

**THE USE OF FACEBOOK IN THE 2012 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS: A
CONTENT ANALYSIS OF JOHN DRAMANI MAHAMA AND NANA ADDO
DANQUAH AKUFO-ADDO'S OFFICIAL PAGES**

BY

NANA KWAME OSEI FORDJOUR

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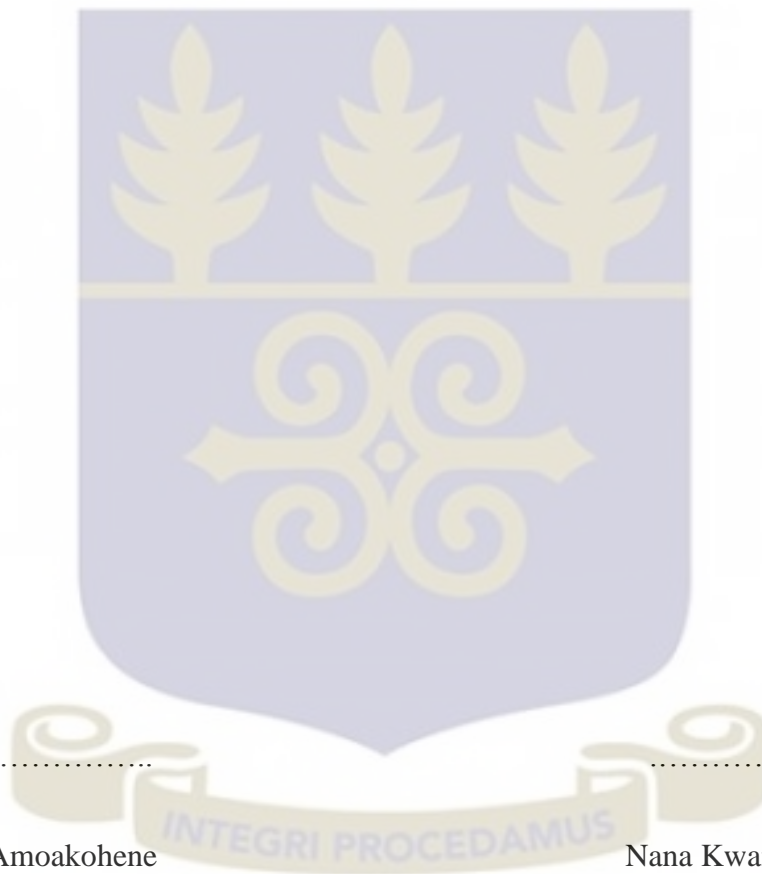


**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
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DECLARATION

I declare that, except for references to other people's work which have been duly acknowledged, this dissertation is as a result of my own research conducted at the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. The work was supervised by Dr. Margaret I. Amoakohene.



.....
Dr. Margaret I. Amoakohene

(Supervisor)

Date.....

.....
Nana Kwame Osei Fordjour

(Student)

Date.....

ABSTRACT

This study is a quantitative content analysis of the textual Facebook wall posts of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo, during the 2012 election campaign. The principal goal of the research was to determine whether the Facebook wall posts of both candidates fell under the functions, topics and sub topics of political campaign discourse. A sample of textual posts from the 1st of August to the 6th of December 2012, were analysed for this study. Using the functional theory of political campaign discourse as the bases for the analysis of candidates' Facebook posts.

The posts focused mainly on acclaims (84%) followed by attacks (15%). Defences (1%) were rarely employed and only used by John Dramani Mahama. Candidates' posts focused mostly on policy (45%), followed by character (55%), when it came to topics. When they addressed policy, the candidates discussed general goals (39%) in a similar proportion like future plans (38%), and past deeds (23%) were the least discussed policy sub-category. In talking about character, candidates' Facebook posts were mostly on ideals (45%), followed by leadership ability (37%) and personal qualities (18%) as the least of character sub topics discussed. Data for this study confirmed three hypotheses, after subjecting data through the chi-square goodness-of-fit test.

DEDICATION

This piece of work is dedicated to the glory of God Almighty, my family

&

to all lecturers of the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

To God be the glory for seeing me through this journey by the power of the Holy Ghost. I am thankful for His mercies, favour and wisdom throughout the period in undertaking this study. I am forever grateful to my parents, Mr and Mrs Fordjour, my five siblings Ruth, Stanley, Henry, Edward and Rebecca, for their priceless support and prayers during the entire course. My uncle, Dr. Yaw Kusi Fordjour, for his positive words and support throughout the period, God richly bless you.

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Finally I would like to appreciate my friend and brother, Mr. Eric Boateng, and to all other friends especially the class of 2013/2014 of the School, God bless you all for your support.

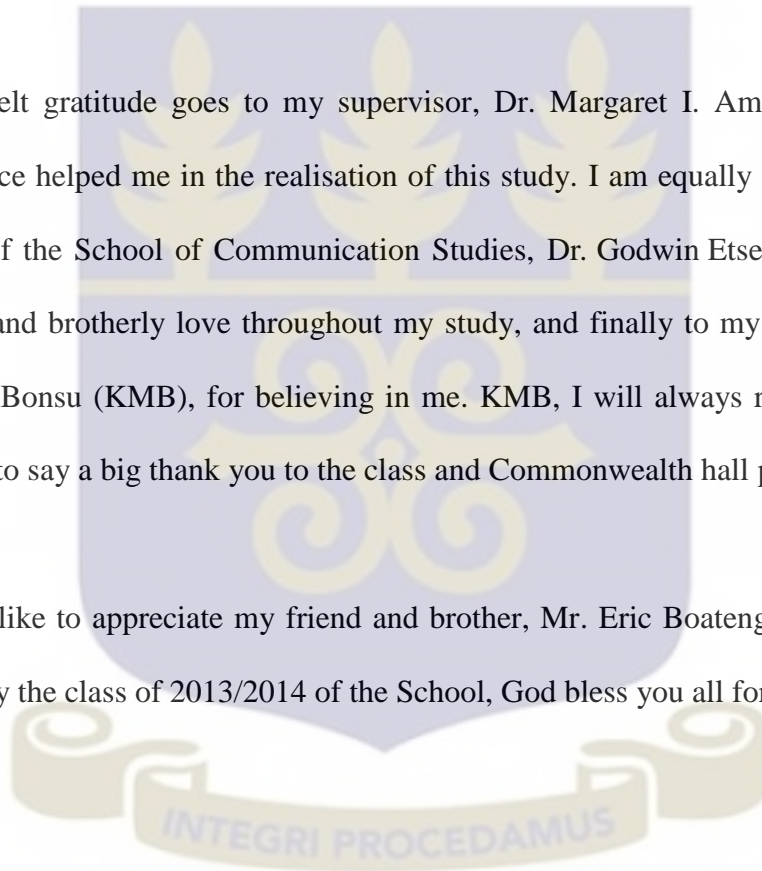


TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE

Declaration.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Tables.....	viii

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background of Study.....	1
1.1.2 Social Media and Political Communication.....	2
1.1.3 A Brief History of Facebook	4
1.1.4 The 2012 Election.....	5
1.2 Problem Statement.....	6
1.3 Research Objectives.....	7
1.4 Research Hypotheses.....	8

1.4.1 Reasons for Hypotheses.....	9
1.5 Scope of Study.....	10
1.6 Significance of Study.....	10
1.7 Operational Definition.....	11
1.8 Organisation of Study.....	11



CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 Introduction.....	12
2.2 The Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse	12
2.3 Literature Review.....	16

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

3.1 Introduction.....	25
3.2 Research Design.....	25
3.3 Content Analysis.....	25
3.4 Universe and sample.....	26
3.5 Data collection procedure.....	27

3.6 Unit of Analysis.....	27
3.7 Inter-coder reliability	29
3.8 Test for inter-coder reliability.....	30
3.9 Data Analysis.....	30

CHAPTER FOUR

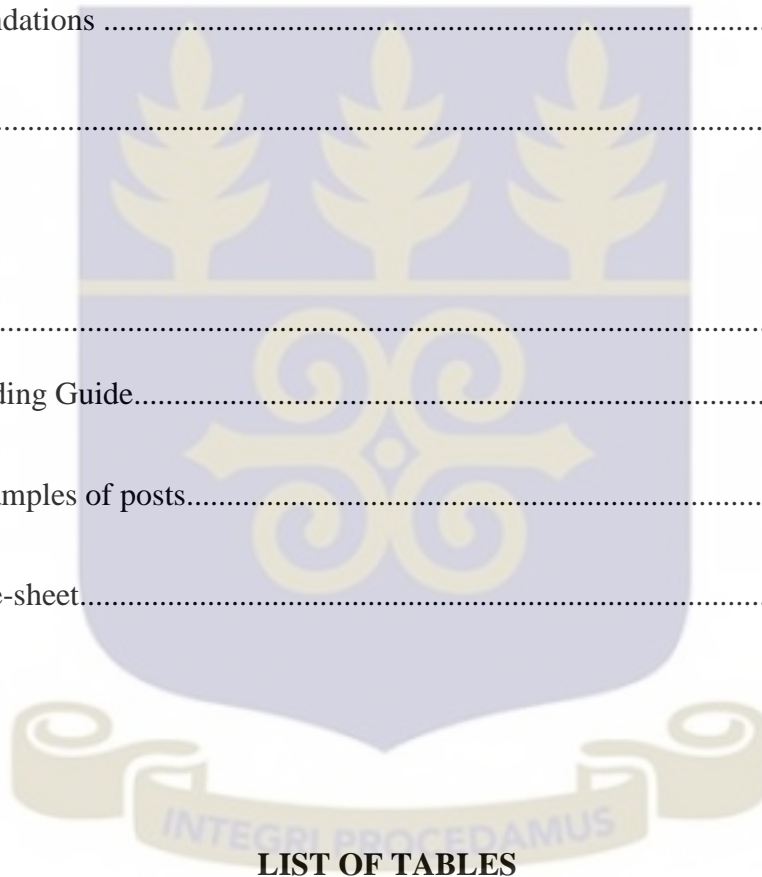
Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction.....	32
4.2 Functions of 2012 Facebook Campaign Posts.....	32
4.3 Topics of 2012 Facebook Campaign Posts.....	34
4.4 Forms of Policy in 2012 Facebook Campaign Posts	35
4.5 Forms of Character in 2012 Facebook Campaign Posts.....	36
4.6 Testing of Hypothesis.....	37
4.7 Discussion of findings and hypothesis.....	39
4.7.1 Functions.....	40
4.7.2 Topics.....	41
4.7.3 Subtopics.....	42

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Introduction.....	44
5.2 Summary of Major Findings.....	44
5.3 Limitations.....	45
5.3.1 Recommendations	45
5.4 Conclusion.....	46
References.....	47
Appendix A-Coding Guide.....	52
Appendix B-Examples of posts.....	54
Appendix –Code-sheet.....	57



LIST OF TABLES

TABLE TITLE	PAGE
1. Frequency Distribution of Functions.....	31
2. Frequency Distribution of Topics.....	32
3. Frequency distribution of Policy Subtopics.....	33
4. Character Subtopics.....	34



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to study

Social media is gradually becoming an important platform for disseminating information to several groups and individuals, as well as an effective tool in political communication. Hendricks and Denton (2010) argue that President Barack Obama's 2008 campaign was the first presidential campaign in which the new media was effectively utilised in a political campaign to reach out to the electorates and the main reason why Barack Obama was successfully elected into the highest office of the land (White House, 2008). Social networking sites (SNS) like Facebook have provided a convenient and affordable means of disseminating information in the political arena. In modern democracies, political parties have used these social media platforms to spread their political ideology, raise funds for campaigns and sometimes for activism (Shen, 2013).

