

**VIEWER EXPOSURE TO AND PERCEPTION OF POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS  
IN THE 2020 GHANAIAN GENERAL ELECTION: A STUDY OF VOTERS IN THE  
LEDZOKUKU CONSTITUENCY.**

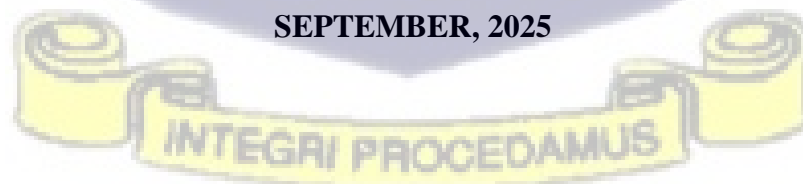
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, this thesis is the result of my own research work under the supervision of Fr. Dominic Maximilian Ofori (Ph.D.) and Prof. Abena Animwaa Yeboah-Banin (Ph.D.) of the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana. References made to other people's work in this thesis have been duly acknowledged and this thesis has not been presented elsewhere in part or in whole for the award of another degree.



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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beloved brothers, Kwaku Bioh Antwi Manu and Kofi Sika Antwi Manu for their immense support throughout my academic studies. It is also dedicated to the entire Antwi Manu family.

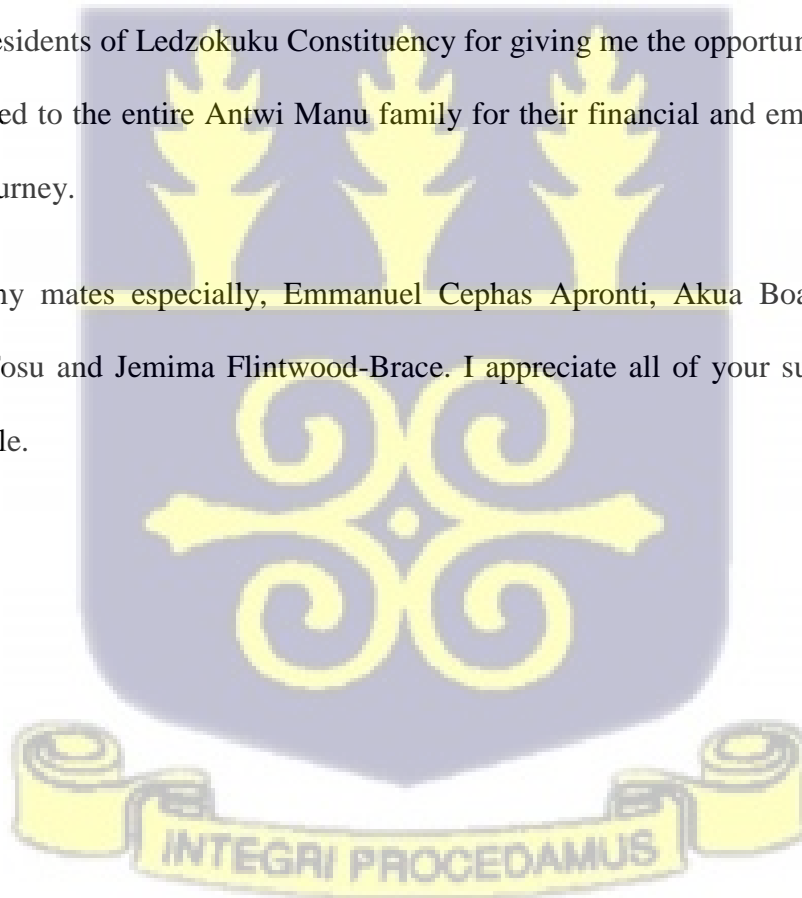


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## ABSTRACT

This mixed-method study investigated the viewers' exposure to and perception of political advertisements that were played during the 2020 general elections in Ghana. Using the rhetorical appeals theory, the study examined the contributions of political advertisements in voters' decision-making to vote for a particular political candidate or party during the 2020 general elections. The specific objectives of the study were to examine the nature of political advertisements voters were exposed to, find out how voters engaged with TV political advertisements, examine voters' perceptions about the role the political advertisements played in their voting decisions, and find out whether demographic differences (gender and education level) shaped voters' reception practices towards political advertisements during the 2020 general elections. A qualitative content analysis was employed to analyze the content of eight (8) political advertisements of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC) that were played on television during the elections. Focus group discussion was also employed to gather data from six (6) voters after they exposed to political advertisements. Moreover, a survey was undertaken to gather data from two hundred and five (205) voters in the Ledzokuku Constituency. The study revealed that the two parties deployed all three rhetorical appeals, ethos (credibility and trustworthiness), pathos (emotional appeals to connect with voters) and logos (logical and rational arguments to support the candidates or parties) in their advertisements. The majority of the voters in the constituency engaged with the advertisements of the candidates or parties they support, induced by strong affiliations with the candidates or parties. It was also indicated that the majority of the voters were exposed to messages which they perceived to have informed their voting decisions. Educational level did not play any major role in voters' interest in messages that highlighted the policy and programme proposals of candidates or parties. In terms of gender differences, female voters were more interested in watching advertisements that showed celebrities and other people who endorsed candidates or parties than male voters.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 Introduction

Communication is crucial in politics. Politicians and other political actors employ different communication tools to reach electorates during elections. As the Constitution of Ghana stipulates, voters are entitled to elect their preferred candidates and political parties every four years. For these candidates and political parties to gain favour and win the votes of electorates, communication must be effective. Consequently, candidates and parties adopt different forms of political communication to present their ideas and agenda (Strömbäck & Kioussis, 2014). In this regard, political advertising, which is a form of political communication is one vital intervention adopted by political parties to sell their message to the electorates. Political advertising helps political parties, candidates and followers to keep their followers abreast of their messages. However, the resolve of political advertising is given true meaning with the intervention of the media. The coverage of the media is an important aspect of politics and elections because they refine the perceptions that form the reality on which political action is based. In this manner, political parties during elections adopt different messages for political advertisements through the media to influence voters.

