes the democratic potential of the internet as well as the internet and how it was used for electoral campaigns prior to the advent of social media. The second aspect of the chapter embodies discussions on the concept of social media and the various ways political actors have utilized social media for electoral campaigns. It discusses how political actors have adopted and are using the various electoral communication techniques on social media to mobilize people to participate in politics. Chapter five focuses on the
research methodology. The methodology adopted for this study is qualitative as the research seeks to understand the use of social media from the point of view of those engaging with it for the purposes of electoral campaigns. So rather than seeking to know how often it was used, it rather seeks to know how and why it was used. It also consists of the research design and the data collection techniques that was adopted for this study. Chapter six present the analysis and the interpretation of the data. The data collected was categorized into themes closely aligned with the research questions which allowed for easy interpretation and analysis. The last chapter summarizes the study, states the major findings followed by the conclusion.
CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS IN

GHANA (1951-2016)

2.1 Introduction

The dynamisms in electoral campaigns in Ghana is inextricably linked to the history of her democratic elections beginning from 1951. Although this history is a chequered one due to coup d’états, it nonetheless reveals the changing patterns in electoral campaigns over the years in Ghana. Since electoral campaigns basically aims at getting a party’s message to voters, the choice of media and the technique in communicating the message is crucial. In other words, electoral communication is a critical aspect of electoral campaigns. The primary aim of this chapter is to trace the history of electoral campaigns in Ghana with more emphasis on the medium of communication and the techniques and strategies used in communication. The idea is to understand how the introduction of a new media technology impact on electoral communication in order to situate the discussion of electoral campaigns in the era of social media within a proper context.

2.2 Electoral Campaigns in Ghana during the Pre Mass Media Era (1951-1969)

The early electoral campaigns in Ghana according to Austin (1970) were largely organized and manned by party volunteers in the local areas. The national leadership of the parties were surrounded by few political advisors who run relatively short national election campaign. The bulky part of the work was done by those at the grassroots who relied heavily on face to face contact to mobilize support and to appeal for vote at the constituency level. Aside the face-to face mobilization strategy, these party volunteers sometimes organized town hall meetings and rallies to put their campaign messages across to the people. In essence very little was done at the top by the party leaders as even party meetings were
usually constituency based. The parties also utilized party press if they had or independently owned press to run commentary on their activities (Austin, 1970). Direct campaigning during the early years of Ghana’s democracy can be attributed to the level of illiteracy at that time and the unavailability of radio and television. This is not to suggest that direct forms of campaigning in contemporary times is irrelevant or has been abandoned by political parties due to the increase in literacy because as suggested by Key (1964), the personal touch in campaign rallies has psychological effect on individuals as the crowds’ applause and cheering strikes the doubters in the audience and carries them along. Denis Austin’s describes in details how political parties in the Gold Coast prior to the 1951 elections campaigned for votes.

Starting with the Convention People’s Party (CPP) Austin (1970) avers that, the CPP in 1950 established local branches in the various constituencies based on the colonial administration’s division of the country. This probably contributed largely to CPP’s victory in the 1951 elections as suggested by Austin (1970) because these local branches formed by the CPP worked as nationalist propaganda centers and helped in spreading the party’s campaign messages. Throughout 1950s, the CPP had a strategy to extend its local branches across the country. For example, Austin reported that, twelve party members on 15th October 1950 volunteered to walk to the remote villages in Oda in the province of the Colony to campaign to the people there with the aim of winning new convert (Austin, 1970). After this face to face section, the volunteers had enrolled two hundred and thirty-eight new members and convinced over one hundred and fifty men and women to pay their state tax (Austin, 1970). They did not only go to win convert but also educated them on the procedure outlined by the government for the general elections and what pre-requisite they needed to satisfy before they could be registered. Also, the party volunteers in the local branches during the period of the national voters’ registration assisted the official registration officers. As a
result, the official report on the 1951 elections gave a special mention to the CPP as the only political party which was outstandingly active during the registration and that there was no doubts that, the high rate of registration in certain areas was due to the commitment of the party volunteers to assist the official registration officers (Austin, 1970). In actual fact, the party’s help was absolutely needed because, the local branches of the party had campaigned prior to the registration to the extent that, most of the party supporters refused to register with the government. According to (Austin, 1970) a report was sent from towns like Akuse, Cape Coast and Sekondi that, the people had refused to register with the government but demanded that they are given C.P.P. registration forms to register in the name of the party.

As pointed above some of the political parties that owned newspapers dedicated some portions of the paper to report campaign activities. The newspaper as a form of mediated information then was not new to Gold Coasters even though its reach was within the urban areas. Twumasi (1981), traced the history of the media in Ghana to 1822 when the then British Governor of the Gold Coast Settlements founded an official newspaper called the Royal Gold Coast Gazette. The publication of this paper seized two years after its inception. Following this collapse, no official paper was published again until 1857 when two African brothers Charles and Edmund Bannerman owned and edited the first Black newspaper in the Gold Coast called the Accra Herald (Twumasi, 1981). James Hutton Brew from the Cape Coast established the Gold Coast Times in that same year. Subsequently, other newspapers were established but the papers were not published consistently until the 1930s and 40s when the media scene in the Gold Coast witnessed the spread of African-owned newspapers (Twumasi, 1981). Majority of these papers published articles ranging from the operations of the colonial government, to the abuse of power and corruption among the colonial officials as well as critiquing colonial policies (Twumasi, 1981). In 1948, the leader of the CPP started The Accra Evening News which constantly stated the demands of the CPP for
‘self-government now’ while punching holes in the colonial administration. Other party newspapers included the Morning Telegraph (Sekondi), Ashanti Pioneer (Kumasi) and Daily Mail (Cape Coast). The CPP’s Accra Evening News during the campaign period became the medium to reach the educated party officials at the various constituencies who in turn relayed information from the top to the local branches. In one of the newsletter published in the Accra Evening News, the party head told its officials to go round the country especially to the rural areas to educate the illiterates that, it is the government that will register them and not the party lest they lose the opportunity to vote. It was reported thus,

*Should anybody fail to register his or her name today then that body forfeits his or her own liberty. This is the hour calling all real and dutiful citizens of this country to their duty... We have endeavored in all respects to explain in the best way possible the qualifications a voter must have; we have also explained the way registration will have to be conducted... To our literate brothers and sisters, we say that a great and onerous duty hangs on them to educate our unfortunate illiterate brothers on this vital issue... It is this registration that will prove that we should have our ‘self-government now’ or wait in further squalor and discontent for the next hundred years* (Austin, 1970, p. 112).

Apart from the direct campaigning and publishing campaign activities in the newspaper, the CPP also organized local party rallies. They courted the sympathy of the electorate using their ‘cult of martyrdom’ as Austin (1970) called it. It was a strategy adopted given that most of the leadership of the party went to prison as a result of the ‘positive action’ and some of their publications in the newspapers. According Austin (1970), CPP rallies were a scene to behold as enthusiastic crowd cheered their leaders whiles they delivered a lecture. By way of having a personal touch with the people and also raising funds, the party sold cloths, party flags, handbags, photographs of Dr. Nkrumah the party head and belts designed with its white, red and green colors to the Gold Coasters (Austin, 1970). Sometimes in their
bid to woo the people, the campaign team in the local branches would hire a brass band and move from one village to the other to preach about CPP.

CPP’s main opponent the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) on the other hand upon realizing the crowds that CPP was pulling merged forces with the country’s intelligentsia and the chiefs who were then the main means through which the colonial government ruled (Austin, 1970). Although the chiefs and the intelligentsia had a lots to forgive each other for, they set aside the differences and saw the apparent benefit of collaborating to put down CPP’s increasing force which consequently culminated in the formation of the Joint Territorial Council (Austin, 1970). This council met on several occasions to discuss matters of interest to the state and published their report in the newspapers. They countered the propaganda of the CPP in their campaigns and sponsored some individuals to stand as candidate to counter their opponent from the CPP (Austin, 1970). The main mode of campaign adopted by the Joint Territorial Council was through publications in the newspapers and the chiefs whom the intelligentsia considered the most effective rallying point.

Other smaller parties proliferated albeit leading parties during the pre-election months were the UGCC and the CPP. These parties included the Ghana Freedom Party (GFP) which was formed by a European called Charles Deller on May 1950 (Austin, 1970). The GFP’s campaign communication strategy adopted was to publish the party’s ideals and manifesto in the newspapers (Austin, 1970). Other parties were the National Democratic Party (NDP), the Kumasi People’s Democratic Party, the Gold Coast Labor party but all these parties faded out as the election approached except the NDP. As a result, the competition for vote from the Gold Coasters was mainly between the CPP and the UGCC (Austin, 1970).
It is important to state that, radio broadcasting was established in 1935 by the then Governor Sir Arnold Hodson to relay the British Broadcasting Corporation’s program to about three hundred listeners in Accra. Sir Arnold hoped that, the radio will serve as a medium to counter anti-colonial sentiments in the private newspapers. The radio thus was solely controlled by the colonial government and was not available to any candidate for electoral campaign purposes except for use on getting the people to register for the elections. So basically campaigns in the Gold Coast especially in the years preceding independence thrived on face-to-face communication between party volunteers and or the candidates and the people as well as publications in the newspapers. This form of campaign prevailed in other parts of the world as suggested by Norris (2000) and it can be largely credited to what Key (1964) calls the Americanization of political campaigns not only by Europeans but also by Africans and people in the other regions of the world.

2.3 Mass Media and Electoral Campaigns in Ghana (1979-2000)

After her independence in 1957, Ghana experienced four different military take overs interspersed with elections, as a consequence, the continuous growth of the electoral process was stalled. As well, the use of the radio and the television as electoral communication channels for election campaign purposes did not really see much progress until the second government of the fourth republic took over. This was largely due to the attitude of the successive government after independence towards the press thus while the first president controlled the media and the contents its broadcasted, his successor Dr. K.A. Busua was a libertarian and that transcended to his attitude towards the press (Twumasi, 1981). In other words, in the midst of these political alternations, the media was also imperiled to revolutionary and liberal policies depending on who was in government (Twumasi, 1981). This meant that, electoral campaigns in Ghana’s second and third republics were still largely the traditional face-to-face method although new trends had cropped up due to the
advancement in the radio broadcasting technology and the introduction of television. As a result, campaign organization gradually began to shift from local campaign organization to national organization where campaign strategies and techniques were planned at party headquarters. Although party officials and volunteers still played a major role, a new sets of professionals were introduced to play a specialized role like communicators, advertisement expect, polling officers among other things (Oquaye, 1995). While the print media remained politically important, people developed taste for the television, a modern way of broadcasting. The television became a new source of political news especially the national evening news. For example, in the 1979 elections, all the presidential candidates appeared on the national television and were quizzed on several issues including the thrust of their manifestos and even their family life (Oquaye, 1995). The appearance of political candidate on the television presented a step in electoral communication so far as electoral campaigns in Ghana was concerned because blunders made on previous television appearance were corrected in subsequent appearances. Image, appearance and communication skills became very crucial in the modern era political campaigns in Ghana due to the introduction of television as a mode of electoral communication. As it happened in the USA, the campaign team of John F. Kennedy in the 1960 presidential debates incorporated ways that television will enhance his image whereas his opponent Richard Nixon who had recovered from a hospitalization refused makeup hence, he appeared on television looking pale and frail (Allen, 2010). Those who heard candidate Nixon on radio pronounced him the winner but over seventy million who watched him on the television saw a candidate who was sick (Allen, 2010). Recognizing the power of this medium, Nixon in subsequent debates performed better to enhance his image but his first appearance on the television made a significant impact on the viewers (Zelenak, 2013).
Similarly, in the 1979 elections in Ghana, image and communication skills played an important role in defining the various presidential candidate especially the leading candidates. For example, the presidential candidate for the Popular Front Party (PFP) confessed on the national television that, he had in 1971 described the Ewes of Ghana as inward looking people but he failed to apologize neither did he explain the situation that led to his pronouncement (Oquaye, 1980). His attitude on the television corroborated already held views about the PFP presidential candidate as being arrogant. More so, whereas the other presidential candidates in the 1979 contest when quizzed about their family life on television proudly exhibited their wives, the presidential candidate for the PFP could not do same and it became an issue especially among the women voters who considered a good president as one who had a blissful marriage (Oquaye, 1980). This issue may appear trivial when compared with other issues that were discussed when he appeared on television but a survey by Oquaye (1980) after the elections revealed that, the voters regarded it crucial and it informed the decisions they made on the Election Day.

Therefore, it can be inferred from the above that, the rise in professional communicators, presidential candidate image branding, advertising specialists and polling that characterized modern campaigns in Ghana can be linked to the role played by the television not leaving out the radio too. However, given the political terrain that persisted in the country, this gradual shift did not happen overnight not even immediately after the resurgence of democracy in 1992. Political parties steadily grafted these practices into their campaigns but a lots of attention was still paid to direct campaigning activities like the door-to-door campaigns, rallies, sale of party paraphernalia and the use of party propaganda vans. Also, some other reasons accounted for the delay in the gradual shift to the newer forms of campaigns in Ghana. The reasons included the fact that many Ghanaian homes especially those in the outskirts of the urban areas did not have access to television and also that literacy
levels of many Ghanaians was still not very impressive although news readership had increased (Acheampong, 2010; Hasty, 2005)

2.4 Post Mass Media Electoral Campaigns in Ghana (2004-2016)

Post mass media electoral campaigns comprise the culmination of the comprehensive use of the television, the radio and the internet for electoral communication and the development of social media. Television and radio outlet became fragmented with shift from national broadcasting to several private stations making it possible for political parties to reach the masses through tactical communications and mass media management during electoral campaigns and even beyond elections (Norris, 2000). This new era of electoral campaigns can be better understood in the context of continuous technological and socio-economic development which in turn have transformed electoral communication in such a way that political parties and journalist as well as other political actors have been forced to react to the ongoing revolution in order to remain relevant in the political scene.

By the mid-2000s, political parties in Ghana have gotten a full grasp of the media with little press censorship at least compared to the past years (Mahama, 2012). The coming into power of Ex-President Kuffour marked a great step to press freedom because shortly after he came to power, he repealed the seditious criminal libel law and welcomed both the state and private media to the Osu Castle which was the then seat of government (Hasty, 2005). With this step taken, suffice me to the say that, the media in Ghana gained some vibrancy particularly the private media. Election campaign advertisement on the television and radio also became common place. Television and radio adverts became more advanced with some stretching to about two minutes (E. C, 2005). For the first time presidential debate was organized by the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) and it was broadcasted live on both the state and some private televisions including radio outlets (E. C, 2005). Almost all the contesting parties presented a candidate except the N.P.P. Such an environment defined the
move towards innovative campaigns designed to win massive votes. Political campaigns became more centrally planned with focus on the image of the presidential and parliamentary candidate and less of party ideology.

According to the 2004 election report by the Electoral Commission of Ghana, most political parties in 2004 introduced new strategies to communicate to the masses (E. C, 2005). For example, some of the political parties mounted billboards designed with the images of their candidate with the party colors as background. As well, public address systems were mounted on party propaganda vans for use in making announcement in the various towns and villages. In both the towns and villages, these party vans went from street to street preaching the party’s message in the local dialect with some party volunteers sharing fliers of their candidate. Their first approach in capturing the attention of the public was by playing songs specially composed for their presidential candidate. The two leading parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) were mostly noted for that. Although the use of the party vans and the public address system was not new in Ghana so far as electoral communication was concerned, political parties modified their approach by incorporating newly available technology to improve their public address system’s sounds and the design on the party fliers to attract more people. Furthermore, political parties designed most Principal Street in the cities with their party flags and colors and organized town, constituency, regional and national rallies thronged with enthusiastic party supporters in their colorful party paraphernalia.

Again, the electoral commission of Ghana reported that, political parties adopted a new strategy by forming keep fits clubs in the various party branches at the constituency level (E, C, 2005). These keep fits clubs essentially became another tool of communicating to the people. Members of the keep fits club wore party t-shirts and adorned themselves with other party paraphernalia and walked through the various street in the towns amidst drumming
and dancing. Door-to-door campaigns and newspapers were not left out of the campaign process, it still featured greatly in the campaigns for that election (E. C, 2005).

By 2008, some leading members of the NPP and NDC have established their own private radio stations in the capital of Ghana, Accra with some few affiliates in the other regions (Hasty, 2005; Morrison, 2004). This eased the broadcasting waves as both the private and state owned media especially the private owned media houses hosted political party communicators from the various parties to discuss campaign issues (Morrison, 2004). By this period, some private stations have begun broadcasting in local languages and radio coverage has gone wide to many part of the country thus, the radio became one of the chief means of sourcing political information (Morrison, 2004). Newspapers had not fiddled out, their catchy headlines drew many people to news stores to read what was going on in the campaigns of the various political parties (Morrison, 2004).

Some television stations covered live campaign rallies and interviewed key party officials on their campaign issue (Morrison, 2004). Television advertisement had also seen massive improvement with parties introducing a new strategy like getting endorsement from celebrities in the entertainment, business and other sectors in the country (Agyepong, 2017). It should be noted that, these endorsements were a ploy to get the attention of the followers of the celebrities to their party (Agyepong, 2017). On some occasions, these celebrities mounted campaign platforms and shared their thought on the party’s campaign issues and encouraged their followers to make the right choice (Agyepong, 2017). Door-to-door campaigns were still carried out by the party communicators in the local branches and sometimes by candidates themselves, both presidential and parliamentary candidates especially during their campaign tours. The keep fits clubs first introduced in 2004 according to electoral commission report by 2008 had come to stay and had attracted many people some of whom where floating voters. Both young and old were members of these
party keep fits clubs and although it was a way of exercising, it also drew more supporters the political parties.

This trend of electoral campaigns persisted through to the 2012 and 2016 general elections but, these two elections saw a great change in the approach the political parties communicated to the electorate especially in the 2016 election. Thus far, it is evident that, the developments in campaign communication strategy is largely determined by the available technology which is appropriated by electoral campaign strategist to maximize votes. Hence, the growth in technology and communication information systems occasioned the gradual move from personal to impersonal political communication especially in the advanced countries. In the early 2000s for instance, presidential candidates in the USA capitalized on the introduction of the web 1.0 to launch campaign websites (Owen, 2014). The website housed basic information about the presidential candidate, the party’s ideology and the key issues in the manifesto (Owen, 2014). These websites were basic and lacked interactive features and were heavily texted with little graphic designs, nonetheless, they served a useful purpose as an electoral communication tool (Owen, 2014). By 2004, certain features have been incorporated into the building of the websites. These features allowed to a certain level some sort of interaction between users who frequented the website, supporters were also able to donate to candidates and volunteers also signed up on these websites to assist with the campaign (Owen, 2014). Internet blogs also bloomed and served as alternative news source (Owen, 2014).