After the 2008 US elections, political social media profiles have become an essential component in the communication strategies of many political candidates worldwide (Sheldon, 2008). The functional theory of political campaign discourse has widely been used in analyzing the contents of political campaigns in many regions (Mosier, 2013; Trammell, 2006). This study examined how the presidential candidates of the two main political parties (NDC and NPP) in Ghana's 2012 general elections, namely John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo used Facebook through the perspective of the functional theory.

1.1.2 Social Media and Political Communication

Social media as a channel for communication is becoming very critical and indispensable to political communication in the 21st century in terms of its use as a tool for political campaign and activism (Gustafson, 2012). Functions of social media platforms include online features such as interactivity, quick updates and multimedia (Kaid & Holtz-Bacha, 2008). Pavlik and McIntosh (2011) argue that social media, just like other traditional channels of mass communication, play four crucial roles in democracy, namely, surveillance (giving information that concerns pertinent issues in society); correlation (giving meaning to events and issues to help individuals gain a contextual understanding); cultural transmission (passing on of culture from one generation to another and moulding others to fit into a society); and entertainment (Pavlik & McIntosh, 2011; Bokor, 2013).

Dimitrova and Bystrom (2013) observe that since the inception of the internet and social media in the mid- 90s, there has been a transformation in political discourse and that social media has revolutionised political communication. Some scholars agree that the use of social media for political purposes had a positive impact on the probability of voting in the 1996 and 2000 US presidential elections, because it became an incentive to traditionally apathetic voters to participate in the events (Tolbert & McNeal, 2003; Hebshie, Sikanku & O'gara, 2008). A recent study in Germany posits that there is a positive relationship between access to internet and voter participation, so candidates who effectively employ social media, hold an electoral edge over their opponents (Czernich, 2012).

Social media, a subset of the new media, can shape our understanding of issues and events due to its viral and interactive nature. Social media platforms provide a new form of mediated communication that gives the audience access to on demand content and the privilege to

share and engage in discussion with others (Levy, 2008). With these attributes of social media, information travels faster on social media than the traditional media. Over the past few decades, computer-mediated communication has largely been an important part of the integrated communication plans of campaigns worldwide and has moved from being a surplus requirement to a necessity (Walther, 2010). Bentivegna (2002) argues that SNS were earmarked a promising phenomenon in political elections in the build-up to the 2000 U.S. Presidential campaign

However, the use of social media in the arena of political communication meteorically rose during and after the 2008 US presidential election (Woolley, Limperos & Oliver, 2010). Since then, the use of the new media in political campaigns has been adopted by many politicians and it is gradually usurping the role of the traditional media in politics (Williams & Gulati, 2012). Out of the numerous SNS, scholars argue that Facebook has been the most prominent SNS in political campaigns worldwide (Pavlik & McIntosh, 2011). Even though Facebook is essentially a social networking site that allows users to present a range of user-to-user information about themselves via a technology mediated communication, the effective use of Facebook during the 2008 presidential election showed that it was a potent tool for political communication (Farquhar, 2009; Woolley *et al.*, 2010). Additionally, the presence of politicians on Facebook provides individuals with the sense that direct communication can be achieved with the politicians and also demystifies the perceived pomposity of politicians (Steenkamp & Hyde-Clarke, 2014). In the 2012 elections, majority of the Ghanaian presidential candidates utilized Facebook disseminating their campaign messages.

1.1.3 A Brief History of Facebook

Facebook came into being in 2004 after Mark Zuckerberg introduced it as a strictly Harvard-based social networking site, the aim of Facebook was to building and maintain online as well as offline social ties on the University campus (Cassidy, 2006). Subsequently, it was adopted by Yale and Stanford Universities and gradually spread to other Universities in the US (Phillips, 2007). Eduardo Saverin, a co-founder of Facebook, was the first financier of the site and provided the initial funds for setting it up in Harvard. Subsequently, Peter Thiel reportedly gave Zuckerberg the first and most significant funds towards the upgrade and development of the site. Afterwards, Zuckerberg received two separate investment packages of \$12.7 million and \$27.5 million from Accel Partners and Greylock Partner, respectively, when the site showed some promises (Yadav, 2006). This gave him the purchasing power to buy the Facebook.com domain online domain for \$200,000 in 2005. In addition, Facebook signed an advertising deal with Microsoft to craft and sell ads on the site and the site receives a large chunk of income on advertisements placed on the edges of the site (Farquhar, 2009; Oreskovic, 2009).

Currently, Facebook has an estimated 900,000,000 daily users worldwide and said to be the most widespread social networking site in the world (ebizmba.com, 2014). Typically, users frame themselves on Facebook with the intention of altering the perception of their page visitors about them (Gustafsson, 2012). Users are attracted to Facebook because of its unique features and functions which include profiles, albums, games, videos-sharing, group creation, public pages, and creation of events (Shen, 2013). Facebook also helps politicians to increase their online support base and delivers real results to those that hone its benefits strategically.

1.1.4 The 2012 Ghanaian Elections

Prior to the 2012 elections, Ghana had gone through five successful elections with the NPP winning two (2000 and 2004) of these elections while the NDC had won three (1992, 1996, and 2008). Gyimah-Boadi(2013) argues that the 2012 Ghanaian election has been described as one of the most intriguing and controversial elections in the history of Ghana because it was an election in which the two major parties(NDC and NPP) were optimistic of electoral victories and the first time biometric verification was used in a general election in Ghana. Ghanaians voted on December 7 and 8, 2012, to elect a President and members of the legislature in the sixth election of the Fourth Republic of Ghana. The two days of voting was necessitated by faulty verification machines at some polling stations.

The Electoral Commission's declared results were challenged in the Supreme Court by the NPP, over alleged electoral malfeasance which they claimed marred the 2012 General Election. A nine-member team of Supreme Court Judges was empanelled by the Chief Justice to adjudicate the petition brought forth by the NPP and come out with a verdict. Finally, on the August 29, 2013, the Judges came out with a 5-4 ruling against the petitioners, claiming that the incumbent John Dramani Mahama was legitimately elected in the 2012 elections (Keteku, 2013). Even though the 2012 elections was surrounded by controversies, scholars like Bokor (2013) have argued that social networking sites (SNS) like Facebook and Twitter were used extensively by both the NDC and NPP in their campaigns. This shows that even in the democratic dispensation of a developing country like Ghana, Facebook was adopted by politicians in achieving their political goals in the 2012 elections. Therefore, this study seeks to functionally analyse the textual posts on the Facebook pages of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo. Ghana's democracy has been hailed as a model for

Africa by various international organisations worldwide, after successfully going through peaceful elections since 1992 (Jockers, Kohnert & Nugent, 2008).

1.2 Problem Statement

The use of the Internet and social media in political campaigns worldwide has received much scholarly attention. However, most of these studies have concentrated on developed countries and their use of social media, with majority of them focusing on the Internet and social media use in the 2008 US General Elections. The use of traditional forms of media in political campaigns during elections in the Fourth Republic Ghana, has also received so much attention from some scholars, but only few have looked at social media use in Ghana. A recent report on the worldwide Internet usage (internet users by country, 2014) claims that Ghana is ranked 63rd in world Internet usage. Furthermore, the report suggests that there are about 5,171,933 Internet users in Ghana and the internet penetration rate currently stands at 19.56%, a 15% increase from the previous year's figure of 4,482,669. Additionally, a recent report on Facebook usage in Africa (top African countries on Facebook) ranks Ghana as number eighth African country with high usage. Furthermore, it estimates about 1,465,560 Ghanaians actively use Facebook and rates Ghana as an up-and-coming powerhouse in ICT. In view of this increase in general Internet usage, political candidates in Ghana have begun to utilise these new media channels to reach out to some voters.

The functional theory of political campaign discourse has mostly been used to examine the content of political campaign messages in several jurisdictions like South Korea, US, Taiwan, but no known studies have tested its applicability in a Ghanaian context. Additionally, the functional theory has mostly been used to examine political debates, political advertisement, campaign news and speeches, but has only been used on a few occasions to analyse social

media platforms like Facebook. A systematic study of the functions of Facebook use in Ghana, a country within Africa, would be a contribution to, or maybe the start of, a scholarly effort to understand how political communication functions within a different political and cultural setting than the traditionally examined ones like the U.S or Europe via the social media. This study will therefore apply the functional theory to analyse messages posted on the Facebook wall of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo.

1.3 Research Objectives

The study sought to:

- Find out whether the Facebook posts of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo fell under the functions (acclaims, attacks and defence) of political campaign discourse.
- Determine whether the Facebook posts of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo fell under the topic (policy and character) of political campaign discourse.
- Find out whether the Facebook posts of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo fell under the sub categories of policy(past deeds, general goals & future plans) and character (leadership ability, personal quality & ideals) of political campaign discourse

1.4 Research Hypotheses

According to Wimmer and Dominick a hypothesis is “a formal statement regarding the relationship between variables and is tested directly.” Subsequently, they explain that “the predicted relationship between the variables is either true or false” (Wimmer & Dominick 2003:24). This study was contextualised within the functions and topics of the functional theory of political campaign discourse and set out to test the following hypotheses:

H₁: John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo are likely to acclaim more than attack in their Facebook posts in the 2012 Presidential campaigns.

H₀: John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo are not likely to acclaim more than attack in their Facebook posts in the 2012 Presidential campaigns.

H₂: John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo are likely to attack more than defend in their Facebook posts in the 2012 Presidential campaigns.

H₀: John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo are not likely to attack more than defend in their Facebook posts in the 2012 Presidential campaigns.