In Ghana, the common types of media that are employed by political parties and candidates to champion their political agenda to influence voters during elections are radio and television (Adeiza, 2019). Radio and television deserve closer attention due to the important role they play in elections. Radio and television sometimes have the capability of allowing candidates

or parties to target voters with greater precision (Herrnson, 2009). Both forms of media influence voting decisions.

In view of this, this present study assessed the exposure and perception of how political advertisements played on traditional media such as television were used to influence the voting decisions of the electorates of Ledzokuku Constituency in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana in the 2020 general elections. The remaining sections in this chapter provides a discussion on the background to the study that is: political communication, the role of advertising in audience's everyday lives, the beginning of advertising in Ghana, political advertising and how it emerged in Ghana. The chapter also presents the identified problem, the rationale of the study, objectives, research questions, significance of the study, the scope of the study and organization of the study.

### **1.1 Background to the Study**

This section of the chapter one sets the background of the present study. Political communication which is the home of this current study is a dynamic and multifaceted field of study that explores the processes and effects of communication in the context of politics (Chadwick, 2013). Political communication encompasses various forms of communication, including speeches, debates, advertisements, media coverage, and social media interactions, all of which play critical roles in shaping public opinion, policy-making, and the democratic process (West, 2017). The focus of this present study is on political advertisements and voting decisions.

Consequently, the discussion of the background starts from political communication and then narrowed to political advertisements.

### **1.1.1 Political Communication**

Political communication is very important within the framework of effective politicking in every society. It is of importance to political organizations, media and citizens. McNair (2011, p.4) defined political communication “as a purposeful communication about politics.” In support of McNair’s (2011) definition, political communication is aimed at influencing and creating an understanding of politics between political actors and the public whereby both parties are allowed to share their opinions. Political organizations through the media influence citizens’ decision making on political issues. Kaid (2004) explained political communication to be the role communication plays in any political process. Kaid’s (2004) definition of political communication brings to light the importance of communication in any discussion that focuses on politics. A smooth political communication process is premised on the belief that senders and receivers of political messages mediate well such that the sender almost always is ready to act on the feedback from the receiver. On the other hand, Graber and Smith (2005, p. 479) explained political communication as a "means by which political messages are employed to influence the course of politics." Furthermore, in an actual sense, political parties and actors disseminate political messages to electorates with the vision of achieving a political effect. However, Denton and Woodward (1990) characterized political communication in terms of “the intentions of its senders to influence the political environment” (Cited in McNair, 2011, p. 3). The distinctive

feature of political communication lies in its content and purpose, and not its source. Political communication provides room for public discussion of political issues. Moreover, it integrates all forms of communication that are employed by politicians and other political actors to achieve a particular goal, a communication directed to voters, and communication regarding the political activities of politicians and other political actors that are discussed on various media platforms.