The 2008 USA Presidential elections marked another significant turn to the evolution of political communication prompted by the introduction of web 2.0. (Baker, 2009; Berners-Lee, Fischetti, & Dertouzos, 2000; Owen, 2014). The web 2.0. is distinctively different from the web 1.0. in terms of its interactive nature and the multimedia platforms incorporated in it (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010; Owen, 2014; Wasswa, 2013). This new media also known
as the social media became the new approach to enhance electoral communication. Its nature of reachability made it easy for politicians to quickly broadcast messages to large number of people within some few seconds. More importantly, social media gives people the opportunity to develop their own political content, share it online, and exchange comment with other people on content created by them or others. Each social media tool is unique in the way it operates. For example, YouTube is basically a video-sharing site that affords it users both the opportunity to view and upload video content and comment as well. Conversely, social media sites like Facebook and Twitter are more textual although Twitter allows only one hundred and forty characters in a post at a time; their nature foster a direct social interaction. Nevertheless, these social media tools have some defining similarity in terms of its user centeredness, highlighting its distinctiveness from the older media counterparts. Although the above tells the story of the use of the internet and social media for electoral campaigns in the US, it as well unveils how social media has been grafted in electoral campaigns worldwide and at the same time explains its relevance and why political parties in Ghana integrated it into their 2016 electoral campaigns.

The above indicate that politicians from the Gold Coast era to the present democratic dispensation have depended on the media as a medium to get their messages across to the electorate. Over the years, politicians in the country have used different forms of media namely newspapers, radio, television, billboards and the internet to reach out to the electorate which as well demonstrate the changing forms of electoral campaign communication in Ghana. These development has made electoral communication more effective than before especially with the introduction of the internet and social media tools.
CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This research points to two areas of study that is, election campaigns as a mode of garnering people to maximize vote during elections and social media as an electoral communication tool and how it has been utilized for political mobilization and participation. Thus, this literature review first discusses the concept of election campaigns, followed by discussions on electoral communication and the techniques used in electoral communication by political actors to mobilize people to participate in politics. The next few sections will look at studies on political mobilization as a driving force for political participation given that electoral campaigns aims at mobilizing people to participate in politics.

3.2 Electoral Campaigns

Key (1964, p. 456) likens electoral campaigns ‘to the appeals of opposing counsel to a jury’. He considers campaigns as a means adopted by opposing political forces to educate and inform people about candidates and their issue positions. Beyond this simplistic definition Key assert that, electoral campaigns when looked at in its entirety is a systemic manipulation of the mass mind where political parties and candidates adopt techniques and strategies to profess their love for the people all with the aim of seeking their consent to govern them. Marletti and O'Neill (2001) defines the concept of electoral campaigns in the context of the mass media’s role as transmitters of political messages. They view electoral campaigns as a multifaceted process whereby politicians use the mass media to influence the choices of the voters. Marletti and O'Neill (2001) further defined electoral campaigns as the period of heightened use of propaganda and other forms of electoral communication tools.
The above definition by Marletti and O'Neill (2001) is shared by Brady, Johnston, and Sides (2006) in one of their two approaches adopted to define electoral campaigns. Brady et al. (2006) looked at the definition of electoral campaigns from two separate angles namely the institutional or quasi-institutional conditions and ‘campaigns as periods of uncommon intensity in the political order’ (Brady et al., 2006, pp. 1-2), which thus defines the longevity or otherwise of the campaign. The institutional conditions are those guidelines that govern elections in a country, they include but not limited to the following, knowing the election date, knowing the identity of the candidates and the rules regarding what can and cannot be done during campaigns. Brady et al (2006) believes that these conditions can be used to define electoral campaigns because in the case where the election date for example is constant like it is in Ghana, a speech by a presidential or a parliamentarian hopeful which has undertones of soliciting for support in an election way before the election date can be considered as a form of campaign. Simply put, institutional conditions serve as a constant reminder to campaigners to boost their campaign effort as they approach the Election Day. To this end, Brady et al. (2006) use of institutional conditions to define electoral campaigns captures the whole process of electoral campaigns although these conditions do not specify the exact period campaigns begin. Barring the institutional conditions, Brady et al. (2006) used the intensity approach to suggest that, electoral campaigns can be defined based on the heightened intensity of the campaign which can be measured by the effort put in by the campaigners in terms of their engagement with the media, involvement in political discussions and the media’s focus on campaign issues. This approach basically suggests that, campaigns can be defined within the context of how candidates, the media and voters engage each other and not necessarily by knowing the date of the election (Brady et al., 2006). For instance, an election campaign is ongoing when the media focuses most of its resources to cover and report the activities of candidates whiles at the same time political
parties through their activities also aim at attracting voters to become aware of what is going on in the political scene. Through its activities, the media orient the voters’ minds toward a particular end in their electoral choice (Brady et al., 2006). As well, effort put in by the political actors also defines electoral campaigns. These efforts range from increased advertisement to regional and national rallies to increased debates and rebuttals on issue positions (Brady et al., 2006). Given the above, the striking difference between the two approaches is that while the institutional conditions suggest that electoral campaigns build up steadily to a point where the activities consume the parties, the intensity approach is denoted by the increased interaction between political actors, the media and the voters.

The debate about the importance or otherwise of electoral campaigns and how they matter for voters in making their choice of a leader has been and is still being discussed in political science literature (Enns & Richman, 2013; Holler & Skott, 2005; Nadeau, Nevitte, Gidengil, & Blais, 2001). While the objective of this study is not particularly on this forgoing debate, it is important these debates are discussed in relation to this study because it will highlight the importance and the need to discuss the use of social media for electoral campaign purposes. According to Enns and Richman (2013), early scholars of electoral campaigns in their attempt to forecast winners of elections analyzed the importance of campaigns. In rating the importance of campaigns, issues raised as part of the campaign agenda were analyzed against the fundamental variables voters align to like ideology, race, gender, socio-economic status inter alia. Based on this, some scholars came up with the campaign enlightenment theory (Enns & Richman, 2013). According to this theory, campaigns educate voters about the fundamental variables and the candidates’ position concerning the variables in relation to issues on the ground thus grounding the electorate to make a choice. As well, campaigns trigger hidden predispositions and it reduces uncertainty about
candidates which in turn enables the electorate to choose a candidate that best relate with their fundamental variables as mentioned above (Enns & Richman, 2013).

However, scholars on the other side of the debate argue that, campaign information does not reach everyone in the first place (Enns & Richman, 2013). This leaves some of the electorate politically unaware of campaign issues thus leaving such electorate to decide on a leader based on certain fundamental variables they align to which correspond to a candidate (Nadeau et al., 2001). As cited in Enns and Richman (2013), scholars like Downs (1957), Popkin (1991), Shaffner and Streb (2002) consider loyalty to a party as a dominant fundamental variable which voters emphasize in making a choice and thus campaigning for months will serve no purpose for such voters. Similarly, scholars who base their argument on fundamental variables also considered past election results in the light of certain demographic figures and argued that, if the trend of voting by a particular ethnic group, gender or race is consistent over certain period of years then such voters do not need campaigns to decide on whom to vote for (Enns & Richman, 2013). But the fact that fundamentals such as partisanship is easy to identify with does not mean that voters always automatically connect with them because studies by Mensah (2011) on political brand management indicate that, voters process new information against already stored ones before they come to a decision on whom to vote for. Also, every voting period present its own dynamics in terms of issues on the ground like the economic state of the country which may force voters to consider other candidate options; this aside, campaigning for voter turnout in general is also a crucial part of the electoral process. Examining electoral campaigns on social media within the context of the above debates, social media as well is not accessible to everyone thus on one side, it enhances the debate on the importance of fundamental variables in campaigns. But also looking at it from the other hand, social media affords candidates several opportunities to enlighten voters because of its engaging
character. Given the above, the importance of electoral campaigns in general and the use of social media for campaigns in particular cannot be glossed over. Above all, the fact that political parties and candidates are investing in new trends of campaign activities shows the relevance of these new trends to the success of their party in elections thus research on social media and electoral campaigns is important as it unveil the nuances and other novel ways of using social media to campaign for votes.

3.2.1 Campaign Organization and Strategy

As stated by Bone (1965) political campaigns do not just happen, it involves careful thinking and planning of every speech, rally and all other campaign processes. Key (1964), shares the same thought with Bone (1965) as he notes that, the preparation for a campaign requires a well-structured and comprehensive disposition of plans, strategies and techniques in broad outlines than what often exists within the party headquarters. In giving a breakdown of the campaign process, he pointed out seven key areas campaigners must pay attention to. This include, ‘the preparation of a master design or overall strategy, selection of issues and the working out of detailed strategy, activation of existing organization and the creation of a new and subsidiary agencies, counteroffensives, campaign techniques, electoral communication and publicity and finance’ (Key, 1964, p. 342). Based on the objective of this study, much attention will be focused on electoral communication and publicity. However, given that electoral communication forms part of the campaign strategy, the next few paragraphs will focus on campaign strategy. Both authors Bone (1965) and Key (1964) define campaign strategy as the general framework that guides the actions of the party propagandists, the speech writers, the party funders, the principal communicators and the day to day endeavors of all the subordinate units of campaign organization during the campaign period. Bone (1965) defines the first step to determining a campaign strategy as the master strategy. This entails gaining an understanding of the electorate to whom appeals
may be directed. This is because there exist several sub groups within the voting public. There are those who are strong loyal partisans who will not trade their loyalty for anything (Bone, 1965). This group pride themselves as party loyalists and admit to voting straight away for their party most of the time. Another group is the nominal party supporters who admits alright to being affiliated to a particular party but their ties to the parties are breakable (Bone, 1965). They may deviate in a given election to vote for a different candidate other than their party’s candidate. The last group comprise those who are not affiliated to any party (Bone, 1965). They are usually tagged according to Bone (1965, p. 343) as ‘self-styled independent’ voters who ignore party labels and swing their votes in an effort to vote for the best candidate. Thus, having an idea of the various degrees of commitment and loyalty among the electorate informs the parties and candidates about the voters’ level of participation which in turn determines the strategy that will be adopted to reach potential supporters and ‘independent voters’. Key (1964) describes the above process as identifying the ‘group target’. In his view a campaign strategy designed with a knowledge of the group target firstly retains the support of party loyalist, secondly draw voters traditionally attached to the opposition parties and finally bring political unbelievers to the true faith (Key, 1964). Other strategies include deciding on whether to be on the defensive or offensive which is usually determined by the party’s status of either being an incumbent or in opposition, exploiting the anxieties of the people and being soft-handed on the campaign blueprint in order to take advantage of breaks and to meet unexpected moves by the opposition (Key, 1964). To this end, a grand campaign strategy is one that is judiciously formulated and executed with precision. This therefore requires that once the plan is drawn, all organizations within the campaign team must respond to the general direction in accordance with the plan. It is in this vein that, Key (1964) considers unity of command at the top level of the party organization a prime necessity in the management of a presidential campaign in
order to achieve sufficient execution of a coherent campaign strategy. In his view, since campaigns includes different elements of the party, lack of unity at the top and coherent communication may lead to the different elements pursuing contradictory propaganda lines, squandering campaign resources and deepening disorderliness leading ultimately to the loss of the election. It can be inferred from the above that, communication in election campaign is key as it forms the basis of first organizing and managing the campaign from within the political parties and candidates and two engaging with the electorate. In all, an adequate system of communication must exist so that, communication within and among the campaign team will be consistent with the overall campaign theme, the outflow of campaign messages from the candidate on a tour can be monitored to enable the party to be on the lookout for possible attacks from opponents and also to enhance the parties’ and candidates’ engagement with the electorates.

### 3.3 Election Communication

McNair (2011) Hakan (2016) and Mahama (2012) in their respective works implicitly defined election communication as a sub of political communication. Mahama (2012) agrees with McNair (2011) that both words in the phrase are too broad to be subjected to a definition thus indicating the difficulty in defining it with precision. Building on the definition of political communication by Denton and Woodward McNair (2011, p. 4) defined political communication as a ‘purposeful communication about politics’. His definition encompasses all forms of political discourse that ensues between various political actors, their target, the media as well as verbal and non-verbal signs of communication like hair styles, make up, logo design and written statement. Further to this definition, McNair (2011) draws his readers’ attention to the relationship between three basic fundamentals of a political process needed to conceive and birth a political action. These basic fundamentals are political organization, political parties and public organization. In explaining the role of
political parties as part of a political process, he defined election communication as the role played by political parties during campaigns to effectively communicate with the electorate to win their votes through the use of political advertisement and marketing. This holds true as Alexander (1969) defines effective communication in political campaigns and other political discourse as being able to utilize the media for one’s optimum benefit. Mahama (2012) restricted his definition of political communication to the verbal and written aspect of all forms of political dialogue including election communication.

Hakan (2016) on the other hand adopted the definition of political communication by Uslu (1996) based on which he developed his own definition stressing on election communication. According to Uslu (1996, p. 790) as cited in Hakan (2016) ‘political communication is an effort of communication, either one or two-way, made by a political view or political organ using the techniques of advertising, propaganda and public relations according to the requirements of the time and particular state of affairs on a continuous basis in the political system, in which it operates and carries out political activities, in order to build and maintain the trust, confidence and support of public opinion and accordingly to come to power’. In formulating his definition, Hakan (2016, p. 12) asserted thus, ‘political communication is a two-way process of communication between politicians and voters by which, on the one hand, politicians transmit their thoughts and wills to voters, and on the other hand voters communicate their opinions to politicians after interpreting in different ways, the messages that they received’.

Bone (1965) discusses two ways to achieve a successful electoral communication. The first is the communication technique and the second is the communication media, which is the means through which the campaign message reach the electorate. He defines communication techniques as tactics employed by political parties and candidates to stir up voters to register and vote on Election Day. Studies on campaign effects suggest that,
campaigns may or will produce either of the following effects; activation, reinforcement or conversion (Asah-Asante, 2015; Enns & Richman, 2013; Hillygus, 2010; Jacobson, 2015; Ursprung, 1994). For example, some persons will decline to vote or engage in any political activity unless their latent predispositions are aroused. Knowing this already, campaigners try to kick-start the political interest of this group many of whom would opt to stay at home on Election Day. With reference to the various groups that make up the voting public including the hard-core party supporters, the latent party voters and the independents and the studies on campaign effects as stated above, the question then is what techniques can be used to activate those groups that are politically inactive? Must the voter be made to consider the opposition as being incompetent? Must the voter be made to feel upset that the victory of the opposition will be harmful to his or her interest? Must the voter be made to feel that their interest is the top most concern of the campaigning team? These and many more questions explain the various techniques political parties adopt to communicate with the electorate. The techniques include propaganda, smear politics like the use of defamatory and invective language among others.

Stromback and Kiousis (2014) define election communication as the use of communication strategies by political parties and candidates to reach voters through mediated channels or through their own controlled communication systems. They argue that, communication in elections is at the heart of every election campaign be it in organizing the campaign leadership and volunteers at the grassroots, building alliances with corporate groups, mobilizing supporters or influencing the political information milieu. In light of the above Stromback and Kiousis (2014) opined that, political parties and candidate must integrate strategic means of communicating in their campaigns lest they slack behind their opponent since they are all competing within the same political space for the attention of the same electorate. They defined strategic communication as the committed use of ICTs to achieve
the objectives of an association (Stromback & Kiousis, 2014). By this definition Stromback and Kiousis (2014) implied that, political parties must strategize their communication to meet their goals, more specifically their primary goals which very often may differ from other political parties. For example, while some political parties are vote-seeking others are policy-seeking and others are office-seeking (Strom, 1990) thus an understanding of party peculiarities will serve as a guideline to both the primacy given to how political parties plan and run their campaigns and the campaign communication they will opt for.

The second step to achieving successful election communication is the importance attached to the media because it is the means through which most of the campaign messages will reach the electorate. The media basically refers to technologies that serve as intermediaries between a communicator and a message recipient (Alexander, 1969; Tettey, 1999). The mainstream media sometimes referred to as the traditional media comprise newspapers, magazines, and television. These are one-way communication systems that transmit messages to their audience using media techniques like framing, priming and agenda-setting (Alexander, 1969). Social media, blogs and websites make up the new media. The new media is computed-mediated thus its users are able to create and share their own content via virtual networks (Tettey, 1999). All these media technologies are important in electoral campaigns as such, political parties and their candidates must embrace them to reach the electorate nevertheless, political parties must be tactical with their choices since the voting public vary in demographical terms and media usage. Thus careful thought must go into the choice of media by political parties and candidates. Polls for example can be used by political parties to measure media competence and their relative usage by the electorate to serve as a guideline in choosing which media to disseminate their campaign messages (Alexander, 1969).
It can be inferred from the above that, election communication occurs in stages, the production stage, the technical stage and the media stage. The production stage entail plans on which form of communication to adopt be it advertisement, rallies, conferences among others. The technical stage involves the strategy or technique that will be used to communicate the adopted forms of communication. This include but not limited to propaganda and smear politics like the use of defamation and invectives. The final stage is the means of communication, which is the media options available to political parties and candidates. The next few paragraphs will delve into the various stages as outlined above.

3.3.1 Political Advertising

According to McNair (2011), political advertising refers to the buying and the use of advertising space in the media like radio, television, billboards and newspapers among others by political parties or candidates to transmit political messages to the voting masses at a commercial rate. Hakan (2016) as well defines political advertising as an aspect of communication in which political parties or candidates purchase and use commercial airtime of various media outlets to campaign to influence voters’ behavior and political beliefs. Adeyemi and Gbadeyan (2010) simply define political advertising as the use of the media by political parties or candidate to popularize their campaign messages to the electorate. It is worth noting that, all the above definitions stress the purchase and use of the media for political advertising purposes which thus presupposes that, political advertising rides on the capacity of the political parties or candidates to purchase space in the mass media especially those media outlets that have nationwide appeal. Put differently, the success of political advertising in persuading voters’ largely depends on media coverage particularly the space and time allotted to it and the purchasing power of the political parties or candidates. However in some countries, political advertising is regulated by law so that all political parties can have equitable access to the media (McNair, 2011). For example the election
laws in Britain bans political parties from buying broadcast airtime, in its place, the institution in charge of elections allocate free airtime to the political parties based on the number of candidates a party present for the elections but parties are free to advertise in other news media like the newspapers, cinemas and billboards (McNair, 2011). Also, given the importance of the media in advertising, political advertising should be designed to suit the different media outlet because, an advertisement designed to be aired on television may not necessarily work for the radio, or even the press and vice versa.