H₃: John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo are likely to discuss policy more than character in their Facebook posts in the 2012 Presidential campaigns.

H₀: John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo are not likely to discuss policy more than character in their Facebook posts in the 2012 Presidential campaigns.

1.4.1 Reasons for Hypotheses

H₁: Benoit (2007) found in the US that acclaims were more than attacks and that defences are the rarely used function. Additionally, studies have shown that candidates who attack more than acclaim are considered unfavourably by electorates because they are viewed as not prepared to hold office (Lee & Benoit, 2004). Also, the 2012 Ghanaian elections we witnessed a lot of promises from candidates from the NDC and the NPP, during the campaign period. Based on the above points, we can assume that the Facebook posts of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo will have more acclaims than attacks.

H₂: Lee and Benoit (2004) as well as Benoit and Airne (2005) argue that defences are the least favoured function because candidates who defend frequently are seen as reactive rather than proactive. In addition, the researchers claim that defences may inform or remind people about an opponent's weaknesses. Finally, during the 2012 presidential elections, we witnessed a lot of insults on our airwaves between politicians to the extent that the Media Foundation for West Africa, conducted studies to sanitise our airwaves. With the above points, we can assume that the functions of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo same Facebook posts will have more attacks than defences.

H₃: Benoit and Delbert (2009) claim that political campaign discourse can occur on two topics, which are policy and character. Similarly, previous ((Benoit, 2007) studies on election campaign messages in the US and Asia have shown that topics of general election presidential debates are skewed towards policy (75%) compared with character (25%) For this reason, we can assume that Facebook posts will follow that trend.

1.5 Scope of Study

This study was about the use of Facebook by the two leading presidential candidates in the 2012 Ghanaian elections (John Mahama & Nana Addo) hence examined the textual Facebook wall posts and the functions they served. The scope of this study was the textual posts from 31st of August to the 6th of December were analysed because the functional theory of political campaign discourse is only used to analyse texts.

1.6 Significance of Study

The era of the social media platforms such as Facebook has given political parties and candidates an additional medium to communicate with their electorates. The use of Facebook as a medium for political communication gained prominence especially after the 2008 US Presidential elections (Wu, 2009). This study was relevant because it provided the latest trends in Facebook use by politicians in Ghana, in terms of announcing their political views. Also, it helped explore how political candidates take advantage of Facebook in achieving their political goals in Ghana. The findings of this study can help Political consultants to develop their Communication strategies using Facebook. Finally, the study has also contributed to knowledge in the field of political communication in the Ghanaian democratic system and provided literature for future studies in the area of Facebook and political campaigns.

1.7 Operational Definition

Post: Messages that are displayed on the Facebook wall by the owner or administrator of the page.

Profile page: An individual's customised personal Facebook account that contains information the owner wants others to view.

Social media: Online platforms/communities that promotes user-to-user interactivity.

Web 2.0: The second stage of internet development that is characterised by the transformation of web pages to dynamic or user-generated content and the growth of social media.

Wall: Walls are sections on a user's Facebook page that can be written on by friends within the user's network.

1.8 Organisation of Study

This study was presented in five chapters. The first chapter (chapter one) gave an introduction and background to the research while it offered an insight into the concepts and variables that were studied. Additionally, this chapter looked at other related topics, the objectives, problem statement and significance of the study. In Chapter Two, studies related to the research were reviewed as well as the theoretical framework for the study was discussed. The functional theory of political campaign discourse was discussed in detail. Chapter Three, focused on the methodology, research design, universe and sample, Data Collection Procedure and data analysis. Findings as well hypothesis of this study were presented and discussed in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the study and gives recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAME WORK & LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the theory that underpinned the study. The Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse was examined to analyse the textual posts on Facebook walls of the two leading candidates in the 2012 Ghanaian elections. Furthermore, this chapter reviews scholarly work related to the study.

2.2 The Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse

The functional theory of political campaign discourse was propounded in the US by William Benoit and a team of researchers in the 1990s. It has widely been used to analyse the contents of presidential debates, television news, campaign ads, news coverage, contents of newspapers, emails etc (Wen, 2014). These studies have been conducted in the US, Taiwan, South Korea and other Western countries.

2.2.1 Assumptions of functional theory

The functional theory is underpinned by some theoretical assumptions. Benoit (2006) explains that the functional theory of political campaign discourse has six main assumptions and these are:

- **Voting is a comparative act:** This is because before an electorate decides on whom to vote for, they have to make a choice between two or more candidates and this is done through comparative judgment. There is a likelihood that the electorate may not be in total agreement with a candidate or party but agrees with them to a large extent and this is because political parties and candidates may have both good and bad

points. Eventually, an electorate chooses a preferable candidate or party based on factors that are of most importance to the electorate in question (Benoit, 2006).

- **Candidates must distinguish themselves from opponents:** Stemming from the first assumption of the functional theory, since voting is a comparative act, candidates must tell voters what differentiates them from other candidates. If voters see no distinction between candidates, they have no reason to choose one over the other. This means that political candidates must come out with messages that will make them stand out from their opponents in an election. This does not also mean that candidates will not agree on some grounds or policies with their opponents, for instance issues pertaining to employment, inflation etc (Benoit, 2006).
- **Political campaign messages are important vehicles for distinguishing between candidates:** The third assumption also originates from the first two. Campaign messages are what candidates use to draw a distinction amongst their opponent(s) and highlight to voters. These messages are sometimes channeled to voters via candidates' speeches, political manifestoes, televised debates, viewing the candidate's website, information from Journalists covering candidates' campaign, press releases, political ads etc. The media through which voters seek campaign messages varies from one individual to the other. Finally, some voters hardly seek information about candidates. All they do is vote based on any little information they encounter during the campaign and before they cast their vote (Benoit, 2006).
- **Candidates establish likeability through acclaiming, attacking and defending:** The reason being that candidates must do their best to look different from their opponents and attractive to voters. Benoit *et al.* (2003) claim that differentiating between candidates alone does not guarantee electoral victory and political campaigns

must employ the three functions namely acclaims, attacks and defences, to establish voter preference. Acclaim messages portray a candidate or political party in a positive light to voters. The functional theory posits that campaign messages should mostly contain acclaims because they have no negative repercussions. On the other hand, attacks are campaign messages that speak negatively about an opposing candidate or ridicule an opponent in the eyes of voters. Attacks are expected to be minimal because some scholars have noted that voters dislike character assassination (Jasperson & Fan, 2002). Lastly, defences are rebuttals to attacks from other candidates, individuals or political parties. Lee and Benoit (2004) argue that defences should be minimal because it can have three ramifications. Firstly, defenses can make a candidate look not proactive to voters. Also, they can make a candidate lose focus by concentrating on attacks levelled against them rather than the campaign. Lastly, defenses can remind voters of an attack they may have forgotten or inform voters who are not aware of an attack message (Benoit, 2006).

- **Campaign discourse occurs on two topics:** Policy and Character: The theory postulates that it is policy and character topics that help political candidates distinguish themselves from others. Policy messages deal with government plans or actions whether past, current or future that falls within the ambit of governance, for instance, education, employment and inflation. Character on the other hand deals with the candidates' personality or image. Statements that centre on a candidate's ability, competence, traits and qualification are character messages. Benoit (2003) observed after analysing several political debates and ads that, candidates who churned out more policy messages than their opponents, mostly won (as cited in Lee and Benoit, 2004).

- **A candidate must win majority of votes in an election:** Even though this assumption looks generic, it is very germane to Presidential campaigns especially. The theory argues that a candidate's campaign messages, should not target everyone but majority. This is because policies favourable to some voters may not be favourable to others. Secondly, the theory posits that the citizens who matter are the ones who actually vote.

In general all these assumptions apply to the Ghanaian political campaigns however, the current study concentrated on the fourth and fifth assumptions to study the textual Facebook wall posts of the two leading presidential candidates in the 2012 Ghanaian elections because the aim was to examine the functions and topics of the posts. The functional theory is appropriate for this study because it helps the researcher to make predictions about the nature of political messages (Benoit, 2006), which is the aim of this study. Also, it is well suited to simplifying the forms of campaign discourse and has proven an outstanding analytical tool. The functional theory has been applied successfully to various studies to study the nature of political messages (e.g., Wen 2014; Mosier 2013; Blomberg *et al.*2012). It can also be applied to diverse political messages such as debates, web pages, televised political ads and campaign speeches. Even though the functional theory of political campaign discourse has several advantages, there are some limitations to its application. The theory seems to be more suitable in two-party systems and seems to have a limited applicability in multi-party jurisdictions, because the discourse in these debates is more all-embracing. The main principle of the theory about winning the elections reveals that it is better suited to a two-party system, where the winner is always definite, but in a multi-party system, it may sometimes be difficult to find only one clear-cut winner.

The functional theory helps the researcher to make predictions about the nature of political messages (Benoit, 2006). The functional theory of political campaign discourse postulates that regardless of the medium employed, the sole intent of a campaign discourse is to acquire votes (Cho & Benoit, 2005). Candidates persuade voters that they are preferable to their opponent(s). Benoit (2006) claims that the functional theory can give electorates a better understanding of campaign messages for candidates vying for political offices.

In addition, Isotalus and Aarnio (2006) and Isotalus (2011) argue that functional theory is not equally suitable to analysing political campaign discourses in all cultures and not suitable for analysing non-presidential campaigns. The researcher observed that the functional theory has been developed to purposely analyse presidential campaigns, where a candidate's personality is critical. However, in parliamentary debates, the character of a parliamentary candidate is not as crucial as the character of a presidential candidate. Lastly, the researchers claim that attacks and defences are seemingly not basic forms of communication in Finnish political campaigns. Subsequently, Isotalus (2009) also observed that expressions of agreement are typical in Finnish political television debates and that these expressions do not fall into the same categories as the functional theory proposes.

2.3 Literature Review

Several researchers have conducted studies in the area of the Internet and social media use in politics. Some of these studies have focused on the role of social media in promoting political participation and relationships (Vesnic-Alujevic 2012; Steenkamp & Hyde-Clarke 2014); Hebshie, Sikanku & O'gara, 2008) while others have touched on the role of social media in political campaigns and political communication (Aparaschivei 2011; Woolley, Limperos

&Oliver 2010;Mosier 2013).Some scholars have also looked at the effects of SNS on individuals (e.g., Kim 2011) and findings of these studies have contributed significantly to knowledge in the area of social media and other web 2.0 platforms. The content of politicians' Facebook pages and profiles has received attention from several researchers either to confirm or reject specific theories and models in communication studies. While some scholars have examined textual posts on such politicians' Facebook pages, others have focused on non-textual posts or messages like photographs.