Political communication provides an opportunity to analyze how citizens respond to specific messages through public opinion, voting behaviour, and how audiences are influenced through different communication channels. The ultimate aim of political communication is based on political parties and candidates' ability to influence electorates through the employment of effective communication. The use of mass communication channels is very effective in political communication. Political parties and actors target electorates through the employment of mass communication channels in a competitive environment where electorates have a choice between more than one party and candidate which is similar to how organizations in the business sector target their audiences (McNair, 2011).

The conceptual evolution of political communication can be narrowly traced to political science. The fathers of political communication such as Walter Lippman, Harold Lasswell, Paul Lazarsfeld and Murray Edelman borrowed different ideas from scholars in the field of public relations, anthropology, journalism, sociology, linguistics, psychology and economics (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008).

Political communication got its firm root in the early works of Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet in 1948 when studies were conducted to determine media influence on the American

voters. The works of Harold Lasswell and Paul Lazarsfeld clearly showed that the public sphere was critically influenced by the wings of political communication and media studies (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008). The early scholars projected the notion that citizens had little capacity to reason or decide independently about politics and their views were heavily shaped by political leaders and experiences with the media. In the early stages of media studies, citizens were considered to be indirectly influenced by the media. However, communication scholars helped position the field of political communication to address media influence and the related understanding of media communication processes (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008).

According to McNair (2011), political communication has three interrelated elements that depend on each other to function fully. The first element which is political organizations consists of political actors or figures, parties and other individuals who aspire through organizational and institutional means to influence any decision-making process in politics. Organizations such as political parties, public institutions, pressure groups and governments fall under this element. The discussions of these political organizations centre on political issues that happen in our immediate environment. The second element of political communication is citizens. Citizens educate themselves on political issues in the country through the media. The media help citizens to understand political issues when they disseminate the activities of political organizations. Information is provided to citizens in the form of reportages, editorials, commentaries, and analysis of political issues. For effective communication, citizens need to provide feedback on political issues through opinion polls, letters, blogs, citizen journalism as well as phone-in comments on media platforms. The third element that makes political communication complete is the media. The media are the avenue through which political organizations get in touch with

their followers or electorates. Organizations get their messages to electorates or citizens through media engagement such as reportages, editorials, commentaries, political analysis, appeals programmes, advertising and public relations.

Political communication has different forms. Each of these forms influences the voting choices of electorates. They are used to convey political messages to influence the voting decisions of electorates. According to Asah-Asante (2015), some of the prominent forms of political communication are political advertisements, analysis and discussion of political issues, election campaigns, campaign songs, pictures, jingles, manifestos, party emblems, political conferences and meetings. These forms of political communication reach the electorates through communication channels (Alfani, 2015). Examples of these channels are newspapers, radio, television, posters, billboards and other social media platforms.

### **1.1.2 Political Advertising**

McNair (2011) defined political advertising as the purchase and use of advertising space in the media by political parties or candidates to disseminate political messages to electorates at a commercial rate. Newspapers, radio, television, billboards among others are the generally known media advertising spaces. Political advertising is an avenue for parties or candidates to leverage the commercial broadcasting time of media platforms to influence voters' beliefs (Hakan, 2016) and popularize their campaign messages (Adeyemi & Gbadeyan, 2010).

In this regard, politicians have a fondness for media platforms with nationwide appeal as they help them broaden the scope of their messages. Parties and candidates purchase media space

in the mass media especially those media platforms that have nationwide appeal to disseminate political messages. The success of political advertising to persuade electorates heavily depends on the media space and the allotted time for particular advertisements, and the purchasing power of the political parties or candidates.