Ijeh (2010) as cited in Izuogu and Umoren (2017) defines political advertising as the use of advertising principles for political purposes especially during electioneering campaigns. He further adds that, political advertising encompasses several processes like planning on which theme to adopt for the advertisement, identifying the various target groups and designing the most suitable advertising message for each group and also choosing the most suitable advertising media to disseminate all the advertising messages, all aimed at attracting the attention of voters in elections (Izuogu & Umoren, 2017). The above definitions suggest that, political parties and candidates use political advertising to persuade the voting public in a way they desire as pertaining to agenda setting in the media in accordance with their political objectives by using commercial advertising techniques. Going by Ijeh’s definition as cited in Izuogu and Umoren (2017), political parties must take cognizance of the different types and ways of commercial advertising and apply them appropriately to suit their objectives.

Śechny (2016), highlight five types of commercial advertising political parties and candidates can take advantage of to get the attention of the electorate. They are, brand advertising, comparative advertising, defensive advertising, persuasive advertising and informative advertising. With brand advertising, the focus is on getting customers to be aware of products and remembering the products by using methods like jingles, colors and
slogans (Sawant, 2012). The idea is that, when customers become aware of products, there is the likelihood that they will buy it. Relating it to politics, parties and candidates make up for products in the commercial sense, thus they must be branded in such a way that will attract the electorates. Comparative advertising operates effectively in a market where there are at least only two brands because the objective is to compare brands without necessarily smearing the competitor although some brands use comparative advertising to discredit their competitors (Merritt, 1984). This type of advertising has been described by Izuogu and Umoren (2017) and Adeyemi and Gbadeyan (2010) as contrast political advertising where positive statement is made about the candidate and the opposite for the opponent. Defensive advertising uses defensive tactics to get customers to believe that their products are the best on the market (Šechny, 2016). In using this type of advertisement, political parties as rightly indicated by Bone (1965, p. 346) and Key (1964, p. 473) if they choose a defense strategy should emphasize their strong points and ignore their opponent completely. Persuasive advertising is intended to convince consumers to patronize a particular goods or services because that is exactly what they need (A, Asemah, & Edegoh, 2013). The goal of this type of advertisement is to persuade consumers especially when a products faces strict competition from other competitors. It is in this light that some scholars discuss positive and negative advertising because in the course of persuading voters to vote for them, political parties either use positive or negative strategies. (Adeyemi & Gbadeyan, 2010; Hakan, 2016; Izuogu & Umoren, 2017; Merritt, 1984; Ridout & Franz, 2011; Šechny, 2016).

Positive political advertising according to Šechny (2016) and Ridout & Franz (2011) focuses on messages about candidates’ lives, struggles, triumphs and campaign issues as well as supports offered to people both in cash and kind by the party and candidates rather than comparison with opponent. It aims at evoking positive feelings of hope and joy which is evident with a crescendo of inspirational music (Šechny, 2016). Hakan on his part describes
positive advertising as a ‘form of communication by which the actions and performance of
the political party or the candidate as well as their promises are presented to voters by setting
an optimistic theme for the future’ (Hakan, 2016, p. 15). By contrast, negative advertising
attacks and draws attention to the opponent’s weakness in terms of their personality and
policies to discredit them with the goal of creating a negative effect (Hakan, 2016). Political
advertising therefore becomes negative only if the goal of the advertisement is to vitiate the
rival to the advantage of the sponsor. The point of these negative ads is that, the electorates’
future depends on voting the sponsors to office (Ridout & Franz, 2011). Put differently,
Merritt (1984) avers that, the goal of negative advertising is to shove consumers from
competitive products thus when this is applied in politics, negative political advertising
draws electorates away from other opponents. However Merritt (1984) warned that,
negative political advertising works best in two-party political campaigns than in multi-
party campaigns because in a multi-party campaign, pushing electorate from one opponent
does not guarantee vote from those electorates. Informative advertising is aimed at
informing customers about the benefits of a product especially when they newly appear on
the market (Šechny, 2016). Martin in his paper on distinguishing the informational and the
persuasive effects of political advertising and their comparative impacts on voters’ choices
took insight from Ackerberg’s (2003), work on advertising in the market for single-serving
yogurt (Martin, 2014). He adopted this as one of the strategies in determining the importance
of information advertising between an incumbent and a main challenger. As cited in Martin
(2014), Ackerberg in his studies asserted that, informative advertising effects is minimal
when consumers have precise prior beliefs about a product. This implies that, a consumer
at a certain stage absorbs every detail about a product such that, additional information does
very little to influence his decision. This insight can as well be used in political advertising
especially in democracies where the competition is keenly contested by the incumbent and
the main opposition. For example voters weigh the information they have about an incumbent in terms of the benefits they have gotten since the incumbent assumed office against those ones a challenger put up in an advertisement about himself and what his administration seeks to do and form their expectations around that. So in a case where the voter has benefitted less from the incumbent in terms of job opportunities Martin (2014) suggests that, based on the informational advertisement about the two contenders in terms of what they intend to do about creating jobs, the voter may lean more towards the challenger than the incumbent because of his or her experience with the incumbent. In this sense, the voter has developed enough political knowledge about the incumbent’s ability to create job such that, new information about his abilities in an advertisement to do so does not convince him enough.

3.3.2 Propaganda

Bone (1965, p. 381) defines propaganda as a process of communication which seeks acceptance for an idea, cause or position without encouraging the respondent to analyze or to examine in support of it. He considers propaganda as an age old tool of communication which has been used by government, private interest groups and political organizations to achieve their objectives. In the case of political parties Bone (1965) elucidates that, they employ propaganda as a tool to engineer the consent of the electorate while at the same time they distort fact against their opponent to make them look incompetent. In doing this, campaigners often claim to be educating the electorate while accusing their opponent of using propaganda to defend themselves however the primary difference between education and propaganda lies in the method and techniques employed in communicating and not necessarily the objectives (Bone, 1965). Thus whereas education emphasize objectivity, reason and knowledge before arriving at a conclusion, propaganda uses incomplete facts and figures and out of context quotations to arrive at a preconceived conclusion. Lasswell
(1927) in his work on the theory of political propaganda also stressed the need to distinguish propaganda from education by highlighting the various forms and techniques of propaganda. He argued that, the ultimate objective of a propagandist is to manage collective attitudes through the manipulation of what he calls ‘significant symbols’ which comprise stylish use of the pen and voice as well as face and body gestures to strengthen the attitudes of his or her support base and to attract more followers (Lasswell, 1927). The ultimate goal of propaganda then is to succeed in persuasion thus it uses systematic methods to achieve this end. Kizina (2015) discusses these methods which she has categorized as different types of propaganda namely objectivity, tempo and openness.

Objective propaganda can be sub-divided into white, grey or black depending on the level of neutrality of the propagandist. White propaganda is largely devoid of prejudice and provides explanations without distorting facts (Kizina, 2015). For example, political or social advertisement designed to spell out the positive objectives and achievement of an organization based on fact can be placed under white propaganda. Hence, not all propagandist methods are negative. Grey propagandist deliberately blend facts with hearsay in their argument to give interpretations that favors their course (Kizina, 2015). For this reason, grey propagandist often avoids open dialogue and critical analysis. Black propaganda is founded on falsehood (Kizina, 2015). Its aims, objectives and significance are hidden such that, it misleads people to think that it is coming from a particular source when in actual fact it is coming from a different source (Kizina, 2015). The secrecy surrounding its source is basically to cause shame and damage to its purported source. Black propaganda is a tool that is often used by government institutions and top organizations for diplomatic reasons and also to persuade doubtful audience (Kizina, 2015). It regularly uses the services of ‘yellow’ journalist, false documents, jokes, slogans, and visual pictures (Kizina, 2015). What defines tempo propaganda is the "fastness" or "slowness "of
propaganda operations, depending on the type of media engaged whether long term or short
term to achieve a desired outcome. Fast propaganda aims at making a short-term impact on
public opinion, while the slow propaganda nurture opinion over a long time. Fast
propaganda uses the radio, newspapers, speeches, television, e-mail and the internet as its
communicating media since they practically are able to create immediate effect on the target
group (Kizina, 2015). Conversely, slow propaganda makes use of books, cultural
exhibitions, and educational exchanges as they that seek to influence ideas and attitudes
over time (Kizina, 2015). Lastly, open propaganda as the word suggest accommodates all
forms of propaganda be it black or white and it is usually used by advertising agencies that
provides services for political parties and candidates whiles hidden propaganda is
characterized by its emphasis on a particular issue to a target group. What makes it hidden
therefore is not the content per se but the consistency in stressing a particular statement
although that statement may be factual. Thus hidden propaganda is all about drumming in a
point by overly highlighting that point whether it is factual or not.

The above shows that, propaganda rides on a certain theory that plays on the psychology of
its audience. Though it is not always false, political propaganda often uses falsehood to
manipulate its audience by making them to build up faith in the propagandist whiles at the
same time abhorring the opponent of the propagandist. The media thus is the number tool a
propagandist employ to get to his or her audience. This includes but not limited to the
television, radio, books, posters, films, cartoons and social media. Given the importance of
the media to propaganda, it is safe to say that, political propagandist are always on the
lookout for new media technologies to advance their course. It is therefore not surprising
that, social media has gradually become a tool for propagating propaganda agenda.
3.3.3 Smear Politics

Goffman (1963) in his work on Stigma and the management of spoilt identity conceptualized political smearing as social stigmatization which result from separation. He defines separation as the identification of targeted individual or groups of persons as members of an out-group. Thus he posit that, when people view others as being different from them, it becomes very easy for them to tag those people outside their group negatively because they perceive there is little harm in doing so (Goffman, 1963). Similarly, allegiance to a political party encourages negative labeling towards opposing parties. This is widely seen during elections when political parties compete for the affection of the electorate. Parties capitalize on their salient differences be it ideologies, candidate personality and issues to attack each other in order to make their opposition appear undeserving to win the elections.

Izuogu and Umoren (2017), as well defined smear campaigns as a form of negative campaigning where one political party attacks the reputation of another party in order to derail the chances of the opposition in an election. They provided four levels at which smear campaigns occur namely, intra-party level, inter-party level, candidate-to-candidate level, candidate-party level. The intra-party level smear campaigns usually occurs when political parties conduct primary elections to select candidate who will represent the party in the general elections (Izuogu & Umoren, 2017). Candidate use smear tactics to discredit their opponent by spreading false rumor about them. The candidate-to-candidate level also fits into this level although they are candidate competing within the same political party. However, the candidate-to-candidate at the inter-party level is between flag bearers of different political parties contending in an elections. Here, the flag bearers attack each other usually on personality, family, economic class, loyalty, ancestry inter alia. The inter-party level is characterized by political parties attacking their opponent by using their past records.
and other social categorizations such as ethnicity and religion to make their opponent appear incompetent before the electorate (Izuogu & Umoren, 2017). They often resort to the use of slanderous and invective language to incite their supporters against their opponent (Bone, 1965).

3.4 Political Mobilization

According to Norris (2000), political participation is embedded in the concept of political mobilization. In his studies he noted there are four perspectives of political participation, the institutional perspective, the individual perspective, the cultural perspective and the organizational perspective. The institutional perspective emphasize the significance of voter registration rules, the level of political right and liberties, electoral laws among others as key determinants of political participation, the individual and cultural perspectives is delineated by the investment of individual resources like time, money, education combined with efficacy as predictors of political participation (Norris, 2000). The organizational perspective that explains political participation focuses on the role of mobilizing agencies like political parties in the case of elections, group networks like churches, voluntary association among others (Norris, 2000). Thus in electoral politics, political parties’ through their campaign activities mobilize electorate to participate in the elections. This buttresses Sorauf (1967) assertion that despite the fact that religious leaders, community organizations and political elites all play a role in encouraging citizen participation, ‘political parties arguably are the most active and important mobilizing agents’ (as cited in Wielhouwer, 1999, p. 177; Gershtenson, 2003, p. 293).

According to Gershtenson (2003) due to the costly nature of mobilization, political parties must be strategic in their effort in mobilizing to win the affection of voters. He suggest four strategic ways political parties must consider in order to mobilize effectively. First, political parties must study the participatory tendencies of individuals (Gershtenson, 2003). That is,
political parties must aim at individuals’ whose activities are more likely to respond to mobilization (Gershtenson, 2003). Thus, parties must be guided by certain predictors of participation like income, education, age, party identification and efficacy in order to boost their mobilization efforts in targeting individuals. Second, as cited in Gershtenson (2003) while parties’ aim at boosting participation through mobilization, they must not overly contact every individual they consider are more likely to participate in politics rather, parties should pay more attention to individuals who support their party and its candidates and as well parties should avoid overly focusing on supporters of their opponents at the expense of their support (Kramer 1970; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1992; Wielhouwer 2000). Third, parties must consider the social positioning of individuals (Gershtenson, 2003). That is, parties must pay attention to individuals who have greater social connections. For example Rosenstone and Hansen’s (1993) studies suggest that people who own houses and have stayed in a community for longer period usually have greater social connectedness and are more likely to be contacted by a political party because it is assumed that people with greater social connectedness will exert influence on others in the community as cited in (Grabarek, 2011). Lastly, parties must situate their prospect of winning within the right context, being mindful of their position as either an incumbent or an opposition (Gershtenson, 2003).

As cited in Gershtenson (2003) studies by (Cox and Munger 1989; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993) suggest that, a party in opposition is unlikely to allot a lots of resources to mobilization conversely, an incumbent may consider it less important to mobilize extensively (Gershtenson, 2003). They however warned that in competitive elections, parties whether in opposition or in power must put in greater effort to mobilize (Gershtenson, 2003). Dalton (1984) however holds a different view to Gershtenson’s first suggestion to political parties on the strategies to mobilize. He posits that voters begin to distance themselves from party cues as they gain more political skills and the cost of
information decreases. While he does not dispute the importance of parties targeting individuals with certain skills and characteristics, he suggests that cognitive mobilization is beginning to alter how voters make their choices in relation to political participation and how those choices affects overall participation in politics.

He defined cognitive mobilization as those skills and resources possessed by citizens that enables them to engage in politics without relying on partisan cues (Dalton, 1984). He argues that, the spread of education and the explosion of political information in the media resulting in the low cost of information has opened up voters to understand the ins and outs of politics and hence making their own political decisions without resorting to partisan cues (Dalton, 1984). Thus although both forms of mobilization have effects on participation, in terms of electoral politics (Dalton, 1984) one key effects of cognitive mobilization is volatility in voter turnout and vote cast because cognitive mobilization enhances ones political competence to make a rational choice on Election Day (Dalton, 1984). Given the features and the pool of political information on social media, one cannot deny its importance to political mobilization both at the cognitive and party level.

### 3.5 Political Participation

According to Carpentier (2011) the notion of participation has been fluidly used in post-modern democracies resulting in contestation over its definition. Montero, Teorell, and Torcal (2007) posit that democracy is improbable when it is devoid of the citizens’ ability to participate freely in government processes. Giglio (2015) is of the notion that, due to the openness of word political participation to several interpretations its meaning should be subjected to a model of democracy depending on the topic under discussion. In his book on the models of democracy Held (2006), identified two forms of democracy, liberal or representative and direct or participatory as cited in (Giglio, 2015). The model pertaining to representative democracy refers to a system of rule where the participatory role of the citizen
is reduced to the delegation of power through voting where the citizens are represented by the elected officials within the framework of the rule of law (Carpentier, 2011). On the contrary, the model in the latter category denotes a system where citizens play a crucial role in public affairs and their participation is not limited to simply voting representatives (Carpentier, 2011). Therefore the participation of citizens in every public activity can be said to have at least some political potential value (Carpentier, 2011) because it is through their participation in activities be it at the macro or micro level that citizens develop the democratic skills necessary to play an active role in society (Kenski and Stroud, 2006).

According to Verba and Nie (1972, p.2) ‘political participation refers to those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel’ as cited in (Ekman & Amna, 2012, p. 286). To identify the various forms of political participation, they grouped political participation into four main themes that is voting, campaign activity, cooperative activity and citizen-initiated contacts. Kenski and Stroud (2006) also define political participation as any political activity an individual undertakes like volunteering as a campaigner for a political group or donating among others. Ekman & Amna, 2012 and Scaff, 1975 stretches the above definitions by including other forms of political activities like demonstrations, strikes, boycotts and other forms of protest behavior. Scaff (1975) expanded earlier definitions of political participation by dividing the concept into two, ‘participation as interaction and participation as an instrumental action’ (Scaff, 1975, pp. 454-455). He explicates participation as interaction as how individuals in a community interact with each other to achieve a common goal of interest to their community (Scaff, 1975). This kind of participation is a form of political communication that focuses on community interest as espoused by citizens or members of a group in a community through speech, political argument and persuasion (Scaff, 1975). Participation as an instrumental action on the other hand is related to the idea of how individuals use their
influence and power to advance their interest with the intention of influencing the distribution of power (Scaff, 1975).

Unlike participation as interaction which is more related to the community interest, participation as instrumental action borders on influence and power than to justice and community. It emphasize defending one’s right and interests within a competitive framework (Scaff, 1975). This particular notion of participation implies that, citizens or members of a community work to ensure that their interests is not disregarded by the elites in political positions. They often exercise this power through voting which offers them the opportunity to decide who power goes to through the selection of a party or a candidate based on their own interest (Scaff, 1975). It as well provide the basis of legitimacy within which political elites make their decisions on issues concerning the community or country (Scaff, 1975). This form of participation is therefore very important to this study because voting during elections is an important aspect of political participation because the decision to vote is precipitated by several actions like sourcing for news and discussing issues on politics (Ekman & Amna, 2012; Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Scaff, 1975; Valenzuela, Jung, & Zu'niga, 2012).

Building on Brady (1999) and Verba and Nie (1972), Montero et al. (2007, p. 341) developed their typology of political participation namely; ‘voting, consumer participation, party activity, protest activity and contacting’. In their typology, they termed voting as a form of exit-based mechanism of political influence where voters can decide not to vote or choose to vote for another party instead of the party they are affiliated to. They defined party activity as first being a member and contributing actively to the growth of the party as well as using the appropriate party channels to address concerns. Consumer participation includes politically motivated boycott of certain goods, deliberately choosing certain goods to express support, donating money for political purposes, sending anonymous and vague
political messages and others. Basically, consumer participation borders on the citizen’s role as a critical consumer to effect a change or influence public opinion. The fourth dimension which is protest activity, involves partaking in protest activities demonstrations and strikes. Citizen initiated contacting like targeting specific democratic institutions or organizations like the political parties constitute the fifth dimension.