For instance, a study by Fernandes, Giurcanu, Bowers and Neely (2010) sought to find how Facebook fostered civic engagement and facilitated political dialogue in the 2008 US presidential elections. Fernandes *et al.* (2010) content analysed the Facebook pages and wall posts of the two leading presidential candidates in the 2008 US elections(John McCain and Barack Obama) using the Michigan model of voting behaviour, which states that electorates vote based on four reasons (partisanship, group affiliation, candidates' image and campaign issues). The researchers focused on Facebook pages created by University students in seven "swing" states (Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, and Ohio).They also observed that, the several topics posted on the walls showed that the groups covered a wide range of areas, from political topics to social interactions, web link, group organisational activities as well as emotional expressions. Fernandes *et al.* (2010) also confirmed the hypothesis that pro-Obama groups were more active on Facebook than pro-McCain groups. Finally, the finding suggested that online social networks facilitated political participation among young voters especially in the Universities.

Also, Steenkamp and Hyde-Clarke (2012) examined the use of facebook in political commentary in South Africa. They qualitatively content analysed comments on the Facebook

pages of the two main political parties in South Africa (DA and ANC) from the 14 to 21 June; 2010. The researchers sampled 111 comments collectively from the DA and ANC pages (26 for DA and 84 for ANC). Subsequently, Steenkamp et al. conducted in-depth interviews with party officials in charge of maintaining the Facebook pages. The study examined the comments under four theoretical assumptions:

- Facebook's plays role of a participatory tool and acts as an additional channel for political communication outside of traditional media.
- Facebook offers new ways of reaching individuals and targeting specific audiences.
- A political party's Facebook site facilitates political interaction and participation by making two-way communication possible.
- Facebook allows for increased public opinion and political participation.

The researchers observed that both the ANC and DA Facebook pages provided extra and sometimes extended exposure for political parties and more interactive communication avenues with the public. Also, the Facebook pages offered a wider range of avenues for information retrieval, dissemination of information and also participation than the traditional forms of media. Finally, findings showed that Facebook sites only impart information to members of the group and neither engage nor chat. Eventually, this leads to limited political interaction and participation overall. The findings of this study have laid the foundation for social media studies in an Africa context and also established that politicians use Facebook for one-way communication.

Keat (2012) content analysed the Facebook pages of two young female politicians (Tin Pei Ling and Nicole Seah) in the 2011 Singapore general elections and validated the contents with newspaper articles on the candidates from February, 2011 to May, 2011. The researcher

observed that campaigning on SNSs gives electorates the opportunity to shape the politician's image. Also, the researcher found that popularity on SNSs did not translate into electoral victory and this was because the Facebook users were not representative of the electorates and were generally younger people. Findings of this study prove that the political discourse on social media platforms may not necessarily be a reflection of majority opinion.

The functional theory of political campaign discourse has also been used by several scholars to investigate the nature of political campaign messages on various media platforms. For instance, Cho and Benoit (2005) conducted a study in the US, by applying the functional theory to examine news releases from six 2004 Democratic presidential primary candidates, the researchers content analysed news releases on the candidates' website. The researchers observed that majority of news releases were acclaims (70%), with attacks constituting less than half (29%) of the news releases and a few defences. On the other hand, candidates focused more on policy (55%) than character (34%). Additionally, in discussing policy the candidates discussed past deeds (38%), future plans (32%), and general goals (29%). When it came to character, they focused on personal qualities (37%), ideals (32%), and leadership ability (31%).

Benoit and Stein (2005) content analysed 715 US presidential campaign brochures and analysed it with the functional theory of political campaign discourse. The study analysed the brochures of presidential campaigns from 1948 to 2004 and observed the prevalence of acclaims (77%) more than attacks (23%) and defences (0.3%). In addition; the campaigns discussed policy topics (70%) more than character topics (30%). Subsequently, the researchers classified policy topics into past deeds (48%), general goals (43%) and future

plans (10%). Finally, character messages were further coded between the categories of a candidate's ideals (18) leadership ability (34%), and personal qualities (47%).

Another study by Trammell (2006) explored the prevalence of attacks and political statements on US campaign blogs from a public relations angle. The researcher content analysed the campaign blogs of President Bush and Senator Kerry through the functional theory. The study found that out of 694 and 496 blogs post from Kerry and Bush respectively, more than half (65.9%) of Kerry's post and more than a third (34.15%) of Bush's posts were coded as political statements. The researchers also observed that when it came to attack, Kerry held an edge over Bush with 89.5% of attacks on his campaign blog against Bush's 72.2%. This study confirmed the assumption that opposition candidates attack more frequently than their incumbent counterparts and also majority of messages on political platforms are political statements. So this study will examine the Facebook pages of Ghanaian Presidential candidates to see if the findings are similar.

A study by Lee and Benoit (2009) applied the functional theory in analysing television spots of the two leading candidates, in the 2002 Presidential election campaign in the Republic of Korea (Roh Moo-hyun and Lee Hoi-Chang). The researchers content analysed the television ads analysed six spots from Roh's television campaign and seven from Lee's aired on three different television stations. The study found that, Roh the incumbent candidate dedicated 83% of his campaign themes to acclaim whiles Lee devoted 63% o. Regarding attacks, Roh dedicated only 15% to attacks whiles his opponent Lee 35%, however Roh dedicated 0.8 percent of his messages to defences whiles Lee had no defence messages(0%). Secondly, the researchers observed that there was a balance between themes that dealt with policy and character, thus half (50%) concentrated on policy whiles the other half focused on character. Additionally, in discussing policy the candidates discussed past deeds (43%), future plans

(10%), and general goals (48%). When it came to character, the candidates focused on personal qualities (45%), ideals (18%), and leadership ability (38%).

Also, a study by Benoit and Benoit-Bryan (2013) content analysed the 2010 British Prime Minister election debates between three candidates (Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Nick Clegg) through the functional perspective. The researchers found out that the candidates used acclaims (60%) more than attacks (36%) or defences (4%). In addition, the study observed that the topics the candidates discussed were more of policy (78%) than character (22%). In addition, the policy topics discussed by candidates were past deeds (26%), future plans (27%), and general goals (47%). Finally, candidate's character messages focused on personal qualities (66%), ideals (22%), and leadership ability (12%).

Benoit (2013) content analysed the 2011 Canadian prime ministerial debates between Michael Ignatieff of the Liberal party, Jack Layton of the New Democratic Party, and Gilles Duceppe of Bloc Quebecois, through the functional theory. The study found out that, there were similar rates of acclaims (46%) and attacked (45%) and defences (9%) were least common function. Additionally, the candidates discussed policy (70%) more than character (30%) in these debates. When it came to the subtopics of policy, candidates discussed past deed 38%, future plan 5% and general goal 57%. Finally, regarding character subtopics, discussions were more of personal quality 63%, than leadership ability 17% and Ideals 20%.

Wicks, Bradley, Blackburn and Fields (2011) content analysed 10 political blogs that focused on the 2008 presidential elections through the functional theory. The researchers found that there was no significant difference on Obama and McCain blogs with regards to attacks (29% and 25% respectively). However, John McCain received the highest number of attacks (334)

levelled against him by Jack and Jill politics (a politically nonaligned blog). The study also found out that, even though attacks appeared on the various blogs, only few attacks came from the Candidates themselves. Also, the researchers observed a little less than half (45%) of acclaims on each blog of candidates. Finally, the study found only few rebuttals on the blogs. This study is an indication that blogs and other social media platforms are used for attacks, acclaims, and, rebuttals. Furthermore, the findings confirm the applicability of the functional theory on various platforms such as blogs.

Mosier (2013) sought to find out the frequency of acclaim in opposition to attack messages and compared messages dealing with Character to messages dealing with Policy. The researcher content analysed 280 official e-mails sent from the 2012 Obama and Romney campaigns covering the period of September 16, 2012 to November 6, 2012. In total, majority (82.6%) of candidate e-mails were coded as an “acclaim” message, and a little below two out of ten messages (16.7%) fell under “attack”, meaning they requested an initial commitment be made by the recipient. Additionally, a little above one out of 10 (15%) of candidates’ e-mail messages were coded as being related to character, while policy messages made up two out of 10 (20%) of all messages. Finally, character messages were further coded between the categories of a candidate’s ideals (5.7%), leadership ability (7.1%), and personal qualities (2.1%). Results suggested that persuasion of the undecided voter was not the purpose of presidential e-mail messages in the 2012 election. Additionally, it confirms the fourth assumption of the functional theory that states that candidates establish preferability through acclaims, attacks and defenses Benoit (2006).

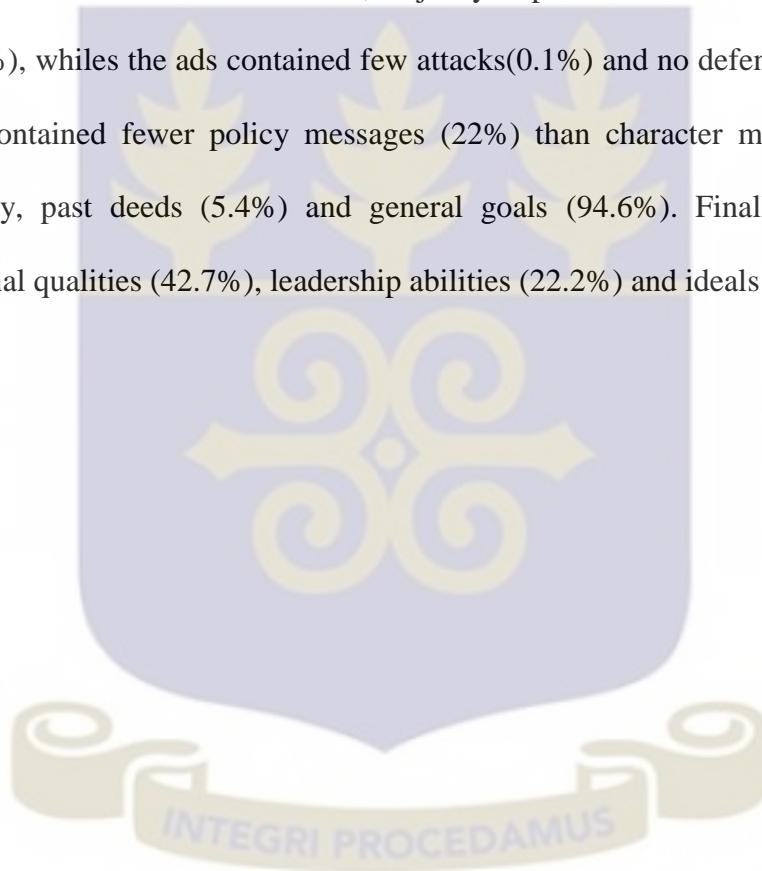
Wen (2014) employed the functional theory to content analyse the Facebook pages of two leading candidate 2012 Presidential elections (Ma Ying-jeou and Tsai Ying-wen) in Taiwan.