Political advertising is a process; it involves planning on the theme, locating target groups, designing suitable messages for each target group, and selecting the suitable media to disseminate the message (Izuogu & Umoren, 2017). Besides, political parties are entitled to five types of commercial advertising (Sechny, 2016) to garner votes. These types of advertising are brand advertising, defensive advertising, comparative advertising, informative advertising and persuasive advertising. For brand advertising, political parties or candidates focus on creating awareness for voters by using political messages, party colours, jingles and slogans. This approach could attract electorates. Defensive advertising allows parties or candidates to choose a defence strategy to emphasize their strong points or ideas to electorates by ignoring their opponents completely (Šechny, 2016). Comparative advertising is also effective in markets that have at least two brands. Comparative advertising compares brands by creating competition and also discredit competitors. With political advertising, parties or candidates can adopt comparative advertising to create competition for their opponents. Informative advertising is aimed at informing voters on the benefits these voters will get after voting for a particular party or candidate. Informative advertising becomes effective in democracies where electoral competition between the incumbent and the main opposition is keen (Martin, 2014). Persuasive advertising helps politicians sell ideas to electorates and is useful especially when parties or candidates face strict competition from their opponents. Political parties or candidates adopt

positive or negative advertising strategies in persuasive advertising since the goal is to persuade voters to vote for them (Izuogu & Umoren, 2017).

Political advertising has several functions that are directed toward achieving a specific aim for political parties or candidates. The functions of political advertising are highly achieved when there is a total and effective democracy. It is an important tool used during elections to inform, educate and set the political agenda using various media formats such as radio, television and print. Political advertising helps voters to gather political information. Political advertising thus gives candidates and parties the possibility to enhance their presence in the media (Holtz-Bacha & Kaid, 2014).

Parties and candidates increase their visibility to electorates by using media advertisements. Politicians mostly market themselves through political advertising to win over their rivals by grabbing more votes during elections. Political leaders in modern times have an interest in the use of political communications especially political advertising to serve their campaign interests. Meenu et al. (2014, p.3) stated that “political advertising focuses on the marketing of ideas, attitudes, and concerns about public issues, including political concepts and political candidates that lead to the increase of a party or candidate’s visibility.” Political advertising contributes to the visibility of parties or candidates and helps them gain confidence from the electorates who accept the parties or candidates’ ideas.

Political parties and candidates resort to political advertising in electoral systems with high competition and systems in which the distribution of political power is keenly contested and determined by elections. In competitive electoral systems, parties or candidates use political

advertising to present themselves to voters to influence voters. Moreover, political advertising helps parties and candidates to reach their supporters to reinforce their beliefs and also influence other voters who are not supporters of such parties or candidates. Political advertising creates an avenue for political candidates or parties to distinguish their image or issue stance from their opponents, and it is best used in a democracy where there is free political competition (Lahi, 2015).

### **1.1.3 The Emergence of Political Advertising in Ghana**

Political advertising came into existence when Ghana's political system started. Ghana's political system evolved during the struggle for independence. Ghana's political history is replete with many transitions; from colonial administration to multiparty democratic governance, then to military autocratic rule, and finally to multiparty democratic governance that has been in existence since 1992 (Afful, 2016). Some of these transitions employed political advertising as a form of political communication to influence citizens (Gadzekpo, 2008).

In the colonial era, the channels for political advertisements were mostly posters, flyers, newspapers and billboards (Afful, 2016). In 1951, there were two leading political parties named Convention Peoples' Party (CPP) and United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC). The Convention Peoples' Party (CPP) led by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) led by George Alfred Grant contested the general elections for the Legislative Council under the universal suffrage (Brown & Roger-Louis, 1999). In advertising politically, parties and candidates used posters, flyers and some of the newspapers that existed.

Radio had already been in the country and was introduced by the colonial government in 1935 (Gadzekpo, 2008). Radio was used by the colonial government only for its broadcasting activities. The local parties and candidates were barred from using the radio. Another election was held in 1956 during the struggle for independence (Manu, 1991). The CPP, led by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah emerged victorious. Political advertisements were published in newspapers, posters and flyers. Ghana was not yet an independent state and had no control over radio broadcasting (Gadzekpo, 2008). Ghana became a republic state in 1960 after gaining independence and started to exercise a full control over radio broadcasting which was previously controlled by the colonial government.