Ekman and Amna (2012) also used a four dimension typology to define political participation. In their typology they suggest that all forms of political participation falls under either parliamentary (formal political participation), extra parliamentary activity, civic engagement or social involvement. They defined civic engagement and social involvement as activities citizens engage in that does not directly influence politicians but has the potential to impact positively on future political activities. Examples of activities that falls under civil engagement include volunteering to assist people in one’s society, adhering to social and environmental rules in one’s society and any other activity that one takes part in due to his or her interest in politics. Social involvement includes personal interest in societal and political issues like following politics and discussing politics. Hence the focus is on the intention and getting involved even if the participation does not produce direct political action but may have future political consequences. Within the framework of their typology, parliamentary activity are those forms of political behavior directed towards formal political institutions. This include, voting in an election in support of a candidate or a party or otherwise just to split vote in order that some people do not gain too much influence, abstaining from voting or casting a blank vote as a sign of protest against the political order, writing to civil servants or politicians to influence a political agenda, contesting in an election, being a member of a political party, trade union, an advocacy group among others (Ekman & Amna, 2012).
Turning to the extra parliamentary forms of political activity, Ekman and Amna (2012) suggest that, citizens may sometimes use means other than the formal ones to address their problems hence their term extra parliamentary activity. They alluded that, some scholars refer to what they call extra parliamentary activity as protest activity nonetheless their choice of the term extra parliamentary activity is aimed at making the point that, not all forms of protest activities are illegal. The legal forms of extra parliamentary activities include participating in protest actions like demonstrations, strike to address the concerns of a group like women’s right, animal protection and other networked groups (Ekman & Amna, 2012). At the individual level, it may include signing or collecting petitions, boycotting certain kinds of product among others (Ekman & Amna, 2012). On the other hand, participating in illegal demonstrations and violent riots constitute illegal extra parliamentary activity (Ekman & Amna, 2012).

In sum Ekman and Amna’s typology in some ways resemble the typology proffered by Montero and his colleagues on the various modes of political participation. For example the act of voting as explained by Ekman and Amna clearly corresponds with that proffered by Montero and his colleagues and to some extent Scaff’s second concept of participation as an instrumental action. So basically what Montero et al. (2007) denote as voting, contacting and party activity all falls under Ekman and Amna’s parliamentary activity while consumer participation and protest activity are captured in Ekman and Amna’s extra-parliamentary activity. Also the typology by Montero et al. (2007) explicate the various forms of political participation in a more narrowed sense. Again what Ekman and Amna’s conceptualized as civic engagement is referred to as interactional participation by Scaff (1975). So clearly the above shows the nuanced nature of the concept political participation and it related concept like civic participation and how scholars have proffered different interpretations to them.
As cited in Kenski and Stroud (2006) studies suggests that political efficacy, knowledge, and participation are interconnected concepts (McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999). For example, political participation is closely associated with political knowledge and efficacy because participation is precipitated by knowledge which enforces efficacy. However, this is countered by Brady, Verba, and Schlozman (1995) in their work on how resources like time, money and civic skills leads to political participation. They assert that, using a resource-based approach as a basis of studying political participation has both methodological and theoretic advantages because resources are measurable as compared to the ability to measure political efficacy and knowledge. According to Brady et al. (1995), time and money are the two main resources that enhances participation. For instance, one can volunteer his or her time to join a campaign trail or attend a meeting, in the same way one can donate his or her money to political campaigns, candidates, parties or organizations. In the area of civic skills, the authors posit that citizens who can speak or write well or who are comfortable at organizing and taking part in meetings are likely to be more effective when they get involved in politics (Brady et al., 1995). Based on the explanation above, the authors argue that, a resource model for studying political participation yields a more powerful explanation of why people participate in politics. These scholarly arguments on political participation validate the need to investigate the relationship between social media and political participation to unravel its effects on social media users because social media users who use it for political purposes as well invest time, money and civic skills to gain political knowledge which in turn boost efficacy leading to participation in offline activities.

3.6 Theoretical Framework

3.6.1 Introduction

This study adopted the Mobilization theory to explain the use of social media powered by the internet for political mobilization by political parties in Ghana in the 2016 elections.
Civic participation in politics is deemed to be an essential element of contemporary democracy (Karp & Banducci, 2007). It is argued that, citizens in democratic political systems must be given the enabling opportunities and necessary incentives to communicate their predilections towards political decision making in their countries (Karp & Banducci, 2007).

Of equal importance to citizen participation is the mobilization aspect where citizens are mobilized and recruited in order to participate in politics. Thus this thesis will use the mobilization theory and place it within the wider context of social media to explain how its in-built characteristics appealed to political parties in Ghana to utilize it for mobilization during the 2016 electioneering period.

3.6.2 Mobilization Theory

First it is important to understand the concept of political mobilization within the various forms as it exist in order to properly understand it within the context of mobilization discussed in this paper. According to Kriesi (2015), political mobilization exist in two main forms. One that is organized by members of the political elites (top-down) which he denotes as the populist strategy and the other by grass-roots organization (bottom-top) conventionally called social movement. Populism as a political strategy is where political elites competes for power and seek to gain authority within a sovereign state through the mobilization of the masses to win their support (Kriesi, 2015). Whereas Lopes (2014) defines social movement as the concerted effort by ordinary citizens to put pressure on political representatives through the organization of other people aimed at transforming the social or political systems in which they occur. This may include but not limited to signing petitions, volunteering to a civil society group and writing letters to political representatives (Lopes, 2014). But for the purpose of this thesis, political mobilization is used within the
context political parties (political elites) mobilizing voters and potential voters to support their party policies and vote for them.

According to Niven (2004), the core of the political mobilization theory is that, increased access to political information through mobilizing agencies upsurge political participation both at the cognitive and behavioral levels. This in other words means that, access to information by the masses through mobilizing agencies increases awareness thus increasing discussions and analysis of political issues and policies which in turn boost efficacy and hence participation. It is also necessary to point out that, mobilization is not only limited to the people and their grievances alone but also the overall resources required for the success of the mobilizing agency which in this study is the political party. This include several factors like time, money and other resources available to the party which explains why many political parties solicit for funds and volunteers in their daily operations (Niven, 2004).

Lopes (2014) refers to these factors as the mobilizing structure. This is better explained in the resource mobilization theory which argues that, the formation and success of political mobilization depends on certain resources like time, money, organizational skills as well as political or social opportunities (Lopes, 2014). This raises the all-important question about how successful a political party can be in the absence of these resources to mobilize supporters. In the view of Carty and Eagles (2004), money is the most valuable resource in the present era of capital-intensive politics suggesting that very little or nothing can be achieved in contemporary politics without money. In contemporary politics, political parties have professional groups like communications expect, campaign strategists, policy developers, researchers among others who work together to manage the affairs of the party. These professionals require money to undertake their duties especially during electioneering periods for example, the researchers will need money to conduct the necessary research in order to feed the policy developers with the right information who in turn provide the needed
content for the communication expects to draw up a communication strategy for the party communicators as well as the content for party’s advertisements. Thus, together especially during electioneering periods, the combined efforts of these persons is what the party depends on to inform voters and mobilize them to rally behind them on election day. Hence, one inherent weakness of this theory as applied in electoral politics is the fact that in the absence of resources, political party mobilization is practically unattainable especially in competitive elections. The implication of this is that, a political party whose ideals and policies are consistent with the needs of the masses may not get the chance to come to power if its lacks resources to mobilize. The otherwise is true and the reality in many countries especially countries that are in their early stage of democratizing. The consequence is what has been tagged as the ‘winner takes all’ by political scientist since party leaders after winning elections seize the opportunity to pay back their sponsors by awarding them with government’s contract and other juicy offers. It is in this light that countries that are well advanced in the practice of democracy have instituted rules that guide party organization especially its finances in order to set a fair play ground for all political parties to compete. Although such policies do not completely suffice for the needed resources a political party may need to mobilize, it at least cushions them to not back out of the electoral race.

Of equal importance to political mobilization according to Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) as cited in Lopes (2014) is the media which serves as the main medium for the mobilization, message validation and scope enlargement. The media is used to persuade and court the sympathy of individuals by employing media techniques and strategies as discussed above. Individuals in turn mobilize people within the core of their network which then spreads to other weakly linked individuals and thus spreading the scope of the network into a large movement (Granovetter, 1983). This implies that social networks are important to the success of political mobilization.
Seen this way then, social media tools powered by the internet are important tools for political mobilization because its in-built properties and network functionalities has transformed the patterns of mobilization from an indirect one to a more direct one making it efficient in disseminating information globally. More precisely, social media tools have in-built speed and interactive features that diffuse information to millions of people with just a click, something that was woefully lacking in old mobilizing structures. Facebook and Twitter for example can be used to share posters, serve as reminders for events, record and report events in real time and as well, its interactive features enable its users to engage each other in real time discussions. Its live feeds and videos facilitate what Housholder and LaMarre (2014) call ‘attitude homophily’. They conceptualize this as the extent to which two individuals think and behave in similar ways (Housholder & LaMarre, 2014, p. 5). Using the hashtag iregistered discussed above in the literature as an example, people who watched the video or pictures of others who have registered for their voter’s id card or in a queue to be registered online were perceived to have developed some sort of attraction and likeness for those in the picture or videos probably because they may have already registered or have harbored the thought of registering. The impact of this on individuals and groups according to Davis (1999) as cited in Housholder and LaMarre (2014) is that, it reinforce preexisting opinions which one can act on to attract others outside one’s group. Similarly, Sketelenburg & Klandermas (2007) as cited in Lopes (2014, p. 7) posit that, when people identify with a group, they tend to participate in that group’s action. Thus when a passive party follower sees pictures and videos of other party members at a rally or on a campaign train there is the tendency that the individual may join the next campaign train or sign up as a volunteer for the party.

In summary, political parties have leveraged social media as a mobilizing structure to campaign since it allows unlimited amount of information sharing, pictures and videos and
engagement online. Thus through social media’s network and other affordances discussed above, people become politically informed which can spur participation.
CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS

4.1 Introduction

This section of the study present and details scholarly discussions on the internet and social media as a communication tool used by politicians to advance their political agenda.

4.2 Structure and Benefits of the Internet

The advancement in technology especially media technology and other interrelated technologies like the Internet has resulted in a significant change in the means by which people connect and share information (Baker, 2009). According to Azab (2012), the growing numbers of the virtual community facilitated by the internet (according to the internet world stats 2017 report, 51% of the world population use the internet) makes it possible to perform physical and social activities like watching videos, listening to music, shopping, searching for information and interacting with friends on the internet.

According to Tolbert and Mcneal (2003) among several other effects propelled by the changes in information technology is its role in influencing electoral behavior. They argue that the structure of the internet makes it possible to enhance democracy in that, it merges the different components of audiovisuals and the traditional media like newspaper and television with the interactivity and speed of telephone and mail (Tolbert and Mcneal, 2003). In other words, the structure of the internet eases communication and makes it flexible for individuals to access and upload information irrespective of their geographical location and as well interact with other users. In addition to the above Sparks (2001) assert that, the structural benefits of the internet also include anonymity of its users (as cited in Wasswa, 2012). He posits that, the anonymous aspect of the structure of the internet is particularly important because it eliminate social demographics such as sex, age and race which poses a
barrier to the inclusion of certain category of individuals in political dialogue. The anonymous component of the internet has sparked several debate because of its positive value as already mentioned and its negative consequences like encouraging criminal and anti-social behavior (Teich, Frankel, Kling, & Lee, 1999). Thus whiles scholars recognize the centrality of the issue no definite solution has been settled on given the fact that technology is not static but dynamic (Teich et al., 1999).

However electoral communication scholars are divided on the role of the internet to boost voter turnout (Carlisle & Patton, 2013). Some argue that while there is evidence to show that the internet has the potential to facilitate political participation, participation online is demonstrated by those who are already engaged in politics offline (Baker, 2009; Carlisle & Patton, 2013). Bruce Bimber in his theory of accelerated pluralism suggested that, ‘the Net is accelerating the process of issue group formation and action, leaving the structure of political power in the U.S. altered, but not revolutionized or qualitatively transformed into a new epoch or era of democracy’ (Baker, 2009, p. 72). He argues that, people who participate in politics online are already doing same offline thus such persons will participate in politics anyway with or without the internet (Baker, 2009). Benjamin Barber as well argues that, ‘for without a will towards a more participatory and robust civic system, why should technologically enhanced politics not produce the same incivility and cynicism that characterize politics on the older technologies, radio and television, for example?’ (Baker, 2009, p. 72) In sum, the argument put forward by both scholars seem to suggest that, people get involved in politics online because they are already involved and not because of the new technology. Yet other scholars argue that, the lower cost of accessing political information on the internet will enable people who desired to participate in politics but did not have the means to become politically involved to get involved (Baker, 2009; Carlisle & Patton, 2013). They suggest that due to the increasing surge in the number of internet users and the
advancement in technology, the internet has the potential to propel people who are politically disengaged into political life (Carlisle & Patton, 2013).

4.2.1 Internet Access and the Digital Divide

According to Min (2010), the hope that communication technologies will improve the development of all persons is yet to be realized and in its stead, it has widened the gap of inequalities and has resulted in the creation of the digital divide. As noted by Min (2010) and Sylvester and McGlynn (2010), studies conducted by Mossberger, Tolbert & Gilbert, 2006 and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA, 1995, 1999, 2000) revealed that the inaccessibility of information and communication technologies (ICTs) spans across various demographic variables like socioeconomic status, gender, age, race, and geography lines. As a consequence, this division has further marginalized people who are already sidelined in the society raising thus an important social question. It is in this light that critics of the internet’s role in politics argue that, if the internet which is touted as having the potential to enhance democracy is largely used by only some section of the populace, then it undermines the democratic potential of the internet (Min, 2010). According to Sylvester and McGlynn (2010), fairly recent studies in the US have shown that some segments of the population specifically those in the rural areas far from the major cities have extremely lower degrees of internet access. Therefore, one will not be far from right to surmise that, if the US which has higher internet connectivity according to socialbakers.com compared to some other part of the world still have some areas lacking internet connectivity then Africa whose access over the years has increased but still lingering behind will have wide scale of internet divide among it populace.

In spite of these misgivings about the digital divide, some political analysts down play its seriousness or refute its existence (Min, 2010; Sylvester & McGlynn, 2010). They argue that, the unequal access and divide associated with the internet as it was with the other older
technologies will sooner or later wane down (Min, 2010). Compaine (2001) and Thierer (2000) in their analysis of the trajectory of the growth of older technologies like radio, telephone among others assert that the divide is not peculiar to the internet since these past technological innovations followed a similar developmental path (as cited in Min, 2010). They suggest that, as technology advances, the cost of production will decrease hence paving the way for its rapid diffusion into many part of the society, thus eliminating the divide (Min, 2010). This is supported by statistics from the internet world stats.com which shows the increasing penetration of mobile phones with internet access into Africa over the past few years and its resultants increase in internet usage as illustrated in figure one above.

However Van Dijk, (1999) and Van Dijk & Hacker (2003), provide a counter argument insisting that the divide will persist because unlike the older technologies, the internet is sophisticated, the computers and the software on which the internet operate needs constant upgrade and it as well requires individual skills to use. Thus, given the demographics of those who suffer from the divide DiMaggio and Hargittai (2001) argues that focusing the debate of the internet access and divide on only access leaves out other aspects of the debate because beyond access, there are five other phases which the internet divide exist. They include the technical means by which internet users will get access that is the hardware, software and the quality of connectivity, the sovereignty of use refers to where internet users are located and their ability to get quality access, the patterns of internet utility, social support networks available to assist internet users and the skills one must possess to be able to use the internet effectively. Therefore, if these five dimensions are put in their right perspectives, the internet divide may be said to exist across all boards although as stated early on it may affects some people more than others depending on one’s status.
4.3 Social Media Defined

Dewing (2012, p. 1) defines the term ‘social media as the wide range of internet-based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user created content or join online communities’. As cited in Bastion, Stilz, and Herlitz (2012, p. 2), ‘social media is a software that enables the publication of a user-generated content online and the direct, unfiltered communication between individuals and organizations’ (Winter, Mosena, & Roberts, 2011). Kaplan and Haenlein explained ‘Social Media as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content’ (Effing, Hillegersberg, & Huibers, 2011, p. 28). According to Bohler-Muller and Merwe (2011) the ‘sociability’ of these tools are seen in the ways users are able to create their own content, share and interact with each other. There are different internet-based applications that cluster to form social media, they include blogs, wikis, social book marking, social networking sites and media sharing sites (Bastion et al., 2012; Dewing, 2012). Boyd and Ellison (2007, p. 2) defined social networking sites 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’. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007) social networking sites in the US began as places where people can build active networks to find friends and friends of friends or to reconnect with friends. These sites later became places where users especially established friends constantly interacted with each other (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Consequently, other features like photo and video sharing capabilities, built-in blogging and instant messaging technologies were built into these sites to enhance them with affordances like visibility, reachability and search ability (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). So in their view, if the labels are taken literally, social networking sites is what has developed to become social
media although they allude to the fact that there are some basic structural and visibility differences. Thus while Dewing (2012) and Bastion et al. (2012) denotes social networking sites as a type of social media, Boyd and Ellison (2007) refer to social networking sites as social media and not a type of social media.

Cohn (2015) on the other hand argues that although both social media and social networking sites operate under the umbrella of Web 2.0, there are some basic differences between the two. He further explained that social media is a medium of communication where people transmit information to other people whereas social networking sites’ is a social structure where people network and build relationships. He admits however that, sometimes how users utilize social media and social networking sites especially for marketing purposes overshadows the similarity between the two sites. Using Facebook, a social networking site as an example, users can sign up and connect with friends in an interactive way. It can as well be used as a social media by companies to communicate and market their brands. In this way, social media and social networking sites can be different but it uses can overlap.

According to Effing et al. (2011) the term Web 2.0 was first used in 2004 to describe the innovative ways software developers and internet users were utilizing the World Wide Web. Under Web 2.0, both users and software developers published their applications and content and as well they were able to constantly modify their uploads in a more collaborative manner. This socially innovative use of the World Wide Web was anticipated by Tim Berners-Lee, the founder of the World Wide Web as he is quoted to have said the that he designed the web to produce a social effect and not as a technical toy (Effing et al., 2011). Some scholars have even added instant messaging tools like WhatsApp to social media due to its social interactivity component thus further broadening the definition of social media (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010). Clearly from the above, the fundamental commonality of
these internet based application tools which is the Web 2.0, opens up the definition of these tools to several interpretations by scholars.