The researcher conducted the study by sampling textual posts over two different periods, the first period focused on all textual posts two month prior to the election and the other period was two months after the elections prior to the end of the winner's first term. The study observed that, on the average each candidate posted a message each day on their Facebook pages over both periods. The researcher observed that, both candidates dedicated more than 70% of their Facebook posts to acclaim and about 20% to attack but had very little defenses. During the first period, the incumbent Ma Ying-jeou had 76.5% of his posts coded as acclaims while his opponent Tsai had 70.9% of his posts as acclaims. When it came to attacks, Tsai held an edge over Ma with 25% of his post being attacks against 18.3%, two months prior to the election. Also, Ma stressed on policy more than character in the first period more than Tsai. Conversely, the study observed that after Ma won the 2012 elections, his Facebook posts were more of character than policy. On the other hand, Tsai stressed more on policy than character during the second period. Secondly, Ma's increased his acclaim and defence posts while attacks reduced significantly, in the second period. In contrast, Tsai's attacks increased while his defense and acclaim posts decreased. The study has expanded the applicability of the functional theory to Facebook and also has shown that the functions of Facebook posts during campaign can change after elections. This study was conducted in an Asian country and findings may be different in an African Country like Ghana.

Shen (2013) content analysed the Facebook walls of the three main candidates in the 2012 US elections (Barack Obama, Ron Paul, and Mitt Romney). The researcher analysed 431 textual posts on candidates' Facebook pages from January to June, 2012, using the functional theory of political campaign discourse. The study found that, Obama and Romney used their Facebook as posts to acclaim more than attack, and defend while Ron Paul used Facebook only to acclaim and attack. In addition, the research found that all three candidates used their

Facebook posts to discuss policy more than character topics. Since this study was conducted in a Western country (US), we will find out if the findings will be similar to that of a developing country like Ghana.

Alqaseer (2014) content analysed 100 political ads in two Kuwaiti newspapers (Alwatan and Alqabas), in the build to two separate elections (March to May 2008 and December 2011 to February 2012). The researcher observed that, majority of political ads in Kuwait had acclaim messages (99.9%), while the ads contained few attacks (0.1%) and no defences. On the other hand, the ads contained fewer policy messages (22%) than character messages (78%). In discussing policy, past deeds (5.4%) and general goals (94.6%). Finally, character ads contained personal qualities (42.7%), leadership abilities (22.2%) and ideals (35.2%).



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the method used in undertaking this study. The study used quantitative approach to examine the textual Facebook wall posts of the presidential candidates and grouped them into functions, topics and sub topics.

3.2 Research design

The study was conducted using quantitative content analysis to examine posts on the official Facebook pages of the two candidates for the 2012 elections in Ghana: John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo -Addo. Quantitative research generally employs numbers to communicate the amount of variable presence and looks at prevalence of a phenomenon (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003).

3.3 Content Analysis

Babbie (2009) describes content analysis as a method which can be used to analyse any communication be it a written text or image. It is frequently used to classify or explain the existence of something, which is the main purpose of this study (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). In this study, a content analysis is an ideal choice for analysing presidential candidates' Facebook pages to help generalise how they use Facebook to fulfill their specific needs such as gaining support from their electorates. According to Reinard (1998, p 180), content analysis is “a systematic method of analysing the content and the treatment of

communication, which usually results in the development of objective and quantitative information.

3.4 Universe and Sample

The textual posts on the official Facebook pages of the two main presidential candidates from the 31st of August to the 6th of December (www.facebook.com/nakufoaddo and www.facebook.com/JDMahama) was used as data for this study, because the functional theory of political campaign discourse is used to analyse textual messages, textual messages were purposively sampled (pictures and videos were not included). The considerations that went into choosing this sampling method were; candidate John Dramani Mahama was endorsed by the NDC on the 31st of August, 2012 after the demise of their candidate President John Evans Atta Mills.

Similarly, Facebook posts unlike other forms of media such as the print media are not posted in predictable periods but as and when the candidate or administrator of the page wants to update the electorates on issues. Furthermore, from late August to the eve of the election (December 6th, 2012) is the peak period of campaign and social media is a recent phenomenon. Lastly, purposive sampling was used by other scholars like Wen (2014) and Shen (2013), to study the contents of textual Facebook posts in Taiwan and US respectively. In total, 154 textual posts were analysed over the selected period (August 1st to 6th December, 2012) and out of that, the incumbent John Dramani Mahama having 72 posts and the challenger Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo having 82 posts.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

The Coding Scheme used by Choi and Benoit (2004) was adopted for this study. Facebook posts on the pages of the two candidates were downloaded on March 23, 2014. The coding process involved four basic steps:

Firstly, the texts were coded and classified into themes. A theme can be defined as a statement about a subject or argument about a candidate (Berelson, 1952; Holsti, 1969 & O'Keefe, 1977). According to Benoit *et al.* (1998), "a theme can comprise a short phrase or as long as several sentences" (p.49). Subsequently, the themes were grouped into the functions they performed (acclaim, attack, defence) and the functions were classified by topic: policy and character (Benoit *et al.*, 1998; Choi & Benoit, 2004; Mosier, 2013; Wen, 2014). Posts that did not fall under any function, topic or sub topic were not coded like when a candidate posts a message like "vote for me", this is because such a message does not give any reason why he/she should be voted for. Finally, the posts were broken into the various subtopics of policy (past deeds, general goals and future plans) and character (leadership ability, personal quality and ideals).

3.6 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study was all textual Facebook wall posts of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo. These posts were classified into themes and subsequently broken into the functions they played. The coding guide developed was the basis for this study. The coding scheme for the study captured and operationalised the content categories as follows:

Acclaims (P): Acclaim themes comprised posts that indicated a candidate or their political party's service to the country, their benefits to the country and its people such as job creation,

social interventions, debts reduction. Acclaims portray candidates and their political parties in a positive light and enhance the image of the candidate. An example is, “On 7th December 2012, vote Nana Akufo-Addo and the NPP for more jobs, quality healthcare and free quality SHS” (posted by Nana Addo).

Attacks (A): Attacks judge other candidates or political parties in an unfavourable way or suggest their failure on different types of issues like energy, health. For example, “I know that on the NDC side there is so much propoganda that they use when talking about the economy” (posted by Nana Addo).

Defences (D): A defence post refutes another candidate or political party’s attacks or accusations made either on Facebook or other media. Defences are meant to repair or minimise damages of attacks. For instance, “ladies and gentlemen do not allow anyone to fool you, you are living in one of the greatest nations on this planet, and there is hope for more” (posted by John Mahama).

The functions were broken into topics:

Policy (Pol): Policy themes are posts concerned with governmental action be it in the past, present or future. Also it pertains to problems related to governmental actions. Example, “Transforming the economy will mean instead of just exporting our natural resources and raw materials we will add value for higher revenue by industrialising and manufacturing” (posted by Nana Addo).

Character (Char): Character posts reveal the candidate’s personal belief, personal trait, ability or attributes. For example, “President Mahama maintains that if it is God's wish, the

NDC will be re-elected to provide Ghanaians with the needed leadership” (posted by John Mahama).

The topics were later broken into sub- topics:

Past Deeds (PD): Past deeds are governmental actions taken by candidates or political party in the past. For instance, “We have achieved one million metric tons of cocoa production in a year, and have paid the highest percentage of FOB price in Ghana’s history (posted by John Mahama).

Future Plan (FP): Future plans are action a candidate will take when elected or re-elected into office. Such as, “Our macro-economic goals in the next four years are an average GDP growth rate of at least 8% per annum, a sustained single digit rate of inflation, low interest rates, an overall budget deficit of approximately 5% of GDP and gross international reserves that will cover not less than four months of imports” (posted by John Mahama).

General Goal (GG): General goals are less specific policy goals or targets of candidates when elected or re-elected into office. For example, “We need to build a knowledge-based economy, and that begins by making sure all our children have access to ICT” (posted by Nana Addo).

Character Sub topics:

Personal Qualities (PQ): Personal qualities refer to candidates’ individual characteristics like honesty, respect and decency. For instance, “I know and respect the importance of education, the value that it brings not only to the students, but also to their families, communities and to the entire country” (posted by John Mahama).

Leadership ability (LA): Leadership ability refers to statements about a candidate or their political party’s competence in government. For example, “Ghana is blessed with natural

resources and it should be easier to educate our population, if only we have the courage to make the right decisions” (posted by Nana Addo).

Ideals (ID): Ideals refer to the candidate or political party’s basic principles or value. Such as, “I am committed to peace and I will do everything necessary on my part to ensure that peace prevails before, during and after the 2012 election (posted by Nana Addo).

3.7 Inter-coder Reliability

Coding was carried out by the researcher and an independent coder. The independent coder was tutored on the units of analysis and was taken through the coding guidelines and the coding sheet. The objective of the tuition was to ensure that the coder meticulously understood the coding process in order to obtain more reliable data for the study. The tutoring sessions also granted the opportunity for definitions to be reviewed, for improving upon the coding guideline until coder was familiar and had a full understanding of the coding procedure.

3.8 Test for Inter-coder Reliability

Coding of the Facebook wall posts of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo was carried out by two coders who were trained to identify the unit of analysis and the content categories, and also taken through the coding guide and sheet. Both coders analysed 10% of the total content of the two Facebook pages using Cohen’s (1960) Kappa (a measure used to examine the agreement between coders on the assignment of categories of a categorical variable) to test reliability. Landis and Koch (1977) explained that Cohen’s (1960) Kappa test values which range from 0.40 to 0.59 are considered moderate, those from 0.60 to 0.79 are considered substantial, while those above 0.80 are considered outstanding. The test of reliability between the two coders was 0.92 for functions (acclaims, attacks or

defences), 0.93 for topics (policy or character), 0.93 for forms of policy (past deeds, future plans or general goals), and 0.90 for forms of character (personal qualities, leadership ability, or ideals). The steps involved in calculating the test for inter-coder reliability were:

- Open the file KAPPA.SAV. Enter data from independent coders.
- Before performing the analysis on the summarized data, specify on SPSS that the Count variable is a “weighted” variable.
- Select Data/Weight Cases...and select the “weight cases” option with *Count* as the Frequency variable.
- Select Analyse/Descriptive Statistics/Crosstabs.
- Select coder ‘A’ as Row and coder ‘B’ as column.
- Click on the Statistics button, select “Kappa” and then “Continue”.
- Click OK to display the results for the Kappa inter-coder reliability

From the categorization by Landis and Koch (1977), the level of agreement between the two coders would be considered outstanding. This means that the guidelines for coding were reliable enough for actual coding of contents for the study.