Moreover, the governance of Ghana switched from democratic to military regime in 1966 (Gadzekpo, 2008). Ghana entered into another multiparty political system in 1969 that allowed five political parties to contest for power. Among the political parties was the Progress Party led by Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia (Gadzekpo, 2008). The political parties that contested in the elections adopted posters and billboards as channels for their political advertisements. Television was already in existence since 1965 (Gadzekpo, 2008). The presence of television was to complement the role radio and newspapers played in Ghanaian media. Few political parties such as the Progress Party were able to advertise their political advertisements on the radio alongside the flyers, posters and billboards advertisements. Following this event was the military rule which also transitioned the country into another democratic rule in 1979. Elections were held in 1979 to elect president, and the first television political advertisement for election politics was designed by Lintas Advertising Company in 1979 as part of the campaign strategy of the Popular Front Party (PFP) which was led by Victor Owusu (Gbeho, 2009). The political advertisement

ran for a month before the July 1979 elections. The PFP's advertisement was mostly aired on Ghana Television (GTV) because of the television's existence as the only television station at that time. This motivated other political parties like the People's National Party (PNP) to also run advertisements to introduce Dr. Hilla Liman who was the party's presidential candidate (Gbeho, 2009).

April 1992 was the turning point of Ghana's political system when the citizens of the country got the opportunity to vote in a referendum for Ghana to revert to constitutional multiparty democratic governance after the military regime that lasted for over a decade (Afful, 2016). Political advertisements on the referendum were published in newspapers and also aired on radio and television stations to inform Ghanaian voters on the need for democratic governance. Posters and billboards were not left out in the advertisements of the referendum. In 1992, the first multiparty democratic elections were held for presidential and parliamentary candidates. The political parties and candidates employed radio and television advertising as a form of political communication tool to influence voters in the elections. Ghana had entered the constitutional rule that allowed private-owned media stations to operate, however, few stations had been established to create competition with the state-owned media (Afful, 2016). As a result, some of the political parties and candidates resorted to billboards and posters to complement radio and television advertisements to influence voters.

Following Ghana's restoration to multiparty democratic administration in 1992, the NDC and NPP, the country's two main political parties used the 2004 general elections as a platform for their political advertising (Tietaah, 2013). After the 2004 general elections, "the 2008

elections followed a similar hue and tenor" (Tietaah, 2013, p. 204) of political advertisements by the political parties that contested in the elections. Before the elections in 2008, political advertisements of NPP and NDC sprang up to influence the voting decisions of the Ghanaian electorates. Both parties employed different media channels such as radio, television, newspapers, flyers, posters and billboards for political advertising. The adoption of political advertising by parties and candidates became very important because it made them reach out to every voter (Komey, 2002).

Political advertising has played a key role in different electoral processes for political parties and candidates (Kaid, 2007). Political parties came out with different advertisements to sell their ideologies and plans to the Ghanaian electorates. In the 2016 elections, the two prominent parties in Ghana, National Democratic Congress (NDC) and New Patriotic Party (NPP), flooded the Ghanaian media with different advertisements that conveyed their plans, programmes and policies. Typical examples of such advertisements that conveyed programmes and policies were the NPP's advertisements on "Free SHS policy and One District, One Factory Project" which ended with the slogan "The battle is the Lord's". The NDC's advertisements, on the other hand, carried the message on "Changing Lives! Transforming Ghana!" ending with the catchphrase "Edey bee keke". Apart from the posters and billboards, radio and television were considered to be the most used media platforms for the dissemination of political advertisements during the 2016 general election (Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) & Center for Democratic Development-Ghana (CDD), 2018).

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Existing research has looked at political advertising and its impact on voters in several ways. For example, Franz and Ridout (2007) investigated whether exposure to political advertising influenced voters' evaluation of political candidates and the choices voters made at the ballot box during the 2004 U.S.A. presidential and congressional elections. The study through a survey revealed that political advertising persuaded voters, and its impact varied depending on the characteristics of voters. Blaise (2016) focused on analyzing the impact of political advertising on voters' behaviour, using the print media in Switzerland from 2011 to 2015. The study showed that political advertising in print media only had a minimal significant impact on voter behaviour unlike the desired impact such as television, radio and social media will produce.