4.4 Social Media and Politics

The extensive use of social media for political campaigns in recent times has brought the attention of scholars to the role of social media in politics (Baker, 2009; Bastion et al., 2012; Effing et al., 2011; Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010). Although political candidate especially those in the US in the past used the internet to raise donations for their campaigns, social media began to feature in elections after Facebook set up profiles for US congressional and gubernatorial candidates (Williams & Gulati, 2007). Soon after, several other candidates also signed up on Facebook and Myspace upon realizing that in order to recruit voters on social media they needed to establish their presence there and engage with them at the personal level (Baker, 2009). For example, Mitt Romney signed up on Facebook after he announced his candidature for the Republican nomination for the 2008 presidential election in the US. However, the US election in 2008 brought a significant turn in the use of social media in politics (Baker, 2009; Wasswa, 2013). This was seen particularly from the campaign team of Barack Obama as they recognized the importance of campaigning on social media (Effing et al., 2011; Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010). Jen Psaki, the spokeswoman for the Obama 2008 campaign team asserted that, ‘Myspace is definitely one of the tools we'll be using to engage Internet users and we're well aware that young people are the ones who are engaging the campaign through the internet, more so than other age brackets’ (Baker, 2009, p. 73). As cited in Wasswa (2013), Obama used social media sites to target and mobilize millions of young people as volunteers to serve in several capacities and as well to receive donations (Baker, 2009). As noted by Baker (2009, p. 74) ‘a Facebook group known as "Students for Obama" was created soon after Obama announced his candidature and within less than a year, it had 62,000 members and chapters at eighty different colleges’. 

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As part of the campaigns, ‘one of such groups at George Mason University held a rally that drew 3,000 students, and another one at Iowa State was attended by more than 5,000 students’ (Baker, 2009, p. 74). This novel way of utilizing Facebook for political purposes further drew more political candidates to campaign on social media as one of their several campaign strategies. For example, supporters and other users are not only able to seek information on social media but also they are able interact with political candidate by commenting on post on the timeline of these candidates and sharing pictures and videos (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010). Facebook for instance makes it possible for its users to form groups and invite other users to join the group if they share the same interest with the purpose for which the group was formed. Members of a group can post videos and pictures and engage in discussions.

According to Bastion et al. (2012) politics on social media took a new turn after the Arab Spring as citizens realized the great power in using social media for their benefits like mobilizing for protest, signing petitions and engaging in online discussions on governance issues. Also beyond political campaigns and civil actions on social media, Bastion et al. (2012) aver that many governments are beginning to engage their citizens directly on social media as they are recognizing the democratizing role of these social media platforms. For example, as a way of attending to the needs of its citizens the Kenyan government came out in August 2013 with it plans to set up an online monitoring system that will observe public conversations on matters arising and opinions on social media in order to formulate citizen needs-based policies (Bastion et al., 2012). The Kenyan Cabinet Secretary Ann Waiguru is quoted to have said that ‘the new platform would help the government respond to the needs and concerns raised by Kenyans on social networks’ (Bastion et al., 2012, p. 1). Seen this way, social media can be used by governments to gather data on how citizens are reacting to a policy decision. It can also be used by government to seek the views of its citizens.
thereby deepening interaction between governments and citizens as well as encouraging other forms of citizen participation beyond what is seen during electioneering periods.

4.4.1 Social Media and Politics in Africa

According to the internetlivestats.com end of 2017 second quarter report, there are 388,376,491 estimated internet users in Africa representing 10% out of 3,497,191,128 world’s population of internet users. Whereas nearly 75% of people in Africa do not have internet access, only 21% of Europeans are not connected to the internet as at the end of 2017 ((Bastion et al., 2012)). While Africa still remains the continent with the lowest internet access, the growth rate between 2000 -2016 has been remarkable and it is regarded as the highest in the world represented as 8,503.1% compared to Asia’s 1,595.5%. The surge in the penetration rate is largely due to the rise in the diffusion of mobile phones and mobile internet usage on the African continent (Afadhali, 2017). According to Global System for Mobile Communication Association (GSMA) 2017 report, about 270 million people in Sub Saharan Africa access the internet through their mobile devices. This in consequence increases the possibility of bringing about change as people can practically exercise their democratic power and engage in politics by simply pressing a button on their phone (Bohler-Muller & Merwe, 2011b).

One main reason for this growth is because communication via mobile phone other than fixed landlines allows for easy connection especially for people living in distant areas with little or no telephone infrastructure (Bohler-Muller & Merwe, 2011b). According to Essoungou as cited in (Bohler-Muller & Merwe, 2011b), mobile internet is driving the interest of many Africans to sign up on social media. Currently, the most visited social media sites by internet users in Africa is Facebook with 160,207,000 subscriptions (IWS, 2017). Again statistics from the Internet World Stats indicate that, Egypt has high internet usage in Africa with 37,333,841 as of June 2017 and 33,000,000 Facebook subscriptions.
These stats perhaps point to the key role Facebook played in the 2011 uprising in Egypt (Bastion et al., 2012). What began in Egypt as a protest against the Hosni Mubarak regime in 2011 following the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia also escalated to Libya (Bastion et al., 2012; Bohler-Muller & Merwe, 2011). What was notable about these protest was the role of social media particularly Facebook and Twitter in mobilizing for support both online and offline suggesting the potential of social media in instigating political change in Africa. Using Facebook as an example, a page was devoted to the memory of Said who in his quest to expose corruption in Mubarak administration was beaten to death by the police in Alexandria (Bohler-Muller & Merwe, 2011). Aside the Facebook page, the organizers also designed online posters to advertise the date of the protest and this contributed greatly to the uprising in Cairo and Alexandria (Bohler-Muller & Merwe, 2011). Also aside the posters, the organizers set up the Facebook event feature which saw a colossal number of 80,000 people joining the revolution online (Bohler-Muller & Merwe, 2011). This festered further event which ultimately forced Egypt’s President Hosni Mubarak to resign on February 11, 2011.

In the other sub regions in Africa, social media has been used as a medium for electoral campaigns and as a medium of interaction between government and citizens. An example has been cited already about the Kenyan government’s plans to monitor its citizens’ reactions to policies in order to formulate citizen needs-based policies. Also the President of Rwanda Paul Kagame has earned a status as one of the chattiest President on Twitter because he interacts and responds to people inside and outside Rwanda during his lunch breaks on Twitter (Bohler-Muller & Merwe, 2011b).

Also in an article on Cable News Network (CNN) website authored by George Webster, former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan announced his plans to bid for presidency on his Facebook page which had 246,000 fans (Webster, 2010). According to Chude Jideonwo
an influential Nigerian activist the ex-President’s presence on Facebook and his active interaction with his supporters opened up a new means of widespread involvement in Nigerian politics especially the youth because it boosted them to feel that they have a voice in the Nigerian politics (Webster, 2010). For instance, in one of his interactions with his followers, Toyin Dawodu suggested to him his idea on how he can assist to boost Nigeria’s electricity production by 4,000MWs and the ex-President replied that, he will let someone from his office contact him (Webster, 2010).

4.4.2 Social Media and Politics in Ghana

According to the Social Media Report for Ghana in 2016, almost every person connected to the internet via mobile phone has a social media or an instant messaging account like WhatsApp with an overall national social media penetration of 40% (GSMR, 2016). Also research indicates that, out of the 3hours 30minutes spent by an average Ghanaian online browsing on his or her phone, 3hours 13minutes is spent on social media (GSMR, 2016). This is clearly seen in the number of WhatsApp subscriptions which stood at 7,408,860 as at the end of 2016, and 4,000,000 Facebook users by the end of June 2017 (InternetLiveStats.com, 2017). The use of social media by government institutions in Ghana has not been as active in the past as it is now with some of them, nonetheless there are some that have made use of social media in the past to draw the attention of many Ghanaians to what they do (Bastion et al., 2012). For instance, during the electioneering period in 2012, the Institute of Economic Affairs devoted a YouTube channel to air live a presidential debate organized by them so that Ghanaians and other internationals outside the country can follow the debate online (Wasswa, 2013).

Also some Ghanaian citizens sourced for information on social media before, during and after the 2012 elections by following the hashtag #ghanadecides on twitter (Bastion et al., 2012). This eventually became a worldwide movement with several other hashtags like the
‘iRegistered’, ‘speak Ghana’, ‘get out and vote’ among others (Bastion et al., 2012). The iRegistered campaign for instance aimed at encouraging Ghanaians who are eligible to vote to register and post images of themselves with their voters’ identification cards as a way of sharing their experience and encouraging others to go out and register. Others posted videos of themselves in queues waiting for their turn to register. These videos and pictures were re-shared online and also uploaded onto social media photo and video sharing sites like YouTube. Furthermore, it has become a common practice now for Ghanaians to take to social media to discuss emerging political issues some of which spark debates lasting sometimes for a week, thus intensifying political interaction among Ghanaians online (Acquaye, 2015). The presidential pardon for the Montie trio for example sparked a lots of debate about the president’s conduct as to whether or not it was a bad precedence (Gadugah, 2016). As well some Ghanaian celebrities in the showbiz took to social media to express their displeasure with the frequent power outages which had ripped many businesses off their profit resulting in the laying off of thousands of workers (Acquaye, 2015). In the end, a peaceful night vigil was organized by these celebrities who invited other well-meaning Ghanaians to join them to demand an end to the power outage via their social media handles. The hashtag ‘dumsormuststop’ was retweeted over 27.4 thousand times by many Ghanaians in and outside the country (Acquaye, 2015). According to Dr. Esi Ansah a lecturer at the Ashesi University, the protest was a clear illustration of how social media can be used to bring about change and how it can influence people of all ages and advised government communicators not to undermine the power of social media but to use it to educate the populace to enhance democracy in Ghana (Acquaye, 2015).

4.5 Social Media and Political Propaganda

The use of social media has been ranked as the first activity on the internet as millions of people sign in to social media websites every day (Kizina, 2015). As noted by Chaffey
(2017) as of January 2017, there were 1,871 million active Facebook users, WhatsApp had 1,000 million active users and Twitter too had 317 million active users. Considering the number of active users on these websites and the potential it presents to its users to reach millions of people within a short period, political parties have leveraged the opportunity to spread political propaganda taking advantage of a key distinct feature of social media which is the spread of information by users themselves, through sharing and tagging (Chaffey, 2017; Kizina, 2015). Political parties have adopted several mechanisms like political trolls, polibot, circulation of biased articles and fake pages to spread propaganda on social media (Kizina, 2015).

Political trolls involve the use of different groups of people on different social media platforms to hurl gross attacks on opponent (Kizina, 2015). Usually the groups that churn out these trolls are networked such that, just a click will broadcast the trolls to their various social media handles which is then forwarded by the other members of the group and other social media users through sharing and tagging other groups or friends. These networked groups also have a team stuffed with laptops to edit videos, pictures and graphics to suit their propagandist agenda and post them online to their various networked groups which also in turn spread the propaganda (Almario-Gonzalez, 2017). Sometimes political trolls are designed in a form of threads of opinion against the opponent but made to appear as if it is coming from the quarters of their opponent with the aim of inciting the readers against their opponent (Kizina, 2015). However sometimes, the intended purpose of these trolls are not achieved as the targets are able to read between the lines to tease out the propagandist intent. As an example, a troll intended to mock the 72-year-old NPP presidential candidate of the NPP on social media for drinking kalypo did not materialize as many sympathizers across the country took selfie pictures of themselves drinking kalypo and posted them on Facebook as a way of showing solidarity to the NPP presidential candidate.
The polibots is a new innovation used by political groups to heave attacks on their opponents. Polibots operate in two forms, manual and automatic. Manually, it is operated by an employed group of people who create and manage plenty social media accounts on behalf of a political party. To make the accounts look authentic and trusted by other social media users, they make friends, share their opinions on issues and express their support for or against various public actions but the underlining objective is to flood their timelines with several status update loaded with propagandist content (Kizina, 2015). These accounts are sometimes setup as public opinion and the managers often use propaganda and language techniques like punning to court the attention of social media users and traditional media houses to the page with the aim of getting people who visit the page to quote their stance on issues posted on the page elsewhere as public opinion thus hiding the propaganda intent (Kizina, 2015).

Automated polibots also referred to as computational propaganda by Fingas (2017) is the use of robots only or a mix of robots and human beings to operate social media accounts in a bid to skew public opinion either to their side or against their opponents by producing as many as thousand post a day (Earle, 2017; Fingas, 2017). This tactic on social media operate in many ways from distributing propaganda to systematized attacks on opponents (Earle, 2017). For example, in Russia 45% of twitter activity is from an automated account (Fingas, 2017). This is not different in China, US, Canada, Poland and several other countries. China for instance used both forms of polibots to attack the Taiwan president (Fingas, 2017).

Very often, biased articles are first handed over to the traditional media before they are published on social media so both the old and the new media go together on this (Kizina, 2015). These articles are disseminated on social media by first posting them, they are then reposted, shared, liked, tweeted and retweeted. Sometimes, ordinary users are paid to spread
these articles (Kizina, 2015). Biased propaganda articles often contain invectives, very sensational and it usually smears or ‘exposes’ an opponent (Kizina, 2015).

Finally, fake political social media accounts and sites are used by political entities to influence people’s opinions and spread propaganda (Kizina, 2015). These fake pages and sites are managed by hired people who break into active social media discussions on widespread topics (Almario-Gonzalez, 2017). They do this by planting a message about their candidate or a smear message against their opponents in an active discussion especially on Facebook from their fake news sites then they use their fake accounts on social media to like the message. These fake accounts heap up the likes until it appears if for example they are using Facebook, on Facebook news feed as one of the top feeds which is then taken over by other users who often do not even read to know the content but just like it. (Almario-Gonzalez, 2017). The more the likes, the more people think the news source is credible (Almario-Gonzalez, 2017).

4.6 Social Media and Political Mobilization

According to Lopes (2014), group meetings held at places like the university, coffee shops and other independent news sources are the traditional means by which people are organized and mobilized for social movement and to spread information. However, the growth of the internet in the 1990’s brought a change in communication in the world (Lopes, 2014). Lopes (2014) provides five key mobilizing structures essential for mobilization, these include; communication, organization, mobilization, validation and scope enlargement. As cited in Lopes (2014), Shirky (2011) argues that, social media encompass all five of these old mobilizing structures given it level of speed and interactivity and several other advantages compared to the traditional mobilizing procedures. Facebook and Twitter for instance can be used to reach out to several millions of people across the globe in real time as events are ongoing. Its mobilizing capabilities became more apparent following its novel use by the
Obama campaign team in the 2008 U.S. presidential elections to mobilize supporters and other potential voters’ especially young voters (Baker, 2009). Social media has since become a vital tool for mobilizing and reaching out to voters (Meti, Khandoba, & Guru, 2015). Facebook for example can be used in exceptional ways to rally voters to join political groups online, like political pages for news and other important update. One of the chief means of doing this is through targeting which has been noted by Key (1964) as an important campaign strategy to churn out campaign messages to the electorates. Facebook can be used to target people based on location, age, gender, profession, marital status and other demographic variables. This eases mobilization online for campaign purposes as political parties and their campaign teams are able to deliver their messages designed to serve the needs of specific targets with just some few clicks. As well, people can be invited to follow political parties and candidates on twitter and retweet their tweet. Again social media users can be easily mobilized online to support parties and candidate by commenting, sharing and re-sharing political video ads from YouTube and other news items from political parties’ websites and their affiliated blogs (Meti et al., 2015). The thrust of Shirky (2011)’s argument is that, although social media has not completely revolutionized political mobilization, it has introduced some significant changes like allowing common individuals who do not hold any party position to organize and mobilize people online for campaign and other political purposes as cited in Lopes (2014). Social media therefore create the avenue for building massive online networks beyond the boundaries of one’s country and also serve as a means to publicize one’s ideas at a cheaper cost and to scale up and hasten group organization. Seen this way, social media’s role in political mobilization is more of an intervening variable than a causal one (Lopes, 2014).
4.7 Social Media and Political Participation

Boulianne (2015) discusses the connection between social media and political participation using a meta-analysis of 36 studies that have delved into research on social media and political participation. Her work provides a useful insight on the various ways people have used social media and the potential uses of social media for political purposes and its effect on political participation. Boulianne (2015), first discusses the theory that focuses on social media as a means of sourcing for news online from friends, family or traditional media organizations. Using Facebook as an example, research indicates that nearly half of its users get exposed to news on their timelines from their social network ties resulting thus in gaining access to news without necessarily seeking for it (Boulianne, 2015). This theory draws heavily from studies on the effects of exposure to the traditional media which suggest that, the more people get exposed to news on current affairs, the more they become knowledgeable which in effect facilitates their participation in political life. The theory concludes that, as people get exposed to political news on social media whether directly through their own effort to get the news or indirectly when they chance on the news on their timeline, their understanding of political issues become broadened which may in turn influence them to participate (Boulianne, 2015). The second theory Boulianne (2015) discusses emphasize how social network ties can be mobilized on social media and its role in mobilizing these ties. These network ties include ‘network size, social ties to groups, organizations and activists and diffusion through peer groups’ (Boulianne, 2015, p. 525). In relation to the network size, it is argued that the use of social media expands one’s network size which may increase one’s exposure to a lots of information on social media. For example, the likelihood of one being invited to sign a petition or being part of a strike is high when he or she has a large network size on social media (Boulianne, 2015). Network ties focuses on links between individuals and political or activist organizations and how
social media is used to form and sustain such groups online. The assumption is that, being a member of an online group exposes one to participate in group activities like volunteering and other forms of political participation (Boulianne, 2015). The last on network ties examines how forms of civic and political participation spread among members of a social network (Boulianne, 2015). It may spread by reading a friend’s status update on a political issue, being influenced to vote after seeing a friend’s picture of him or her in a queue to vote or joining a street protest after seeing a friend has signed up to partake in the protest. These findings by Boulianne (2015) suggest that, there exist a good connection between the use of social media and political and civic participation although it is not known whether the effects of this positive relationship is causal or transformative due to the differences in the methodology used by the various researchers.

With respect to election campaigns Boulianne (2015) suggest that, the meta data did not find any correlation between the use of social media in influencing social media users’ decision to vote or participate in campaign activities. Thus although Boulianne (2015) acknowledges the revolutionary ways social media has been used to campaign like garnering donations, advertisements and mobilization, the analysis from the meta data showed little on how campaigns on social media were successful in influencing people to participate in an election or a campaign.