3.9 Data Analysis

The Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for analysing the coded categories. The findings were presented and hypotheses were tested using one way chi-square goodness-of-fit test to find out whether the variations in the distribution of functions and topics employed by the candidates were real or due to chance. One-way chi-square goodness-of-fit test is a statistic approach appropriate for investigating differences in the frequencies of categories.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The findings of this study are presented and discussed in this chapter. This research aimed at finding out the functions and topics of the Facebook wall posts of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo in the 2012 election campaigns. The objectives were: to find out whether the Facebook wall posts of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo fell under the functions of political campaign discourse, to examine whether the Facebook posts of the two candidates fell under the topics of political campaign discourse and to find out whether the candidates' Facebook posts fell under the subtopics of policy and character of political campaign discourse.

4.2 Functions of 2012 Facebook Campaign Posts

Functions of political campaign discourse refer to acclaims, attacks and defences. This study content analysed 154 Facebook wall posts of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo. It was realised that in all John Mahama had 72 posts while Nana Addo had 82. From Table 1, 495 themes were identified in the Facebook posts of both candidates with 313 themes identified in John Mahama's posts while 183 themes were identified in Nana Addo's posts. Both candidates' posts collectively had more acclaim (84%) themes than attack (15%) themes and defence themes (1%) were the least. Regarding acclaims, the incumbent John Mahama had a little above nine out of ten (93%) of his Facebook posts, while less than one out of ten (5%) posts were attacks and also less than one out of ten (2%) posts were defences. However, the challenger Nana Addo had almost seven out of ten

(67%) of his Facebook posts coded as acclaims, while more than a third (33%) of the posts were coded as attack themes and none of his posts were dedicated to defences (0%).

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Functions in Facebook posts of 2012 Presidential Candidates

Candidates	FUNCTIONS			Total
	Acclaims	Attacks	Defences	
John Mahama	293 (93%)	14 (5%)	6 (2%)	313(100%)
Nana Addo	122 (67%)	61(33%)	0 (0%)	183(100%)
Total	415 (84%)	74(15%)	6 (1%)	495(100%)

Acclaims versus Attacks $X^2 = 237.793$ $df=1$ $p = 0.000$

Attack versus Defence $X^2 = 57.00$ $df= 1$ $p = 0.000$

These values were derived after data was subjected to a chi-square goodness-of-fit test using the SPSS. Steps involved of the chi-square goodness-of-fit test were:

- Entering the category values into one variable and the observed frequencies into another variable.
- Select analyse, then nonparametric tests and chi-Square.
- Thirdly, select “Quality” as the test variable and entered the values for the null hypothesis proportions in numerical order by category value.
- Finally, the output gave the expected frequencies tables, the Chi-Square test statistic and p-value.

4.3 Topics of 2012 Facebook Campaign Posts

Topics of political campaign discourse are classified into policy and character. From table 2, regarding the topics, a total of 415 themes were identified in both John Mahama and Nana Addo's Facebook posts and both candidates had seven out of ten (70%) policy themes in their posts. Three out of ten (30%) of candidates' posts were identified as characterposts. Furthermore, a little above eight out of ten (81%) of John Mahama's posts were coded as policy themes while a little below two out of ten (19%) of character themes were found in his posts. On the contrary, less than half (45%) of Nana Addo's posts had policy themes while a little more than half (55%) of posts were classified as character themes.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Topics in Facebook posts of 2012 President Candidates

Candidate	TOPICS		Total
	Policy	Character	
John Mahama	237 (81%)	56 (19%)	293(100%)
Nana Addo	55 (45%)	67 (55%)	122(100%)
Total	292 (70%)	123(30%)	415(100%)

Policy versus Character $\chi^2 = 68.822$ $df = 1$ $p = 0.000$

These values were generated after data went through the chi-square goodness-of-fit test using the SPSS.

4.4 Forms of Policy in 2012 Facebook campaign Posts

Policy topics are further divided into past deeds, future plans and general goals. Past deeds are governmental actions taken in the past by a candidate or their political party; future plans are specific actions a candidate will take when elected or re-elected into office and general goals are non-specific or actions candidates will take when elected or re-elected into office (Benoit & Benoit-Bryan, 2013). From Table 3, a little less than a quarter (23%) of both John Mahama and Nana Addo's Facebook posts were classified under the topic past deeds, while more than three out of ten (38%) were coded under future plans and a little below four out of ten (39%) were classified under general goals.

However, John Mahama had a little less than three out of ten (28%) policy posts coded as past deeds, while more than three out of ten (38%) of John Mahama's policy posts fell under future plans and less than four out of ten (34%) of his policy posts were classified as general goals. Whereas none of Nana Addo's policy posts fell under past deeds (0%), a little less than four out of ten (38%) of his policy posts were future plans and a little more than six out of ten (62%) were coded as general goals.

Table 3: Frequency distribution of Policy Subtopics of 2012 Presidential Candidates

	SUBTOPICS OF POLICY			
Candidate	Past Deeds	Future Plans	General Goals	Total
John Mahama	66 (28%)	91 (38%)	80 (34%)	237(100%)
Nana Addo	0 (0%)	21(38%)	34(62%)	55(100%)
Total	66(23%)	112(38%)	114(39%)	292(100%)

4.5 Forms of Character in 2012 Facebook Campaign Posts

Finally, character topics were divided into personal quality, leadership ability and ideals. Personal quality refers to a candidate's personal character, while leadership ability is about a candidate or political party's competence in government whereas ideals are the candidate's or political party's principles and ideals. Regarding the subtopics of character, a little less than two out of ten (18%) of John Mahama and Nana Addo Facebook character posts fell under personal quality, while a little less than four out of ten (37%) were coded under leadership and a little less than half (45%) were ideals.

However, less than two out of ten (14%) of John Mahama's character posts fell under personal quality, while three out of ten (30%) were classified as leadership ability and a little more than half (56%) of his policy posts were put under ideals. On the contrary, a little less than two out of ten (18%) of Nana Addo's Facebook character posts fell under personal quality, while a little less than three out of ten (27%) were classified under leadership ability and close to a half (45%) of his policy posts fell under ideals.

Table 4: Character Subtopics of 2012 Presidential Candidates

	SUBTOPICS OF CHARACTER			
Candidate	Personal Quality	Leadership Ability	Ideals	Total
John Mahama	8 (14%)	17 (30%)	31 (56%)	56 (100%)
Nana Addo	14 (21%)	28 (42%)	25 (37%)	67(100%)
Total	22 (18%)	45 (37%)	56(45%)	123(100%)

4.6 Testing of Hypotheses

Testing of hypothesis involves the use of statistics in determining the likelihood that a given hypothesis was true (Mathworld, 2011). Given that this study was a quantitative content analysis, three research hypotheses were tested using Chi-square goodness- of- fit test. The first research hypothesis predicted that John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addowere likely to acclaim more than attack in their Facebook posts during the 2012 Presidential campaigns. The rationale for this hypothesis was that studies had proved that candidates who attacked more frequently than acclaimed were seen by the electorates as not prepared to hold an office (Lee & Benoit, 2004). Conversely, the null hypothesis stated that John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo were not likely to acclaim more than attack in their Facebook posts during the 2012 Presidential campaigns.

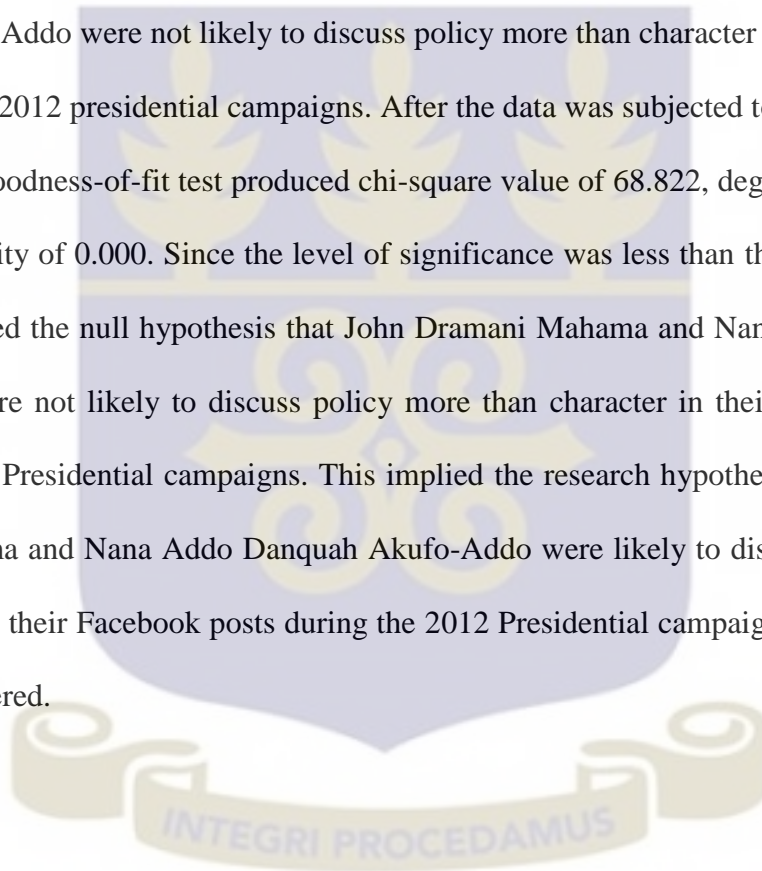
From Table 1, both candidates had a little more than eight out of ten (84%) of their Facebook posts as acclaims and had less than two out of ten (15%) of posts as attacks. When the data was subjected to a statistical test, the chi-square goodness-of-fit-test produced a chi-square value of 237.793, degree of freedom 1 and a probability of 0.000. The level of significance was less than the 0.05 set for the study which means a rejection of the null hypothesis which states that John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo are not likely to acclaim more than attack in their Facebook posts during the 2012 Presidential campaigns. This implied that the first research hypothesis that John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo were likely to acclaim more than attack in their Facebook posts during the 2012 Presidential campaigns was supported by the data gathered.

The second research hypothesis predicted that John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo were likely to attack more than defend in their Facebook posts during the 2012 Presidential campaigns. The reason for this hypothesis was that some scholars had argued that candidates who used defences a lot are seen as reactive rather than proactive (Lee & Benoit, 2004). In addition, candidates who used defences a lot may remind the electorates about attacks they may have forgotten about. The null hypothesis states that, John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo were not likely to attack more than defend in their Facebook posts during the 2012 Presidential campaigns.