On the African continent, Ojekwe (2016) examined the effectiveness of political advertising campaigns in shaping the voting behaviour of Nigerian voters. After a survey of voters in Lagos State, Ojekwe (2016) found that political advertising campaigns did not have a strong effect on the electorate's voting behaviour though it still played a significant role in the voting process. Similarly, Gbeho (2007) studied the issues that were raised in the political advertisements of the two major political parties in Ghana in the 2004 general elections by investigating the nature of the advertisements and whether these advertisements had an effect on voter decisions. After a content analysis of the political advertisements, the researcher found that the incumbent party (New Patriotic Party) in the 2004 elections used positive advertisements that highlighted the party's achievements. The major opposition party (National Democratic

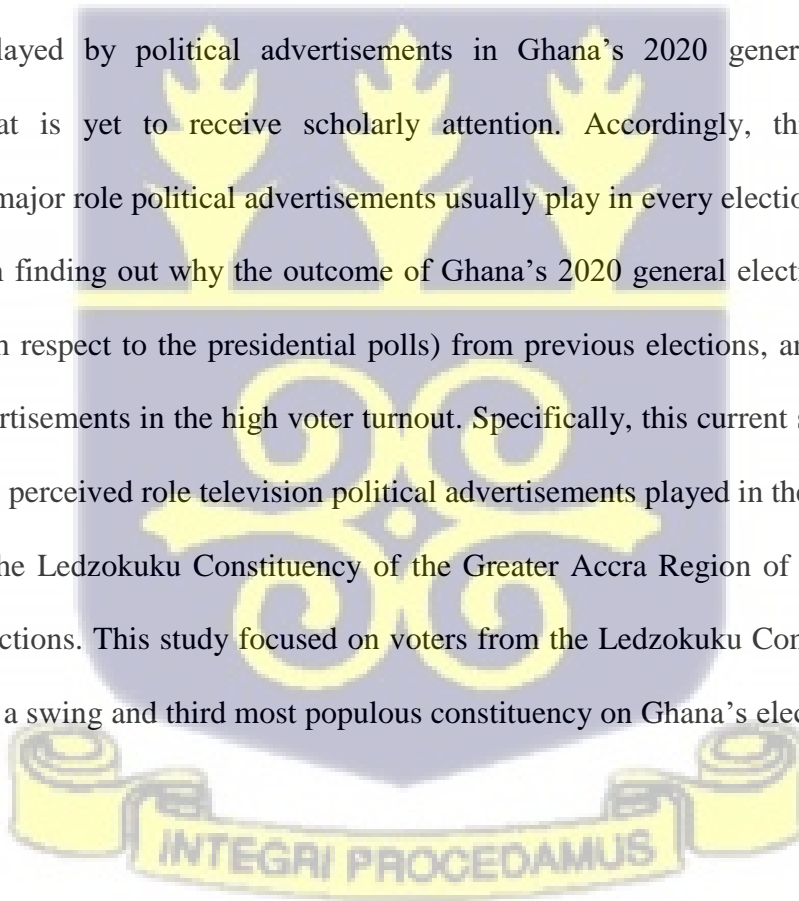
Congress), on the other hand, used negative advertisements that focused on negative issues. Besides, although both parties were truthful in their advertisements, the advertisements did not have any major effect on voters' decisions during the 2004 elections.

Then, too, Amegatcher (2015) conducted a study to find out which of Ghana's two major political parties, that is, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC), relied on negative advertising to achieve the parties' aims during the 2012 general elections in Ghana. The study analyzed the content of 71 television political advertisements. It revealed that the NPP relied more on negative advertising, whilst the NDC relied more on the party's achievements. The findings also showed that both parties focused their advertisements on issues rather than on candidates.

In 2014, Cosmos had also studied whether the use of children in political advertising had had any influence on electorates during Ghana's 2012 presidential elections. The study adopted a mixed methods approach to gather relevant data from 250 respondents who were faculty members of the Sunyani Polytechnic and Catholic University College of Ghana. The study revealed that a majority of the respondents detested the use of children in political advertising, considering it unethical. Nevertheless, the study also found that the emotional appeals used in political advertising had a strong influence on adult voters in terms of exhibiting a preference for a particular political party.