Tolbert and Mcneal (2003) investigates the impact of the internet on political participation in the US using the 1996 and 2000 general elections as case studies. They suggest that, the internet has become a mass medium where people gather information quickly at a cheaper cost resulting in the fluidity of information across distance. Thus the more people get access to variety of sources of information online, the more chance they stand to participate in politics because political information may enhance one’s knowledge which in turn may stimulate efficacy and thus participation (Tolbert & Mcneal, 2003). The main thrust of their
research revolves around the media as a transmitter of information and its role in improving participation and hence democracy. In doing this, Tolbert and Mcneal (2003) traced the history of the media’s role in elections from the 1960s and 70s and how this role has changed due to the changes in communication technology, particularly the internet. Although this research was conducted before the advent of social media tools like Facebook and Twitter their findings suggest that, the advancement in telecommunications especially the internet is sure to alter the way election communication is transmitted to voters. For example, the way political parties and news organizations communicated with voters using their websites in the 2000 general elections was different from the way they used it in the 1996 elections. (Tolbert & Mcneal, 2003). By 2000, most of the websites designs by political parties and news agencies had more interactive features and it was less textual compared to those that were available during the 1996 elections. What this means is that as the internet develops, political parties and news organizations as well will adopt new strategies to communicate with voters taking advantage of the internet’s mobilizing potential to for instance gather donations and volunteers thus stimulating internet users to participate in politics. On the side of internet users, they concluded that, people who had access to political news in the 1996 and 2000 elections participated in the elections beyond voting like donating to campaigns, volunteering to assist a campaign, contacting government officials among others (Tolbert & Mcneal, 2003).

Kenski and Stroud (2006) examine the relationship between the internet and political efficacy, knowledge and participation. They suggest that there is both a positive and negative relationship between the internet and political efficacy, knowledge and participation. For example, due to the interactive nature of the internet, citizens are able to contact public officials online, interact with them and even hold them accountable thus boosting their external political efficacy but on the other hand, external political efficacy is
crushed when public officials ignore emails and other messages from citizens who contact them online (Kenski & Stroud, 2006). The availability of expanse political news online also enhances internal efficacy of citizens because it provides citizens with news about political candidates, their issue positions and other news on elections. Kenski and Stroud (2006) argue that, there is a nexus between efficacy, knowledge and participation because efficacy motivate one to seek political knowledge and knowledge leads to participation. Thus they suggest that, when demographic and other political variables are controlled the internet can be said to be positively related to enhancing political knowledge as several other research findings suggest that, people reported reading about presidential candidates and other political news online (Kenski & Stroud, 2006). Therefore, citizens who have access to the internet are able to expand their political knowledge given the vast political information made available online to citizens (Kenski & Stroud, 2006). On the other hand, Kenski and Stroud (2006) noted in their findings the contention amongst scholars about the impact of the internet on political participation. Using studies by Graber (1996) and Norris (2001) they found out from the result of their study a huge role played by demographic variables in explaining changes in political efficacy and knowledge when placed side by side with partisanship and media variables even though the opposite is true for political participation. Media variables came third when compared with demographic and partisan variables thus emphasizing the fairly petty role of the media. But this notwithstanding, Kenski and Stroud (2006) found in their research some significant bivariate association between the internet and political efficacy, knowledge and participation and although the associations were not large they asserted that, they were positive and significant.

4.8 New Digital Political Marketing Campaigns on Social Media

With the increase in internet technology, political parties began to take advantage of the internet and other digital technologies and tools to rally for votes, engage young adults and
raise funds to support grassroots campaigns (Chester & Montgomery, 2017). With time, electoral politics is becoming more digitized due to the growing integration of electoral politics into the commercial marketing system and digital media which has already transformed corporate marketing procedures particularly in influencing consumers (Rubinstein, 2014). Many of the digital strategies employed by political parties in their campaigns in the 2016 elections particularly those in the US have been previously developed and tested in the commercial sector (Chester & Montgomery, 2017). For example, digital marketing in the corporate world has existed in the US since the mid-90s and has operated through the continuous gathering of data online through which individual’s online behavior is monitored in order to mold messages to their online customers to influence them (Chester & Montgomery, 2017). New innovations over the years have improved the capacity of online data collection, analysis and targeting especially with the rise of social media which allows for personal interaction with consumers online. The unique role of these social media platforms has also contributed to the further generation of data online through the post by the users themselves and what is gathered from their timeline through their daily activities online (Fuchs, 2014).

Although political parties in the past have used micro-targeting techniques to influence the actions voters, recent innovations in technology and the growth of data industries with their wide-range resources for data mining have made voter targeting more digitized (Chester & Montgomery, 2017). This they do by gathering and analyzing data from different sources online about individuals based on which they are able to generate user specific messages to their targeted audience. For example, Facebook has an identity based targeting database that enables political parties to target voters individually using certain demographic characteristics like age, gender, educational background among others (Chester & Montgomery, 2017).
The fusion of modern digital marketing into political campaigns is gradually altering politics in fundamental ways like the link between political parties, the media and voters. Given the contribution of digital technologies to the Trump campaign in the 2016 elections, one cannot be far from right to say that the integration of digital marketing techniques into the political sphere has the potential to expand news sources thereby increasing the chances for citizen participation and also mobilizing people from diverse backgrounds to influence policy (Chester & Montgomery, 2017). These same digital tools when utilized properly can also help political parties to significantly improve the means through which they engage voters, raise funds and ably engender voter turnout (Chester & Montgomery, 2017).

However, the automated system of sending advertisement and campaign messages to targeted individuals has its consequences because some of these programmed advertisement primarily focus on finding and locating targeted voters wherever they are online without paying attention to the sites where these advertisement may appear. For example during the electioneering period in 2016, some advertising companies in the US through this automated programmed advertisement ended up placing ads on sites with false or misleading news like pornography sites, fake news sites and sites supporting videos from terrorist (Nicas, 2016). Also the use of contemporary digital marketing in politics breach the privacy of internet users (Fuchs, 2014). Internet users in their daily interactions online produce data online that maybe private, semi-public and public (Fuchs, 2014). These accumulated data based on users’ interest, communications, online behavior and social networks is appropriated and commodified by advertising giants like Facebook, Google and other private social media owners and sold out to interested countries and other campaign groups be it political or social. Based on this Fuchs (2014) argues that, the commodification of user generated data online especially through social media can give the state enormous power to control its citizens through state surveillance thereby breaching the right of privacy of its citizens.
especially in countries where there are no laws governing the use of private data gathered by companies that come into contact with citizens data daily (Fuchs, 2014).

Thus while political parties are harnessing these digital advertising techniques like artificial intelligence, virtual reality and cognitive computing for advertising purposes to enhance their campaign activities, academics and civil society groups must keep a close watch on all these technological developments. This will enable academics and civil society groups to fully comprehend how these technologies work and its influence on electoral process which will allow for the creation of public policies that can ensure that digital technologies improves democratic institutions without declining citizens of their fundamental rights.

4.9 Social Media and Traditional Media

Over the last two decades, the internet has introduced a new phenomenon into the media landscape. Enabled by advancement in technology, the internet has given rise to the new media comprising the social media, blogosphere, online news outlet etc. These new sources of communication and information provides an alternative to the traditional forms of media consisting the television, radio, newspapers and all other forms of print publications (Rajendran & Thesinghraja, 2014). Some scholars suggest that the new media poses a challenge to the survival of the traditional media especially the print media because more readers are signing up on social media sites to access news online. More so, most of the traditional media houses now have social media handles through which they report to their followers online which thus raises the question of the relevance of the traditional media in the phase of social media (Rajendran & Thesinghraja, 2014; Shivarudrappa, 2014). For example, the new media allows its users to create, modify and share their own contents and interact with other users online leading to the rise of citizen journalism (Rajendran & Thesinghraja, 2014). People post images, videos or text about what is going on in the world around them. Sometimes some of these report particularly from eyewitnesses go viral on
social media as breaking news and as a result finds its way into the main stream traditional media news headlines. Although this present a great opportunity for citizens to be involved in the creation and the broadcasting of news both online and offline, it does not in any way constitute a threat to the relevance of the traditional media as has been suggested by some scholars who have written on the new media (Shivarudrappa, 2014). According to Shivarudrappa (2014), news update on social media lacks coherence and a clear story line as would have been produced by the traditional media. They classify reports online as information that needs to be processed by a journalist who will place the information in a specific context after carefully analyzing and explaining the contents of the information (Shivarudrappa, 2014). Therefore, although the new media has become an integral part of the communication and information media systems and has become a force to be reckoned with in terms of subscriptions, it impacts has not reached a stage of eliminating the traditional media.
CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the research methodology that was adopted for the study detailing the various processes that the researcher used in order to attain the research objective. In more details, it discusses the research design, the research approach, sources and procedure of data collection, the sample considered and the sampling procedure as well as the method that was used to analyze the data.

5.2 Research Design

Research design basically refers to a systematic plan that is used to answer the research problem (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) argues that, a research design may include the whole process of research right from the conceptualization of the research problem to the final report writing. After examining the objectives of this study and recognizing the scanty empirical study on the use of social media for political campaigns in Ghana, the researcher adopted exploratory research as the research design for this study. Exploratory research best suits this study because as defined by Bhattacherjee (2012), exploratory research is many a times undertaken in new areas of enquiry where the research objectives may include the following, to investigate and find out the degree and extent of a problem, to get primary ideas about the research problem and to test the viability of conducting a more wider study regarding that research problem. Thus this research is an explorative study that seeks to unveil the various ways social media is transforming political campaigns in Ghana using the 2016 general elections campaign as a case study.
5.3 Research Approach

Qualitative methods of research were chosen for this study. The advantage of using qualitative approach is that, it seeks to understand research problem from the viewpoint of the population it involves (Neuman, 2014). The disadvantage however may be that, researchers may wrongly attribute a meaning to something a participant may not intend. Also, the open nature of qualitative methods exposes the researcher to plenty of opportunities to obtain unexpected data (Becker, 1996). For instance researchers who adopt focus group discussion and in-depth qualitative interview methods often offer the participants they engage the chance to respond to interview questions in their own words rather than limiting them to choose from some fixed answers thus increasing the chances of the researcher getting rich and culturally salient explanations. Qualitative methods was adopted for this study because the aim is to understand the various ways social media was used for electoral campaigns from the viewpoint of the people who engage with it in this case political parties. In other words, this research is interested in understanding why and the means social media was used to campaign in the 2016 presidential elections in Ghana rather than how often it was used.

5.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

As cited in Tongco (2007), Bernard (2002) avers that, data collection is crucial to the overall understanding of a theoretical framework of a research. It is therefore vital that the method used for data collection and whom the data is collected from is done properly given the fact that improperly collected data can invalidates the entire research work (Tongco, 2007). However, it is not necessary to gather data from the entire community to obtain a valid research finding (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). Mack et al. (2005) further state that, in qualitative research, only a sample or a subset of the population are chosen for a research. Choosing the sample (which and how many people) is informed by
the objectives of the research as well as certain characteristics like size and diversity of the population for the study (Mack et al., 2005). Given this therefore, purposive sampling technique was adopted for this study.

Purposive sampling classify research participants according to some preselected measures that are significant to the research questions ((Mack et al., 2005)). Thus the participants can be handpicked provided they satisfy the required characteristics for selection based on the objectives of the study. This research adopted purposive sampling to select participants from the NPP, PPP and the NDC. The selection of the two main political parties (NPP and NDC) and one smaller party (PPP, given its vote representation) was to find out if there were any differences in the use and value placed on social media by larger and smaller parties.

5.5 Data Collection Procedures

According to Bhattacherjee (2012) data can be collected either through primary or secondary means. Primary data according to Bhattacherjee (2012) are collected by researchers for a particular research study through the use of appropriate data collection procedures. As noted by Bhattacherjee (2012) each time fresh primary data is obtained, analyzed and documented, new stock of knowledge is added to the already existing literature on the phenomenon under study. It is this store of knowledge which later becomes secondary source of data. The data collection method used were in-depth interviews and content analysis. The researcher conducted a one-on-one semi-structured interviews with three political party members who formed the core of their parties’ social media campaign team. The initial contact with all three parties was to the party executives via phone and they all agreed to the interview at the first contact. The party executives later forwarded the contact of those who were in charge of their social media campaigns to the researcher. Contact with the interviewees was via email, text messages and phone calls. The content analysis
examined the post on the official Facebook accounts of all three political parties from July 2016 to December 6 2016.

5.5.1 Interviews

In-depth interviews gives the researcher the opportunity to interact with participants on the personal level thus providing them with a rich understanding of the participants understanding and perspectives of the research topic (Mack et al., 2005). This is attained as a result of the open-ended nature of in-depth interview questions which thus enables the researcher to probe further and delve deep to ask people what they really think about a research topic, share their experiences and express their personal feelings and opinions (Mack et al., 2005; O’Leary, 2014). Conducting in-depth interviews has its challenges like gaining access and the consent of the participants, developing the right interview techniques in order to avoid leading questions and creating the necessary rapport to keep the doors opened for interaction (O’Leary, 2014). In-depth interviews may be structured, semi-structured and unstructured (O’Leary, 2014). The researcher adopted semi-structured interviews for this work. That is, the nature of the questions were more flexible to encourage the participants to give detailed responses and to as well cover areas that were not necessarily covered in the question guide. By using semi-structured interviews, the researcher uncovered data that was least anticipated but very relevant to the study. The researcher after several unsuccessful attempt was later able to interview party members who were in charge of their parties’ social media handles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Party Affiliation</th>
<th>Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1</td>
<td>Progressive’s People Party</td>
<td>Social Media Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>National Democratic Congress</td>
<td>Social Media Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>R3</td>
<td>New Patriotic Party</td>
<td>Social Media Director</td>
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</table>
5.5.2 Content Analysis

According to Krippendorff (2004, p. 18), ‘content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts or other meaningful matter to the context of their use’. As a research technique, content analysis opens the researcher up to a better understanding of a phenomenon, gives the researcher a new insights or informs practical actions. Thus the researcher’s research questions becomes the target which informs the analyst inferences from available text (Krippendorff, 2004). Given this, the next step after formulating a research question is the sources that will be used for the analysis (Krippendorff, 2004). For this project, Facebook was chosen as the source for the analysis because it was the most actively used social media site by the political parties selected for this research. Also because of the interoperability between Facebook and other social media sites like Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram, only Facebook content was analyzed for this research since most of the content posted on Facebook were replicated through shared links on almost all the other social media sites adopted by the political parties. Content analysis is useful as it permits researchers to determine their own context of enquiry which thus provides the researcher with a rich collection of social-scientific construct and thus making a text meaningful in ways that a culture may not be aware of (Krippendorff, 1989). The disadvantage however is that, a researcher in analyzing a content may focus on frequently appearing themes leaving out other equally important themes that appears less in the content (Krippendorff, 1989). According to Lai & To (2015) due to the anonymity component of social media, researchers must first ensure that the content for analyses is authentic and it is from the right source so as to ensure credibility.
5.5.3 Content Analyzed in this Research

Facebook

The researcher analyzed 1,059 posts from the official Facebook pages of NPP (NPP for Development) and PPP (Nduom for Ghana). The NDC as a party according to the respondent did not use any official page because people have created fake accounts in the name of the party. As a result, the researcher used the official Facebook page of the party’s presidential candidate John Mahama. Facebook was chosen for the content analysis because all the respondents stated that Facebook was the social media platform that they used most. Facebook is a social media app that allows its users to connect with friends, family and other people online. Its reachability, interactivity and other key features like Facebook live videos, ads and other marketing component makes it use for political purposes inevitable. Political parties used Facebook live for example to stream live most of the events that took place during their campaign rallies.

5.6 Data Analysis and Presentation

The data that was collected were analyzed using the thematic content analysis method. This is a method of analyzing data by grouping the data into categories based on themes, concept and other similar features (O’Leary, 2014). This method enabled the researcher to categorize and decrease large quantities of data into more comprehensible unit for interpretation. Data gathered from the interview were coded into eight main themes closely aligned to the research objectives that is marketing, dialoguing, mobilization, online presence, targeting, digital campaigns, social media and fake accounts and social media and traditional media. The researcher carefully selected these themes from the literature review, discussions on social media and the interviews themselves having in mind the questions this research seeks to answer. This method enabled the researcher to discuss the findings within a broader spectrum in order to bring out the Ghanaian perspective. Following this, some pages from

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the social media handles of the three political parties selected for this work were analyzed and compared to the literature and the data gathered. By doing this, the researcher was able to check claims made by the political parties which as well may give room for additional data to emerge. All these findings were then brought together to draw the overall conclusion.
CHAPTER SIX

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

This section has been organized into two parts. The first part discusses the interview data which has been categorized into three thematic areas in close relation to the research questions to allow for easy interpretation of the data. These themes are, the changing trends of electoral campaigns in Ghana, patterns of social media usage by the political parties and the symbiotic relationship between traditional media and social media. This is followed by the content analysis of the data gathered from the Facebook pages of the selected political parties for this study.

6.2 The Changing Trends of Electoral Campaigns in Ghana

Compared to 2012, social media significantly featured in the electoral campaign strategies of the political parties in Ghana particularly the NDC, NPP and PPP. This gave rise to an extensive use of social media by the various political parties. Besides, this new trend in electoral campaigns can be attributed to the growing accessibility of the internet and the development of digital technologies. This changing trends in electoral campaigns in Ghana was characterized by

6.2.1 Online Presence

While the 2016 electoral campaigns were popular on most social media outlets available like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram, all the political parties largely focused on Facebook. All the three respondent from the three different parties interviewed seemed to agree that the traffic on Facebook was huge and thus they could reach many Ghanaians on that platform. Also Facebook had advanced inbuilt advertising features and allowed the parties and their audience to interact in ways that it would have been impossible via the
Enli and Skogerbo’s study outlined how politicians use social media into four categories that is, invisible (not present on social media), the silent (inactive on social media), the moderate and then the active. Responses from the respondents indicates that all the three parties were more active during the second half of the year when the campaigns were intense and moderately active during the first half of the year. The respondent from the Progressive People’s Party explained why they did not use their social media handles actively in the early part of the election year in 2016 ‘we began our social media campaign in early 2016 but it wasn’t so active because our campaign had not reached its peak. So what we were doing then was to share some quotes and pictures from Dr. Nduom as well as some of his videos’ (Respondent one, Progressive People’s Party). The NPP in opposition then also utilized their social media handles all year round although not very active to criticize some of the policies and undertakings of the government in power which was a form of campaign since the underlining tone in almost all their post on social media was for their followers to vote for change. The NDC also used their social media handles to update their followers and Ghanaians on the infrastructural projects the government has undertaken in terms of constructing schools and hospitals and to appeal to Ghanaians to vote for them to remain in office to continue with all the projects they have begun. In other words, they used their social media handles to post about everything their government was doing all year round.