From Table 1, above one out of 10 (15%) of both candidates Facebook posts fell under attacks while far below one out of 10 (1%) of their posts fell under attack. When the data was subjected to the statistical test (chi-square goodness-of-fit), **the steps were:** Enter the category values into one variable and the observed frequencies into another variable. Select analyse, then nonparametric tests and chi-Square. Thirdly, select “Quality” as the test variable and entered the values for the null hypothesis proportions in numerical order by category value. Finally, the output gave the expected frequencies tables, the Chi-Square test statistic and p-value.

The chi-square goodness-of-fit test produced a chi-square value of 57.00, degree of freedom of 1 and a probability of 0.000. The level of significance was less than the 0.05 set for the study which means a rejection of the null hypothesis that John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo were not likely to attack more than defend in their Facebook posts during the 2012 Presidential campaigns. This means the research hypothesis that John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo were likely to attack more than

defend in their Facebook posts during the 2012 presidential campaigns was supported by the data gathered. Finally, the third hypothesis predicted John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo were likely to discuss policy more than character in their Facebook posts during the 2012 presidential campaigns. The reason being that, Benoit (2007) claimed that previous studies in the US and Asia on election campaign messages had shown that, topics of general election presidential debates are skewed towards policy (75%) compared with character (25%). The null hypothesis states that John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo were not likely to discuss policy more than character in their Facebook posts during the 2012 presidential campaigns. After the data was subjected to a statistical test, the chi-square goodness-of-fit test produced chi-square value of 68.822, degree of freedom of 1 and a probability of 0.000. Since the level of significance was less than the 0.05 set for the study, we rejected the null hypothesis that John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo were not likely to discuss policy more than character in their Facebook posts during the 2012 Presidential campaigns. This implied the research hypothesis that said John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo were likely to discuss policy more than character in their Facebook posts during the 2012 Presidential campaigns was supported by the data gathered.



4.7 Discussion of Findings and Hypotheses

The goal of this study was to examine the 2012 Facebook campaign posts of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo from the Functional Theory perspective. In doing so, this study content analysed the textual messages in the Facebook posts of both candidates tested three hypotheses. The first focus of this study was to determine whether Facebook posts of both candidates fell under the functions of political discourse.

4.7.1 Functions

The findings of this study are consistent with other studies in the functional theory scholarship like Benoit (1995) and Wen (2014). In that, there were more acclaims (84%) than attacks (15%) and defences (1%). Acclaims were the most frequent function in candidates' Facebook posts, and this, Benoit (2007) predicted, will happen because candidates want to be viewed as competent office holders by their electorates. Similarly, Wen (2014) found that pattern after analysing the Facebook wall posts of Mitt Romney, Barack Obama and Ron Paul, in the USA. Cho and Benoit (2005) also found a similar occurrence when they analysed the news releases of the Democratic Party candidates in the 2004 primaries in the US. Also, other scholarly works in US (Trammell, 2006), U.K (Benoit & Benoit-Bryan, 2013), Kuwait (Alqaseer, 2014) and Taiwan (Wen, 2014) have produced similar findings. In addition, the functional analysis of debates (Benoit, 2013), social media platforms (Shen, 2013), campaign brochures (Benoit & Stein, 2005), emails (Mosier, 2013) and spots (Lee & Benoit, 2009) have also been consistent with these findings.

However, the findings of this study are in contrast with that of Benoit (2013), who found that acclaims and attacks were used in similar proportions in the prime ministerial debates in Canada. Likewise, Wicks *et al.* (2011) observed that attacks were used more frequently on political campaign blogs. Equally, another pattern in functional analysis studies is that, incumbents acclaim more than their opponents, while opponents attack more than their incumbent counterparts. The data from this study demonstrates that the incumbent, John Mahama dedicated a large portion (93%) of his Facebook posts to acclaim more than Nana Addo (67%). This may be because incumbents may have more on-going and completed projects than their opponents. On the other hand, Nana Addo had a larger portion of his post

(33%) attacks more than John Mahama (5%). We can assume that opponents have more attacks because they may need to do a lot to make an incumbent candidate who has high control over the State owned media, unpopular. Other social media studies in the functional discourse have produced similar findings (Shen, 2013; Wen, 2014; Trammell, 2007 & Wicks *et al.*, 2011). Under functions, two research hypotheses were tested. After data was subjected to a chi-square goodness-of-fit test, the data supported the first and second research hypothesis. Likewise, data from studies like Shen (2013), Mosier (2013), Benoit (2013), Benoit and Benoit-Bryan (2013) supported similar hypotheses. In summary, findings of this study were similar to some studies in several jurisdictions and media; however it contrasts the findings of others.

4.7.2 Topics

Aside the aforesaid patterns, findings of this indicated that there was more policy (70%) than character (30%) posts on the Facebook pages of both candidates. The incumbent John Mahama had more policy (81%) than character (19%) posts, while the challenger Nana Addo had more character (55%) than policy (45%) posts. The general usage of the policy topic more than character are consistent with the findings of Benoit and Stein (2005), who conducted a functional study on presidential campaign brochures and also, scholarly works on the functional analysis of news releases (Cho & Benoit, 2005), debates (Benoit & Benoit-Bryan, 2013) and presidential emails (Mosier, 2013). On the contrary, the findings of Lee and Benoit (2009), revealed a balance in policy (50%) and character (50%) messages in the television ads of the two leading candidates in the 2002 South Korean election campaigns. The functional analysis of social media campaign pages (Shen, 2013; Mosier, 2013), debates (Benoit & Benoit-Bryan, 2013; Benoit, 2013) and campaign brochures (Lee & Benoit, 2009),

also supported the third hypothesis. In summary, the Facebook wall posts of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo discussed more policy than character topics.

4.7.3 Subtopics

Subtopics of political campaign discourse were present in the Facebook wall posts of John Mahama and Nana Addo. Regarding subtopics of policy, this study found that both candidates discussed more general goals (39%) than future plans (38%) and past deeds (23%). The incumbent, John Mahama posted future plans (38%) more than any other policy subtopic on his Facebook page while Nana Addo's posts had more general goals (62%) than any other policy subtopics. From the high occurrences of general goals in the Facebook posts of the two candidates, we can imply that Ghanaian electorates are moved by general campaign promises, hence its high usage on the Facebook walls of both candidates. The results of this study are similar to the findings of Benoit (2013) in analysing the Canadian Prime Ministerial debates. In addition, some studies with functional theory like Alqaseer (2014), Benoit and Benoit-Bryan (2013) as well as Lee and Benoit (2009), found that general goals were the most prevalent policy subtopic in political campaign messages. On the contrary, studies by Cho and Benoit (2005) as well as Benoit and Stein (2005), observed that past deeds were the most frequent policy subtopic discussed in news releases and presidential campaign brochures respectively.

Finally, all three character subtopics were present on the Facebook wall posts of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo. Out of 123 character posts, ideals (45%) were the most frequent subtopic of character used, followed by leadership ability (37%) and personal quality (18%). Similarly, Wicks *et al* (2011) found a consistent pattern of high ideals in analysing political campaign blogs in the 2008 US presidential elections. On the contrary, function studies in Canada (Benoit, 2013), UK (Benoit & Benoit-Bryan, 2013),

Republic of Korea (Lee & Benoit, 2009) and Kuwait (Alqaseer, 2014) found personal quality as the most prevalent character subtopic in political campaign messages. In addition, the functional analysis of news releases of Democratic presidential candidates in the US (Cho & Benoit, 2004) as well as the analysis of presidential campaign brochures (Benoit & Stein, 2005). From table 4, John Mahama had most of character posts coded as ideals (56%), than leadership ability (30%) and personal quality. Conversely, the challenger Nana Addo has more leadership ability (42%) posts, than ideals (37%) and personal quality (18%).



CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to carry out a content analysis of the textual posts on the Facebook pages of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo, during the 2012 election campaign. The goal of the study was to classify the textual posts into functions, topics and subtopics of political campaign discourse. Textual posts from the 31st of August to the 6th of December were the sample for this study. The study used the quantitative content analysis approach to analyse the posts. This final section of the study presents a summary of the key findings, limitations of the study as well as recommendations for further research.

5.2 Summary of Major Findings

A major finding of this study was that the Facebook posts of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo contained functions (acclaims, attacks and defences) of political campaign discourse. In all the posts, acclaims were the most prevalent function while defences were the least. However, Nana Addo's Facebook page contained no defence posts. The study also found that collectively majority of the candidates' posts focused on policy than character. However, Nana Addo's posts focused more on character than policy.

It was also found that the Facebook posts of John Mahama and Nana Addo had both policy and character subtopics. Both candidates collectively had general goals as the most prevalent policy subtopic in their posts, while past deeds were the least. On the other hand, none of Nana Addo's posts were classified as past deeds. Finally, ideals were the most frequent character subtopics found in the Facebook posts of both candidates and personal quality was the least.

5.3 Limitations

Typical of any academic research, this study had some limitations. First of all, findings of this study cannot be generalised because did not analyse all the Facebook wall posts of all the presidential candidates who contested in the 2012 Ghanaian election. Also, this study applied the functional theory to the Facebook pages of two Ghanaian politicians and it is restricted to only Facebook and no other media platforms. Finally, even though the study classified posts into policy and topics discussed, the study did not state the type of policy or topics discussed. For instance, whether the policy discussed were on education, health, employment.

The research method chosen for the study was quantitative content analysis. Though very valuable in communication research, content analysis only provides a description of the content of the Facebook pages of two leading presidential candidates in the 2012 presidential elections. The method does not tell, for instance, how and why the candidates decided to focus on what they were posting and how it affected their electoral fortunes.