Clearly, studies on political advertisements abound in the literature. In the particular case of Ghana, however, the few available studies have analyzed the content of political advertisements which focus on political parties which rely on either positive or negative

advertising only without questioning the significant role of exposure of these advertisements in the decision making of voters during elections. Previous studies have only investigated the content of political advertisements in elections in which incumbent presidents along with their parties have won undisputedly with huge margins. Thus, unlike previous elections, the incumbent president won in the 2020 general elections with a contestable margin over his major opponent as the elections recorded the highest voter turnout in terms of total number of registered voters and total number of votes cast (Ghana Web, 2020). According to Frimpong (2023), the 2020 general elections was the election period in which political parties invested heavily in political advertisements and other campaign activities. Realizing the huge investment and the role played by political advertisements in Ghana's 2020 general elections is a phenomenon that is yet to receive scholarly attention. Accordingly, this present study, recognizing the major role political advertisements usually play in every election cycle in Ghana, was interested in finding out why the outcome of Ghana's 2020 general elections was different (particularly with respect to the presidential polls) from previous elections, and the role played by political advertisements in the high voter turnout. Specifically, this current study assessed the exposure and the perceived role television political advertisements played in the decision-making of voters from the Ledzokuku Constituency of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana during the 2020 general elections. This study focused on voters from the Ledzokuku Constituency because it is classified as a swing and third most populous constituency on Ghana's electoral map (Ghana Elections, 2020).



### 1.3 Rationale of the Study

Existing literature indicates that political advertising is one of the predominant tools of political communication used to influence voters and their voting decisions. Political advertising influences voters' behaviour by informing, persuading, reinforcing party supporters' identification and increasing or decreasing voter turnout in elections (Blaise, 2016). Exposure to political advertising on media platforms influences the choices voters make when they select a particular candidate or party.

However, literature on political advertising and its impacts in Ghana's 2020 general elections is limited. The role political advertisements played in outcome of the 2020 general elections whereby the incumbent president won with a contestable margin over his main opponent even in the highest voter turnout in the history of Ghana's elections has not yet receive scholarly attention. Moreover, presidential candidates and their political parties invested massively in political advertising and other campaign activities to disseminate their messages to Ghanaian voters with the aim of influencing voting decisions. However, the contributing role played by political advertisements on voter choices has not been critically looked at in relation to the high voter turnout. The researcher considered this phenomenon as an area of interest that needed a scholarly attention. It was the decision of the researcher to study this phenomenon by using voters in Ledzokuku Constituency as the study's participants because of the constituency classified as a swing constituency in the history of Ghana's general elections (Ghana Elections, 2020). Ultimately, this study investigated the nature, content, and engagement of political

advertisements broadcasting that contributed to the influence of voters' decisions to vote in the 2020 general elections.

#### 1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study sought to assess the exposure and the perceived role television political advertisements played in the voting decisions of the voters in the Ledzokuku Constituency in the 2020 general elections. Based on the primary objective addressed, the following were the specific objectives the study sought to achieve:

1. To examine the nature of television political advertisements voters were exposed to during the 2020 general elections.
2. To assess how voters engaged with television political advertisements during the 2020 general elections.
3. To examine voters' perceptions about the content of television political advertisements that were played in the 2020 general elections.
4. To find out whether demographic differences (gender and education level) shaped voters' reception practices towards political advertisements during the 2020 general elections.

The objectives above helped uncover the nature, content and the reactions of voters to political advertisements that led to a dynamic in voter choices during the 2020 general elections.

### 1.5 Research Questions

To meet the set objectives, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What types of rhetoric appeals were voters exposed to in watching television political advertisements prior to the 2020 general elections?
2. What were the key issues conveyed by political advertisements played on television during the general elections?
3. How did voters in the Ledzokuku Constituency engage with political advertisements played on television in the months leading up to the 2020 general elections?
4. How did voters perceive the content of political advertisements that were played on television in the 2020 general elections?
5. How did demographic differences (gender and education level) shape voters' reception practices towards the content of political advertisements during the 2020 general elections?

By obtaining adequate answers to the above research questions, the main aim of the study which is to assess the exposure and perceived role television political advertisements played in the voting decisions of the voters in the Ledzokuku Constituency in the 2020 general elections will be achieved.