During the intense period of the campaigns, the NPP in order to remain active and relevant on Facebook conducted a research to know the peak periods when people visit Facebook and developed a strategy to suit it. The result of their study indicated that a lots of people check their phones early in the morning between 5am and 7am, during lunch breaks and in the evening between 5pm and 7pm. Thus the party’s Facebook administrators ensured that their Facebook page was updated early in the morning before all the political talk shows in
the traditional media began in order to enter the political trends for the day and remain the
topic of discussion on all the political talk shows and on other social media handles until
something else was posted in the evening. The PPP on the other hand stated that because
they campaigned during the heat of the campaigns when all the contesting political parties
were campaigning, they didn’t wait for a particular time to update their social media handles.
What was important to them according to the respondent was the content because once they
update their page on Facebook, people will go there to read. ‘Assuming someone comes to
read and there is no update because you are waiting for a particular time to post an
update, it wouldn’t be appropriate because everyone has a time he or she visit the various
social media sites’ (Respondent 1).

The NDC’s approach was quiet unique given the fact the party did not rely solely on its
official Facebook account because according to the respondent the party didn’t run a
structural Facebook account. So what the party did was to use its youth wing to blast
messages on the various social media sites although the respondent stated that they were
most active on Facebook.

‘The party did not operate with a structured account on Facebook because social
media lends opportunity for miscreants to create fake accounts for politicians and
you know people created several platforms for NDC for their own purposes some of
which we reported to Facebook so all these made it very difficult for us to run an
official account. Get it right, we had an official account but because of these
plagiarized pages we were unable to run our campaigns efficiently on our official
account. In stead, we used more of our youth activists on Facebook. Every member
of the NDC is on Facebook and each member on Facebook is a potential
communicator for the party. So we used the several pro NDC groups created by our
youth activists to share our messages and those sympathizers who also believed in
our ideology helped in spreading the good news that we shared on Facebook’.
The case was so with the NPP because they had a functional social media team with each member having a spelt out role to perform. According to the respondent from the NPP, they have had a social media campaign team since 2010 with various people playing diverse roles, ‘if you recall in August or September 2012, we organized an e-campaign launch where the president officially launched it by placing a video call to people across the country. I can even say that we have had a social media campaign team since 2008 because that was when we opened a Facebook account but it wasn’t utilized as we did in 2012 and 2016’. The core of their social media team comprised a creative director in charge of arts work and designs, social media administrators in charge of disseminating all their different platforms and a director for research in charge of research plus technical staffs and a point person who liaised with the social media companies and organized training sessions for the team. The PPP’s social media team were tasked to gather and create content for their social media pages and comprise two camera persons, a writer, a video editor and two presenters. The NDC respondent did not give a breakdown of the party’s social media team but stated that the party had a social media team that was in charge of their campaigns online. What the above essentially mean is that, all the parties had a social media strategy as part of their overall campaign strategy. Being present on Facebook was considered by the parties as an important medium they could not afford to do away with as it provided them an affordable means to reach millions of Ghanaians directly without going through the usual screening lens of the traditional media. Although it was not the first time the parties’ utilized Facebook for electoral campaign purposes, all of the respondent admitted that the manner in which they used Facebook in 2016 was an improvement in the previous election campaigns and that Facebook and other social media handles have come to stay and their use for electoral campaign purposes will keep evolving as the internet and digital technologies develop.
6.2.2 Digital Campaigns (Data Mining)

Another new trend in the 2016 electoral campaigns was the use of digital tools to enhance the campaign efforts of the political parties. Gibson (2015) refers to this form of campaigning as ‘citizen-initiated campaigning’. With this form of campaign, the political parties use digital technology to create the necessary tools on social media to enable citizens to raise funds, solicit for votes, organize offline campaign events and broadcast the party’s campaign messages on behalf of the party. Of the three parties, the NPP was the only party that utilized social media effectively to drive citizen initiated campaigns. For example, the social media team of the NPP set up the ‘colors campaign’ on Twitter for their followers to campaign for them. The colors campaign was characterized by intelligent use of the Twitter hashtag to drive Ghanaian youth to campaign for the party’s presidential candidate. For instance the hashtag #WhenNanaComes was used to invite Ghanaians on Twitter to share their thoughts on what the coming into power of the NPP will mean to them personally and the country as a whole whiles at the same time sharing what others have posted on this hashtag on Twitter and other social media handles. Also, several of the party’s activities online was informed by closely monitoring their Facebook page analytics and researching online by their social media research team. They did this by gathering and analyzing data from different sources online about people based on which they designed messages which appealed to their followers For example, based on their research, the social media team realized that a lots of people online liked arts work designed in the form of digital posters so before they posted any quote from their candidate, they first put it in an art work and it was observed that, a lots of people picked it up and shared them across the other social media sites and according to the respondent, they felt that this was a very effective way of communicating with people on Facebook. According to the respondent because the people liked it and it appealed to them, they shared the pictures.
According to the PPP respondent, they were very mindful of their Facebook analytics as it enabled them to understand the demographics of their audience on Facebook. So whenever they posted something they checked to see the demography of those following and exactly where the post was trending, whether it was trending in Accra, outside Ghana or within an area that they least expected. This helped them to know where their followers were really based. For example through their analytics, the party’s social media team learnt that most of their followers were in Accra and not in say Upper West probably because the people there did not have access to maybe smart phones or even the internet to connect to Facebook and other social media platforms. As a result, the party spent less time in Accra and spent more time in remote areas where the people there were not likely to be on social media. The NDC did not utilize this feature on their Facebook page and it could be for the reason already stated above that they as a party did not operate a well-structured official account.

According to Chester & Montgomery (2017), when social media digital tools are utilized properly by political parties, they can improve the means through which they engage voters, raise funds and ably engender voters to turnout to vote. Although the NPP and PPP used these digital tools to campaign online, the degree of usage was limited more particularly to the spread of campaign messages on Facebook and Twitter. None of them used it to raise funds, volunteers or organize offline campaign events. In terms of fundraising, the NPP only used Facebook ads to advertise how the party is using other means other than social media to raise funds. According to the PPP respondent the party was aware of what political parties in other countries were using data mining and other digitized tools to campaign online but they did not pay much attention to data mining as a means of encouraging their followers on social media to campaign for them because of certain challenges like lack of internet access, lack of proper addressing system and wrong perception created by some Ghanaian politicians like giving voters money to vote for them instead of the parties raising funds.
from voters. In other words although they would have loved as a party to explore every opportunity that social media affords them to campaign and reach out to millions of people online, these challenges prevented them from making optimal use of social media more particularly Facebook to collate data online in order to create user specific content and also solicit for funds on social media. Despite the advantages that these digital tools lend political parties to enhance their campaigns on social media, it goes without questions regarding how the political parties can control their enthusiastic followers on social media. More specifically regarding how the parties will connect with their followers and work alongside with them in order to have some level of control on how these citizen initiated campaigns turn out. Also, there is the question of data protection and the effects of such campaigns on the privacy of social media users.

6.3 Patterns of Social Media Usage by the Political Parties

Studies show that political parties campaign on social media for three main reasons they are, marketing, dialogue and mobilization (Enli and Skogerbo, 2013; Effing et al, 2013; Larnyoh, 2016). The data gathered from the interviews regarding social media usage patterns of the political parties were in line with the above stated reasons why political parties use social media. All the political parties used their social media handles to market their brand which in this case was the parties’ presidential candidate. Taking into consideration the six general usage patterns of political marketing in most democratic systems by Henneberg (2002) that is communication and spin, product image management, news management, political marketing strategy development, political marketing research and political market organization and professionalism, it is safe to say that all the political parties in Ghana applied most of these marketing tactics on social media. It must be stated that the degree of usage differed because each party had its own strategy on exactly how to reach out to Ghanaians on social media. For instance the NPP organized campaign programs
like the ‘I am for Nana Campaign’ and the ‘NPP Loyal Ladies’ with the aim of drawing more youth to their Facebook page after the party’s social media team undertook research and gathered intelligence on why the party’s followers on Facebook were above 42. The NDC’s strategy was to market every project the government has undertaken or was still in progress to Ghanaians on Facebook to appeal to them to vote for them again to remain in power. It must be stated that all the three respondents pointed out that their social media teams were commissioned by their parties and tasked with specific duties. As such, every news item they posted on Facebook was edited and got the approval of the head of the team. The NPP for instance had weekly meetings to discuss how their campaigns on social media were progressing in other to re-strategize when there was the need. The above demonstrate that, the social media teams were mindful of the news content they posted on social media so as to protect the image of their party and candidate. As indicated above Facebook was the most dominantly social media sites by the political parties. It was closely followed by twitter and WhatsApp. WhatsApp was used mainly for internal communication purposes by the NDC and PPP. Even so the PPP respondent was quick to add that, aside the main social media campaign team which he directed for the party’s presidential candidate, the party’s youth wing came up with their own campaigns and may have used WhatsApp extensively to spread their campaign messages. But then, the NPP used it both for internal and external communication. The political parties made less use of YouTube in the 2016 elections because of Facebook live videos which had similar features like YouTube. With Instagram, only NPP admitted utilizing it mainly to post pictures.

Mobilization involves political parties using campaign strategies to mobilize electorate to participate both in online and offline events (Norris, 2000). Generally all the parties approach leaned towards mobilizing social media users to follow their campaigns on social media and for updates on their campaign activities offline. Although Kenski and Stroud
(2006) opines that exposure to political information on social media may motivate one to participate in political activities, the parties’ approach particularly to mobilizing social media users to engage in offline activities like volunteering to campaign or going to a campaign rally was not inviting enough to drive participation. The NPP however did quite better in terms of mobilizing supporters on social media to participate in offline activities. The respondent stated that,

*The idea was to take online things to offline and offline things online so for example, in order to get young women to participate in politics, we came up with the loyal ladies idea which was aimed at mobilizing young women online to participate in our campaigns offline. So for example they wore the party’s t-shirt to vantage car washing bays across the countries and even on university campuses to wash cars for people as a form of campaign. They took pictures of what they were doing and posted them on Facebook and reached out to other young women on Facebook to join them offline to campaign for the party* (Respondent 3).

Lastly, all three political parties mentioned dialogue (broadcast and consumption) as a motivation for using social media because they needed to connect and communicate with their followers online but the NPP and PPP’s attitude on Facebook was more of broadcasting and interaction but that of the NDC was broadcasting and influence with less interaction from the party’s top hierarchy and it may be because of the party’s strategy of using their youth activists on social media to blast messages online instead of operating through a well-structured social media accounts like a Facebook fan page. This notwithstanding, all the three political parties used Facebook live videos to interact with their followers online. According to the NPP respondent, through Facebook live videos, their followers were able to interact with their candidate and other top prominent party members. Several of such meetings were setup on both Facebook and Twitter. They first sent out invitations for questions from their followers ahead of time before the live online meeting and also opened up for more questions during the online discussion. Based on these interactions they realized
that their followers were not just following them on social media but were very critical of everything they posted and did not just accept any answer because they probed further and sought for answers on how the party intended to implement some of the policies in their manifesto. As a result, they in turn gave practical explanations to questions some of their followers asked.

‘I think they were very receptive and the interesting thing is that they ask a lots of questions. They don’t just accept what you tell them, they debate you. For instance, people asked provoking questions on our Twitter chats and our followers didn’t just accept rhetorics, they always demanded practical answers beyond a rhetoric. They wanted answers that had practical timelines for implementation and have been well-considered and analyzed. Nothing short of that was accepted by our followers and they sometimes hit back at us if we failed to give them a satisfactory response’.

PPP utilized Facebook live videos to engage their followers online. Like the NPP, they also set up meetings online for their candidate to answer questions from their followers

Some of them sent their questions through their comment on the various post that we put there whether a video, a picture or a text. Some also sent us messages via our inbox. So what we did was that, we gathered all these feedbacks, got rid of the unnecessary ones and discussed those that were important, after we forwarded them to the presidential candidate. There were some that we responded out rightly but there were others we had to push it to the top for deliberation. Another important thing we did was social media meetings where the presidential candidate himself answered questions that were sent by his followers on an earlier date live on Facebook. Sometimes he answered questions on the spot too (Respondent 2).

Again according to the PPP respondent because dialoguing with their followers online was key to them, they turned on all their notification alerts and had someone who monitored these alerts in order to pick up the salient questions which their followers needed answers to. Aside these, the PPP setup the ‘Nduom for Ghana Interactive’ page on Facebook solely to capture live campaign events and also to discuss key issues their presidential candidate raised on every campaign tour.
The NDC on the other hand although used Facebook live, it was purposely to capture live event on the rally grounds for their followers to view and have a feel of what was going on at the rally grounds. In terms of interacting with their followers online, the NDC’s approach was more of responding to comment on videos, pictures and textual post and not answering questions posed to them directly through live chat or conversation on Facebook.

Indeed the expectation that social media will bridge the gap between politicians and electorate Smith (2014) has been proven as the above shows how some of the political parties engaged their followers on Facebook and Twitter. Nonetheless there is more room for improvement because on the larger scale, the parties’ social media campaign activities focused more on broadcasting and promoting themselves than interacting with their followers.

6.3.1 Targeting

Targeting according to Key (1964) is an important aspect of an electoral campaign strategy as it enables politicians to design messages that will best suit their various targeted groups.

Drawing on the interview data, although the NPP and the PPP targeted the youth while the NDC targeted everyone on Facebook, none of the parties explored in full the advantage Facebook advertising offered them. The PPP’s campaign messages on Facebook were general in nature and less targeted but the NPP on the other hand upon realizing that between May and July 2016, majority of their followers on Facebook were above forty years, resolved to design more youthful campaigns to pull the youth on Facebook to their page.

*We realized that we needed to reach out to the young people so there was a very deliberate effort on our part to attract more youths to our page. So we decided to engage the youth more by introducing youthful stuffs like the colors and hope campaign which eventually drew many youth to follow us. We also realized that we had a lots of male followers as opposed to the females at the early stages so we planned to reengineer our campaigns to incorporate many ladies.*
The NPP in the subsequent months realized a major shift in their following after redirecting their campaign focus on Facebook to engage more youth. The NDC however set out with a strategy to woo the hearts and minds of everyone on social media irrespective of their age. ‘The key thing for us was to push out messages that will get to the heart and minds of the people whether young or adults and even if they are young, they will definitely grow to become adults. So we just went out there to win the hearts and minds of Ghanaians without any specific target’ (Respondent 2).

Using the Facebook advertising tool, the political parties could have targeted specific voters using demographic data like age, religion, marital status and gender plus data on users’ interest to identify those who were interested in say football or entertainment in order to design user specific messages. This could have resulted in voters receiving messages that tickled their interest which could have had considerable effect on them.

6.3.2 Social Media and Fake Accounts

All the three parties had a cause to worry about the anonymity component of social media because it raises the question about the ability of political parties to run a coherent campaign without the interference of fake accounts and fake news. PPP was the only party which although was mindful of the influence of fake accounts and fake news, had little to worry about it distracting their campaign online. The most affected party was the NDC and it was due to this menace that the party did not operate on social media with an official social media account on the various social media platforms. As indicated above in a quote from the respondent, the party realized that there were a lots of Facebook and Twitter accounts operating in the name of the party which were all false so directing the traffic to the party’s official account was going to be difficult thus adopting the strategy of using their youth activist to get to the hearts and minds of every Ghanaian online.
The NPP on the other hand were swift in dealing with fake accounts and fake news because they have had that experience in the previous election and have learnt a great deal from it. The anonymity component of social media gives people that chance to create fake account and create fake news that is believable. Thankfully we had that experience in 2012 when the party in power then attacked us so much using fake account so that was one of the critical things we spoke about when we met with the team from Facebook. We were very upset about what happened because we filed many complaint and nothing was done about it and they kept on posting damning things about us. What we did that helped us this time around was that, we countered it very quickly because once they spread, working your way back becomes difficult. People tend to believe bad news than good news once such news spread, you feel like there is a very huge albatross around your neck that you need to take off.

6.4 Symbiotic Relations between Social Media and Traditional Media

Schoenmueller and Schäfer (2012) in their work on traditional media, social media and brand equity revealed that to achieve an optimal marketing result, firms must use both traditional media and social media communication channels. He explained that, the traditional media is still relevant in creating awareness in terms of marketing a product whiles social media provides the avenue for customers to engage with the sellers and also to research about the product. When this conversation is extended to the realms of political marketing on social media, the voters become the buyers and the candidates become the sellers of their political brand. This veers the conversation to scholarly discussions on the complimentary roles of both forms of media to each other so that whereas the traditional media is used as an avenue by the political parties to create more awareness for their brand, social media can be used to engage voters on the various campaign agenda. In Ghana during the 2016 election campaigns, political parties were able to by-pass the traditional media to directly reach and interact with the electoral on social media. Even though this was not the very first time political parties used social media to campaign, the degree of importance they attached to it attracted a lots of journalist to follow them on social media and even used
their pages as a primary source of electoral news (Respondent 1 and 2)). Journalists picked quote from the Facebook pages of the political parties and turned them into news headlines (Respondent 1 and 2). Consequently, social media became a key source for electoral news yet news picked from social media reached a much larger audience only after the traditional media has broadcasted it since many Ghanaians are not on social media.

Following this, the respondents were quizzed about the relevance of traditional media in modern campaigns and out of the three respondents, only the PPP respondent seemed to consider the traditional media to be still relevant in modern campaigns. He believes that although almost all the TV stations and the print media in Ghana have social media accounts and sometimes stream events live on social media, the traditional media is still very relevant and cannot be done away with. In continuance of their earlier responses already indicated above, both respondents for the two biggest parties in Ghana (NPP and NDC) responded that that the traditional media is gradually losing its relevance in modern campaigns. According to the NDC respondent, ‘social media is really taking over and we hope that in the near future we will also run our stuffs on Facebook live’. The NPP respondent believes that, the traditional media is dying out because they pick up their news from stories that break online. He asserts that, the days when social media complemented the traditional media were over because social media has developed to a stage where it can exist on its own without the traditional media and work perfectly but the same cannot be said of the traditional media.

6.5 Content Analysis

The researcher examined post from the official Facebook pages of the NPP and PPP. The NDC did not have a well-structured Facebook page as indicated so the researcher in place used the official Facebook page of the party’s presidential candidate because the NDC respondent stated in the interview that all campaign strategies put in place by the party was
done for the presidential candidate. In other to have a clearer understanding of how the political parties used Facebook the researcher gathered and analyzed data that were posted in the last five months to the run up of the December 2016 elections. The researcher manually gathered the data by visiting the Facebook pages of the political parties. This period was chosen because it enabled the researcher to trace the trends in their posts and also to understand the dynamics in using Facebook to campaign as the Election Day got closer. In all, one thousand and fifty-nine (1059) Facebook post were manually examined. The NPP posted three hundred and seventy-six (376) times within the period examined, the PPP posted four hundred and eighty-five (485) times but the NDC posted only one hundred and ninety-eight (198) times. The figures above indicate that PPP posted one hundred and nine (109) times more than NPP did but NDC posted less and though not certain, it can be attributed to the fact the Presidential candidate’s instead of the party’s Facebook page was used for this analysis. Also both the thematic analysis and the rate of recurrences were done manually. To allow for easy interpretation and analysis, the researcher categorized all the one thousand and fifty-nine post into themes like private life, electoral campaigns, electoral news, public announcement, political advertisement, official government function, past/present government portfolio, donations and electoral advocacy. Also the medium of communication and the frequency of update in a day were looked at.