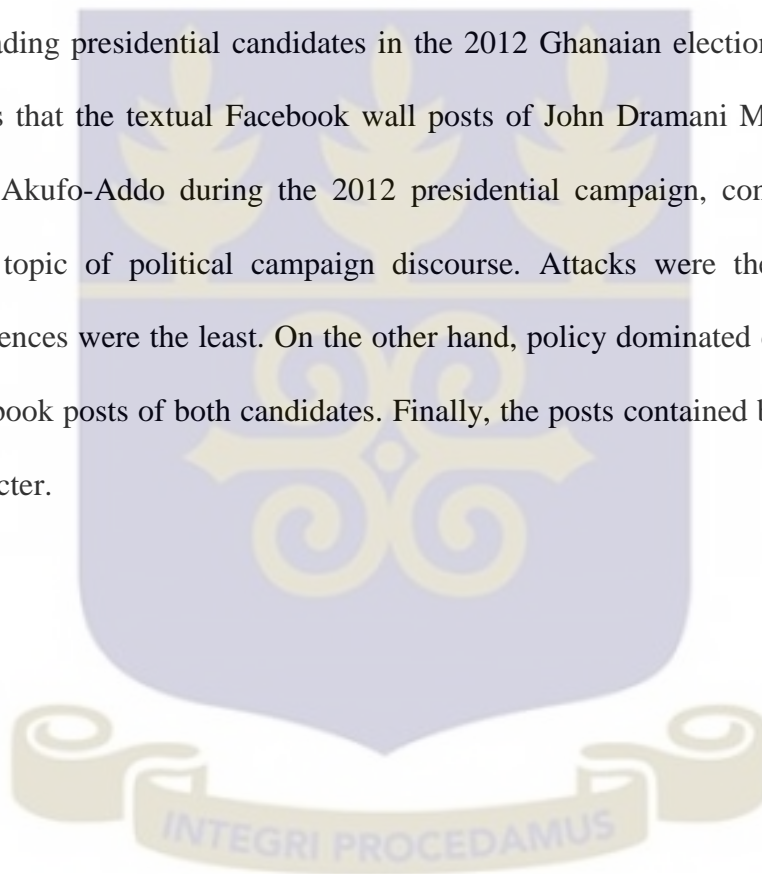
5.3.1 Recommendations

It is recommended that future studies should analyse all Facebook posts in an election and also do an analysis of videos and pictures on candidates' pages. It is recommended, that future studies apply the theory on different political campaign media like newspapers, television ad, radio ads etc. In addition, future studies should apply the functional theory on the Facebook pages of all presidential candidates in a Ghanaian election. Also, future studies

should also look at the type of topics and policies discussed. Finally, future studies should look at other Ghanaian campaign media like newspapers and radio debates.

5.4 Conclusion

The current study substantiated some common campaign message patterns and confirmed the applicability of the functional theory of political campaign discourse in on the Facebook pages of two leading presidential candidates in the 2012 Ghanaian elections. The results of this study shows that the textual Facebook wall posts of John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo during the 2012 presidential campaign, contained functions, topics and sub topic of political campaign discourse. Attacks were the most prevalent function and defences were the least. On the other hand, policy dominated character posts in the textual Facebook posts of both candidates. Finally, the posts contained both sub topics of policy and character.



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APPENDIX A Coding Guide

Themes were broken down into functions as follows:

1. Acclaims (P): Acclaims portray a candidate or political party in a positive light and enhances their image. Acclaim themes consist of posts that indicate s candidates' or their political party's services to the country and such as job creation, social interventions and debts reduction.

2. Attacks (A): Attack themes are posts that comprise messages that judge another candidate or their political party in an unfavourable way or suggest their failure on different types of issues for instance energy, health and economy. Attack posts lay emphasis on the negative side of an opponent or opposing political party.

3. Defences (D): Defence themes refer to posts that refute another candidate or political party's attacks or accusations made either on Facebook or any other media. Defences are meant to repair or minimise damages of attacks.

Functions were classified into topics as follows:

4. Policy (Pol): Policy posts are themes concerned with governmental action in the past, present or future.

5. Character (Char): Character themes took different forms. Posts that reveal the candidates' personal belief, personal trait, ability, or attributes

The topics were later broken into sub categories:

Policy (Pol) messages were subdivided into three categories: past deeds (the candidates' or accomplishments, good or bad), future plans (explicit and detailed campaign promises), and general goals. Character (Char) messages are also subdivided into three forms: the candidates' personal qualities (e.g., truthfulness, kindness), leadership ability (including previous experiences in office), and ideals (values and principles).

6. Past deeds (PD): Past deeds refer to the governmental actions taken by the candidate or on behalf of the candidate previously.

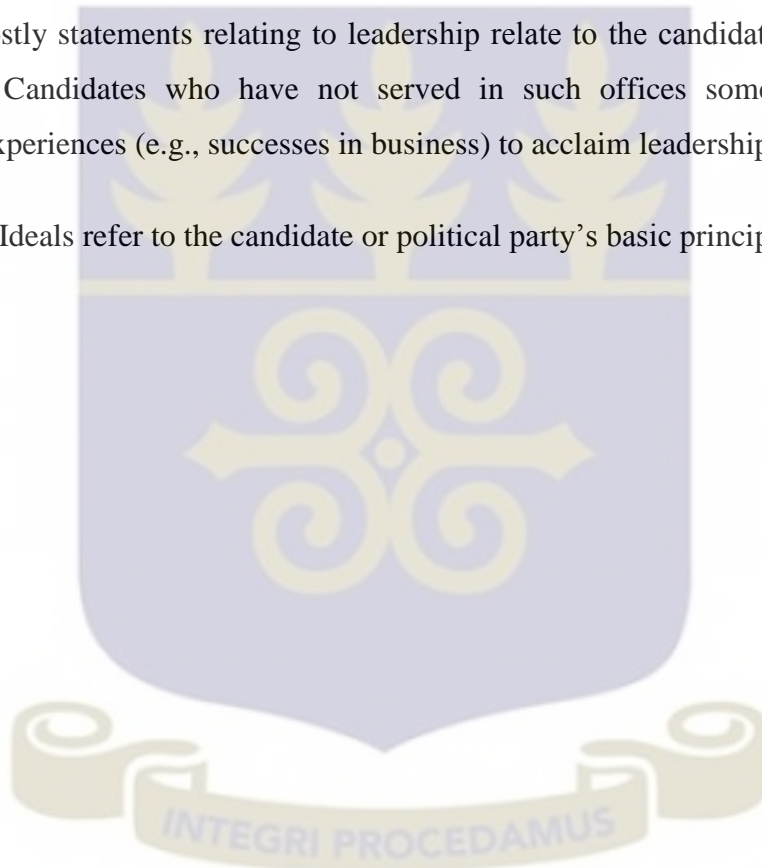
7. Future plans (FP): Future plans are specific campaign promises on policies that the candidate will pursue if elected or re-elected.

8. General goals (GG): General goals are less specific than future plans and do not contain information about the candidates' specific proposals. They lay emphasis ends, rather than means.

9. Personal qualities (PQ): Personal qualities refer to candidates' individual characteristics like honesty, and decency.

10. Leadership ability (LA): Leadership ability refers to the candidates' competence in government. Mostly statements relating to leadership relate to the candidates' experience in elective office. Candidates who have not served in such offices sometimes use other administrative experiences (e.g., successes in business) to acclaim leadership ability.

11. Ideals (ID): Ideals refer to the candidate or political party's basic principles or value.



APPENDIX B
EXAMPLES OF POSTS

Acclaim 1 posted by John Mahama -Within the next four years, we will complete our long-standing grand plan of providing a modern Regional Hospital in each of the ten regions of Ghana.

Acclaim 2(posted by Nana Addo)-NPP's priority is education because we want to build a society of opportunities for every Ghanaian child.

Attack 1(posted by John Mahama)- Where our opponents promise socio-economic transformation in the future, we know, and the international community attests, that Ghana's transition to middle income has started, here and now

Attack 2(posted by Nana Addo)- When you have a whole government admitting to lying to the World Bank deliberately, where do you get the credibility to manage the economy competently?

Defence 1(posted by John Mahama) - TheSefwi beating incident is false and politically motivated.

Policy 1(posted by John Mahama) - Whereas in 2008 the capitation grant provided 3GHC for each school going child; that grant has been increased to 4.50.

Policy 2(posted by Nana Addo)-We need to build a knowledge-based economy, and that begins by making sure all our children have access to ICT.

Character 1(posted by John Mahama) - I am convinced and determined, that together, we can reach new heights of growth and development

Character 2(posted by Nana Addo) - We may have our differences but what joins us together is more important.

Past Deed1(posted by John Mahama)–In less than 4 years into our Better Ghana Agenda, the level of infrastructure development, access to social services and quality of life for ordinary people is unprecedented in Ghana’s history.

General Goal 1(posted by Nana Addo) -We will expand the Ghanaian economy to help create more sustainable jobs for the youth and people of our country.

General Goal 2(posted by John Mahama)- Together we shall create more employment opportunities for our youth.

Future Plan 1(posted by John Mahama)-The NDC government will review the procurement law to give added advantage to indigenous companies and suppliers of made-in-Ghana goods.

Future Plan 2(posted by Nana Addo)- Every child in Ghana will have access to good quality education.

Leadership Ability 1(posted by John Mahama)- A Government under my administration would consolidate education at the basic levels and continue to improve on the standards at all other levels that have enjoyed significant measures of improvement since 2009.

Leadership Ability 2 (posted by Nana Addo) - The difference between the NPP and the NDC is very clear. Vote for much competent economic management and economic growth.

Personal Quality 1(posted by John Mahama) - It is with profound humility and immense gratitude that I accept your nomination as the Presidential Candidate and Flag bearer to lead our great party.

Personal Quality 2(posted by Nana Addo)-I have been travelling around the country for the past two years and one thing that worries me is the high level of unemployment amongst our youth.

Ideals 1(posted by John Mahama)-It has been a very successful campaign, so far, in the Western Region. Our work over the last (almost) 4 years is speaking for us, and the good people of Ghana are acknowledging the development-oriented focus of the NDC.

Ideals 2(posted by Nana Addo) - I'm at the Presbyterian Church at Mepom thanking God today for the mercies and guidance he has shown my team and I on the #HopeTour.



APPENDIX C

CANDIDATE 1 – JOHN DRAMANI MAHAMA

ACCLAIMS (P)

ATTACKS (A)

_____ PD _____
_____ PD _____
_____ PD _____

TOTAL:

_____ FP _____
_____ FP _____
_____ FP _____

TOTAL:

_____ GG _____
_____ GG _____
_____ GG _____

TOTAL:

_____ PQ _____
_____ PQ _____
_____ PQ _____

TOTAL:

_____ LA _____
_____ LA _____
_____ LA _____

TOTAL:

_____ ID _____
_____ ID _____
_____ ID _____

TOTAL:

DEFENCES _____

TOTAL:

CANDIDATE 2 – NANA ADDO DANQUAH AKUFO-ADDO

ACCLAIMS (P)

ATTACKS (A)

_____ PD _____
_____ PD _____
_____ PD _____

TOTAL:

_____ FP _____
_____ FP _____
_____ FP _____

TOTAL:

_____ GG _____
_____ GG _____
_____ GG _____

TOTAL:

_____ PQ _____
_____ PQ _____
_____ PQ _____

TOTAL:

_____ LA _____
_____ LA _____
_____ LA _____

TOTAL:

_____ ID _____
_____ ID _____
_____ ID _____

TOTAL:

DEFENCES _____