The medium of communication in this study has been defined as the means through which politicians presented their information to their followers on Facebook to further their political plan. This medium include text, text, link and photo, text and link, pictures, pictures with captions, digital posters, digital posters with caption, videos and live videos. The researcher used bar graphs to enhance the understanding of readers given the figures involved.
6.5.1 Medium of Communication

The political parties adopted several means of communicating with their followers on Facebook aside the usual text and pictures, these include digital posters, links, notes, live videos and videos. The data revealed that both the NPP and NDC used digital posters more dominantly than any other medium. The PPP on the other hand used pictures with text captions most. What this suggest is that, the politicians first wanted to get the attention of their followers in so doing they included their campaign messages in the caption of their pictures or in the pictures itself. This is true as the respondent from NPP stated that a research by their social media team suggested their followers on Facebook preferred digital posters more than any other medium. Although the same was not articulated by the respondent from the other parties, it is obvious they all saw this medium as the most viable way of communicating with their followers on Facebook. Moreover it is also a convenient way of taking in information as the viewer is saved the time of watching video or clicking on a link to read a lengthy text. It is interesting to note however that, aside the common patterns in the use of digital posters and captions on pictures, the other mediums employed by the political parties widely differed. This inconsistency made it impossible to draw a general pattern of medium usage by the political parties but beyond this, the different mediums adopted by the parties indicate how the political parties employed different strategies and techniques to get the attention of their followers. Also all the political parties utilized Facebook Live Videos particularly during live rally events to give their followers online a feel of what was happening offline. Facebook Live Vidoes was at the time a new innovation Facebook had added to its app therefore the political parties took advantage of it to broadcast events in real time to online followers especially those who cannot be present due to geographical barriers. The idea was to bridge the gap between online followers and those participating offline by videoing live events as it unfolded. Although Key (1964)
suggests that being physically present at campaign rallies is a better way of engaging with other supporters and relating with party officials nonetheless Facebook Live Videos enabled the political parties to feed their followers online with real time events offline which also helped them to grow their audience online.

6.5.2 Frequency of Updates

The researcher also examined the number of times the political parties updated their Facebook pages within a day to understand how well the political parties used Facebook to step up their campaigns in the virtual world as a way of gaining more popularity both online and offline. It was observed from the data that all the parties missed updating their followers on Facebook several days in the preceding months before November 2016. However, starting from November, both the NPP and PPP missed a day each of updating their Facebook pages within the period used for this analysis but the NDC however missed three days in November, that is November 3, 12 and 13. This not withstanding, all the parties except on some few days posted more than once on the Facebook walls. The NPP had the highest number of multiple post which is 13 on 1st and 5th of December followed by the PPP with 11 on December 5 and the NDC with 7 on November 21 and December 6. At least, each of the parties had it highest number of post in December signaling the intensity of their campaigns as they approached the Election Day. In the case of the PPP, they recorded their highest multiple post on December 5 because the party held it final campaign rally on that day at Elmina. Thus by way of keeping their Facebook followers updated on what was happening on the final rally grounds, the party posted 7 live videos and different set of pictures from their rally grounds. Although the researcher could not trace exactly what led to the increased multiple post by the NDC and NPP on December 6 and 1 &5 respectively, it may have possibly been driven by the fact that the parties’ were wrapping up on their campaigns given that the election day was just some few days away. The NPP for example
on December 1 updated their Facebook timeline with different digital poster with excerpt of what the party intends to do when they are voted into office. As suggested by Boulianne (2015) and Kenski and Stroud (2006) in their respective studies on social media and political participation, the more people get exposed to news online, the more likely they are to participate. Thus the multiple post by the NDC and the NPP sought to remind their followers on Facebook about their campaign promises which is also intended to get them to participate on the Election Day. Besides, keeping the timelines of the political parties on Facebook constantly active is a way of keeping in touch with supporters and increasing the party’s virtual presence. Also, the graph below indicates the trend of postings that was done by the political parties within the period used for this analysis. There were some slight inconsistencies in the frequency of updates by the NPP and PPP between July and August but the NDC progressed steadily and intensified their campaigns on Facebook as the Election Day got closer. The campaigns on Facebook intensified from September as the number of updates by all the three political parties increased until campaigns ended in December. Although the parties had just six days to campaign in December, they seem to have posted more within the six days signifying the end of campaigns.
6.5.3 Themes

The researcher also did a thematic analysis of the various post by the political parties to examine and compare it with data gathered from the interview. This gave the researcher a clearer understanding of the intentions behind the post by the political parties’ on Facebook. Nine themes were identified in all, they include private life, electoral campaigns, political advertisement, donations, past/present government portfolio, official government function, electoral news, political advocacy and public announcement. The data gathered from the Facebook post of all the political parties indicate that, all three parties posted more about their campaigns compared to the other themes. But when looked at separately, official government functions came second to electoral campaigns for the NDC. This is because the NDC’s presidential candidate was an incumbent and as such posted a lots of times on completed government projects and corresponding their inauguration ceremonies. Because the PPP presidential candidate is an entrepreneur, quite a number of his post were about his businesses especially his banks. All these business engagements were captured under the theme of private life. Thus the theme on private life came second for PPP whiles political advertisement ranked second most dominant theme for the NPP. The NPP recorded only two post on the theme on private life but the NDC posted nothing on private life.
Considering the background of this study, it did not come as a surprise to the researcher that the dominant theme from all the posts on Facebook across the three political parties was on electoral campaigns. Yet still there were some variations in the post on electoral campaigns. Of all the post on electoral campaigns analyzed from the various political parties only the NPP campaigned against its major opponent the NDC. The NPP’s campaign on Facebook was on two front, to attack their opponent and to defend the party by soliciting for vote using various Facebook campaign strategies as discussed above. For instance, several Facebook post by the NPP were digital posters indicating how the NDC has mismanaged the country in the past years. The PPP and the NDC however had zero campaign post against their opponent. Also the data gathered from the Facebook wall of the NDC presidential candidate corroborated what the NDC respondent said during the interview that the party’s campaign strategy was to reach out to every Ghanaian by making them aware of the massive infrastructural projects the party has undertaken and to appeal to them to vote to retain them in power to complete them.

Conclusively, the analysis carried out for both the interviews and contents pulled from Facebook gives a clear picture of how social media is revolutionizing political campaigns in Ghana. Generally, the data gathered through the interviews corresponds with the content gathered on Facebook particularly the medium of communication. Again both data showed how social media was used by the political parties as a means of broadcasting their campaign messages, marketing their parties and interacting with their followers. While this study did not draw links between social media and election success, it can be concluded from both data gathered that the political parties regarded social media as a significant aspect of their campaign strategy to win support from social media users. However given the potential uses of social media for electoral campaign purposes and the extent which the political parties used social media in 2016 not forgetting the challenges stated by some of the political parties
associated with the use of social media to campaign in Ghana, one can safely conclude that the use of social media for electoral campaign purposes in Ghana is still maturing and its influence and the exact nature of influence on both the political parties and social media users still remains unclear.

6.6 Cyber Security

In order to address cyber security and tackle the issues and concerns that have been raised about the use of social media for political propaganda and defamation and its effects on political parties and aspiring candidates, the government of Ghana has adopted several measures by first inaugurating the National Cyber-Security Inter-Ministerial Council to oversee the establishment of the National Cyber Security Centre, which will manage cyber security operations in the country (Yeboah, 2017). In addition to this, there are plans by the government through the Ministry of Communication to formulate and implement a Ghana National Cyber Security Policy and Strategy (Yeboah, 2017). Also, the government has merged its efforts with other International Institutions like the International Communication Union, Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization, Google, Microsoft and Facebook to improve cyber security and ensure the safety of Ghanaians online (Yeboah, 2017). Again, by way of cooperating with other African countries to deal with cybercrime, the government of Ghana in July 2017 signed the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection at Addis Ababa during the African Union’s 29th Summit (Yeboah, 2017). Added to this is the partnership between the Government of Ghana and the United States of America’s Security Governance Initiative and the European Union’s GLACY project to support the government’s efforts put in place to address cyber security problems in the country (Yeboah, 2017). The government by way of commitment has allocated a budgetary space for cyber security on the national budget in 2019 called the cyber security fund (Sabutey, 2018).
CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the summary of key findings and concludes the study. It basically provides a synopsis of what has been discussed in the previous chapters and the conclusion for the study.

7.2 Summary of the Study

This study investigated how social media is revolutionizing electoral campaigns in Ghana using the 2016 election campaigns as a case study. The objectives of this study was to (1) to investigate the nature and form in which social media is transforming electoral campaigns in Ghana, (2) to investigate how political parties in Ghana used social media to campaign during the 2016 electioneering period and (3) to investigate the interplay between social media and the traditional media in campaigns.

The literature review discussed key topics on electoral campaigns, political mobilization and participation highlighting its importance in a democratic society. The articles reviewed were quite new suggesting that this area of studies is still developing thus this research contributes to the emerging literature on this topic by providing a Ghanaian perspective.

The methodology employed for this research was qualitative because the researcher wanted to comprehend the various ways social media was utilized for electoral campaigns from the view point of the people who engage with it in this case, the political parties. The data collection method used were in-depth interviews and content analysis. The researcher conducted a one-on-one semi-structured interviews with three political party members who formed the core of their parties’ social media campaign team. The data for the content analysis was sourced from the Facebook pages of the NPP and the PPP. The respondent for
the NDC stated in the interview that due to the menace of fake account, the party did not use a well-designed Facebook page solely for the purpose of campaigning as such, the researcher used the posts from the official Facebook page of the party’s presidential candidate. The content analysis complemented the interviews conducted which made it possible for in depth analysis than what would have been with the interviews from the three political parties. The data gathered was then analyzed after it was categorized into themes for easy interpretation.

7.3 Major Findings

With regard to the first objective, this study established that the nature of electoral campaigns in Ghana is changing. The political parties incorporated new forms and techniques of campaigning aside the usual traditional campaigning methods. These new forms of campaigning powered by the internet took place in the virtual space introducing a more impersonal campaigns. This is substantiated by the findings from the content analysis and interviews in the previous chapter. All three respondent admitted the importance they attached to social media particularly Facebook as a medium to reach out to millions of voters. In the view of the parties, social media had come to stay and any party that undermined its potential did so at its own peril. Given this, the parties dedicated substantial amount of resources to explore the various ways they can utilize social media to enhance their campaigns. For example the parties employed several new features available on Facebook to get the attention of their followers online including live videos which was the newest addition at the time. Despite this, the response from the parties and the data analyzed online indicated that, the political parties still used the traditional forms of campaigning like door-to-door, rallies and running campaign advert and on traditional media. This is particularly evident as all three parties posted pictures of their campaign tours to the various
regions and their interactions with the traditional leaders and other key stakeholders in the regions.

Also in relation to the second objective the study revealed how political parties in Ghana utilized social media for electoral campaign purposes. The data gathered indicates that mobilizing supporters online to participate in offline campaign programs with the exception of voting was largely missing especially in the contents that were posted on the Facebook pages of the political parties. Much of the campaign online by the political parties sought to draw the attention of their followers to what was happening on their offline campaign grounds and what they intended to do when they are voted into power. It was largely observed that, all the parties posted pictures and live videos of what went on during their campaign tours to the various towns and villages. For instance if a candidate on a campaign tour made a stop at Cape Coast Kotokuraba Market, his or her social media team would take pictures and videos of his or her interaction with the market folks and post them on their Facebook page. The NPP however did quite better with the NPP loyal ladies campaign which mobilized young ladies online to join the ladies wing of the party to use innovative ways like washing cars to campaign for the party. Also in terms of providing online mobilizing structures to pull traffic to their political pages on Facebook, the NPP made strides to enable their supporters to campaign on behalf of the party with the ‘I am for Nana’ and ‘Colors’ campaign which according to the NPP respondent had a huge following online. This thus is in line with findings by Kenski and Stroud (2006), Lopes (2014) and Boulianne (2015) which suggest that Facebook provides the platform which aids political mobilization and participation, although the political parties in Ghana did not use it extensively or better still they did not explore its full potential to their advantage. In general, the parties used social media as a medium of just broadcasting and popularizing their campaign messages although some of them used it as a means of interaction as has been discussed below. This
means that, further studies can be undertaken to ascertain how virtual or online interaction between party followers and the party can influence the followers to vote for them. None of the parties used social media to solicit for funds, raise volunteers or generate data to send user specific campaign messages to their followers.

The study further revealed that Facebook, the most used social media by the political parties enabled the followers of the presidential candidates to interact online like never before. Unlike the traditional media which set their own agenda which sometimes blocks direct interaction between political parties and their followers, social media bypasses the lengthy media strategies and offers a direct stream of establishing and exchanging virtual bonds. However the researcher argues that online interaction between party followers and the party’s candidates in Ghana occurred at two different levels, one mediated by the social media teams of the parties and the other unmediated. The former means that, the social media teams of the various parties on behalf of their candidate interacted with the followers through the various posts they broadcasted on their Facebook pages. As the respondent for the PPP and NPP stated they filtered most of the comment that were passed by their followers online and those that they deemed fits, they responded or were forwarded to the top hierarchy for further deliberation after which they replied. Although this form of mediation is intra and quite different from what pertains with the traditional media there is no denial that, it is still a form of mediation. The latter implies a direct upward communication between the followers and the party candidates. This direct form of communication was adopted by only two of the political parties used for this study. By using Facebook live both NPP and PPP presidential candidate interacted with their followers online which established some bonds of affiliation as indicated by the parties’ respondents. The NPP also used Twitter chat to setup live debates between their followers and their presidential candidates and other key party representatives.
Lastly in line with the last objective, the study established that the relationship between social media and traditional media is a symbiotic one and that although social media was used extensively by the political parties to campaign, they still relied on the traditional media. News items were carried across from the traditional media to social media and social media to the traditional media and since larger population of Ghanaians still relied on the traditional media for their news, news on the traditional media went more viral especially in areas where the people were unable to access the internet.

7.4 Conclusion of the Study

This study investigated the ways in which social media is revolutionizing electoral campaigns using Ghana’s 2016 electoral campaigns as a case study. Thus the project hoped to assess electoral campaigns in Ghana in the phase of social media and its integration in the Ghanaian political space. The summary above clearly indicate how social media was integrated into the virtual campaign strategy of the political parties used for this study. Although all the parties admitted its importance in reaching out to millions of people and shaping the political thinking of social media users, they as well conceded it was not a straight away guarantee for a candidate’s victory in an election given the nuances in politics and voting. The PPP respondent for instance outlined certain challenges that makes it difficult to fully invest in newly digitized electoral campaigns on social media like data mining. These challenges include the lack of internet connectivity, proper addressing system and the lack of political understanding in Ghana largely caused by the politicians in the country. This in other words implies that, the political idiosyncrasies of a country largely contributes to how new ideas and technology are embraced and utilized by both the parties and their followers. It nonetheless does not stop researchers from drawing some healthy comparisons between countries. That said, it is safe to conclude that social media was fairly used for electoral campaign purposes in Ghana’s 2016 election but it did not radically
change what political parties in Ghana do during electioneering periods especially traditional forms of campaigning, rather it introduced newer forms of campaigning which complemented the already existing ones. However given that it was still a new phenomenon political parties were exploring, the way it was used in the 2016 election may not be the way it will be used in the 2020 election as all three parties alluded to having plans to explore it further in future elections hence the need for further studies on this topic.

7.5 Limitation of the Study and Recommendation

The major limitation of this study is that, it focused only on the activities of the political parties on social media during the 2016 electioneering period and how these activities were transforming electoral campaigns in Ghana. It did not consider the impacts of these activities on the social media users in terms of mobilization and participation, neither did it examine its overall impact on the elections. Given this, further studies can investigate the causal relationship between social media and political mobilization and participation in Ghana. As well, researchers in this area of study must consider exploring the effect of social media electoral campaigns on voters’ choice in Ghana and again the consequences of citizen journalism on democratic process in Ghana.

Furthermore, this study recommends that political parties in Ghana adopts new digital strategies to actively engage their followers on social media like raising funds so that like political parties elsewhere, they can go beyond just reporting their offline activities to their followers online.

As well political parties in Ghana must invest in cyber security technologies in order to combat social media propaganda to have a sanitized engagement with their followers online to foster a safer digital online political life.
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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What position do you hold in your party?

2. Does your party have a social media campaign team?

3. Does your party have a policy regarding its use of social media?

4. How many people form the core of this team and what is their main task?

5. Which social media sites does your party have account with?
   a) Which amongst them is your party most active on and how did it help in your campaign?

6. Did your party consider social media as an important part of its campaign strategy?
   If yes why?

7. In what ways did your party use social media in the 2016 presidential election campaigns?

8. Did your party engage the services of social media advertisers?
   a) If yes, what did they do?
   b) Was their work significant?
   c) If no why didn’t your party engage the services of social media advertisers?

9. Did your party have a target group on social media?
   a) If yes, why that group?

10. In what ways did your followers on social media engage your party online?

11. Were there moments of surprises where voters engaged the party on social media which the party did not expect?

12. In your own view how innovative was your party regarding the use of social media for campaigns in 2016?
   a) Do you think these innovative ways gave your party upper hand over the other political parties so far as campaigns on social media is concerned?
b) If no, do you think other parties who used social media differently had an upper in attracting social media users than your party did?

13. Given the numerous fake accounts on social media, what did your party do to make its social media followers to recognize the party’s official accounts?

14. Did your party have crisis regarding fake accounts operations?
   a. What did your party do about it?
   b. How did it affect the party’s social media strategy?

15. Do you think social media will be significant in future elections?

16. What is the relationship between traditional media and social media in modern campaigns?

17. Do you think the traditional media is still relevant in modern campaigns?

18. Apart from the party’s official social media accounts, did the party’s presidential candidate have its own social media accounts?
   a. Was it managed by the candidate’s personal team or the party’s campaign team?
   b. Why did the party operates separate accounts from the candidate?
   c. Were there moment of contradictions in reporting on social media from the party’s accounts and the candidate’s accounts?
   d. How does the party intend to overcome such challenges in the future?

19. Does the party educate it members on how to use social media?

20. How relevant is social media to your party in this post campaign era?