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

The present study which assessed the exposure and perceived role political advertisements played in the voting decisions of voters in the Ledzokuku Constituency during the 2020 general elections is of importance to researchers, scholars and politicians. For researchers and scholars, the study adds to the body of research by providing valuable insights on the role of political advertisements in the voting decisions of voters in Ghana. Particularly, the study contributes to the revelation of the contributing role advertisements played in the high voter turnout and the changed in the dynamics of incumbent presidents winning with high margins in previous elections of Ghana. This current study contributes to the existing knowledge on the significant role of political advertisements and the reasons behind the huge investments in advertisements by political candidates and parties in any elections in Ghana.

In addition, the findings hope to bring to light the appeals, and the key issues political candidates and parties adopted in crafting advertising messages that enticed voters in their decision making during the 2020 general elections. The study hopes to reveal how voters engaged differently with advertisements of candidates and parties they either support or not

Lastly, to politicians, the findings of this present study hope to provide an insight on the content, nature and type of political advertisements to put out there to influence voters decisions on whom to vote for during elections.

## 1.7 Organization of the Study

This study is organized into seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduced the study and laid down the background to the study. It also presented the problem statement, the rationale of the study, objectives, research questions, scope of the study, the significance of the study, operational definitions as well as chapter summary. Chapter 2 reviewed relevant literature by identifying themes and making connections to findings of related studies. Chapter 3 discussed the theory that underpinned the study. This chapter provided a detailed account of the theory of rhetoric. The chapter also explains the tenets of the theory and its justifications to guide the study. Chapter 4 discussed the methodology employed in undertaking the study, including the sampling technique, data collection and analysis. Chapter 5 presented the findings of the study. Chapter 6 provided a detailed discussion of the findings. Finally, Chapter 7 concluded the study by summarizing key findings, drawing conclusions, outlining limitations, and providing recommendations for future studies.

## 1.8 Operational Definitions

**Electorates:** People eligible to vote in an election.

**Ledzokuku Constituency:** One of the 275 constituencies in Ghana located in the Greater Accra Region. The constituency is located within the Ledzokuku-Krowor Municipal District which is one of the municipalities in the Greater Accra Region. The constituency shares boundaries with

Krowor, La Dade Kotopon and Ashaiman Constituencies. Ledzokuku Constituency is the third most populous constituency in Ghana.

**Political environment:** The aggregation of a state, its government and institutions, legislations, the public and other private stakeholders who interact and operate with and aim at influencing each other (McNair, 2011).

**Voting behaviour:** The actions and inactions of electorates who participate in an election to select members to represent them in local, regional, or national governments. The behaviour of electorates can show either support for or against political candidates or parties.

**Persuasive intent:** “The attempt to influence consumers’ behaviour by changing their mental states, for instance, their attitudes and cognitions about a product” (Rozendaal et al., 2016, p. 346).

**Traditional media:** Forms of mass communication other than new media which include radio, television, and print media (newspapers, magazines, books).

**Free media:** Freedom of the media to operate independently in a society devoid of government restriction, control or censorship.

**Voter turnout:** Number of eligible voters who go to the polls during an election.

**Political observers:** A selected group of people from different political organizations given the mandate to monitor an electoral process. These people help to build public confidence and honesty in an electoral process.

**Positive political advertisement:** A form of communication used during political campaigns to promote a candidate, political party, or specific policies in a positive and uplifting manner. Positive political advertisement aims to inspire and persuade voters by emphasizing a candidate's strengths, achievements, and their vision for the future.

**Negative political advertisement:** A type of communication used during political campaigns to criticize or attack opponents, their policies, or their character. It typically focuses on highlighting the flaws, mistakes, or controversial aspects of the opposing candidate or party, rather than promoting the positive attributes of the candidate sponsoring the advertisement.

**Message content:** It describes the specific information, ideas, or persuasive elements conveyed in an advertisement, marketing communication, or any form of messaging. It encompasses the core message or main points that a sender wants to communicate to the intended audience.

**Exposure frequency:** Refers to the number of times an individual or a target audience is exposed to a specific advertisement or marketing message within a given time period. It measures the frequency or repetition of exposure to a particular ad campaign.

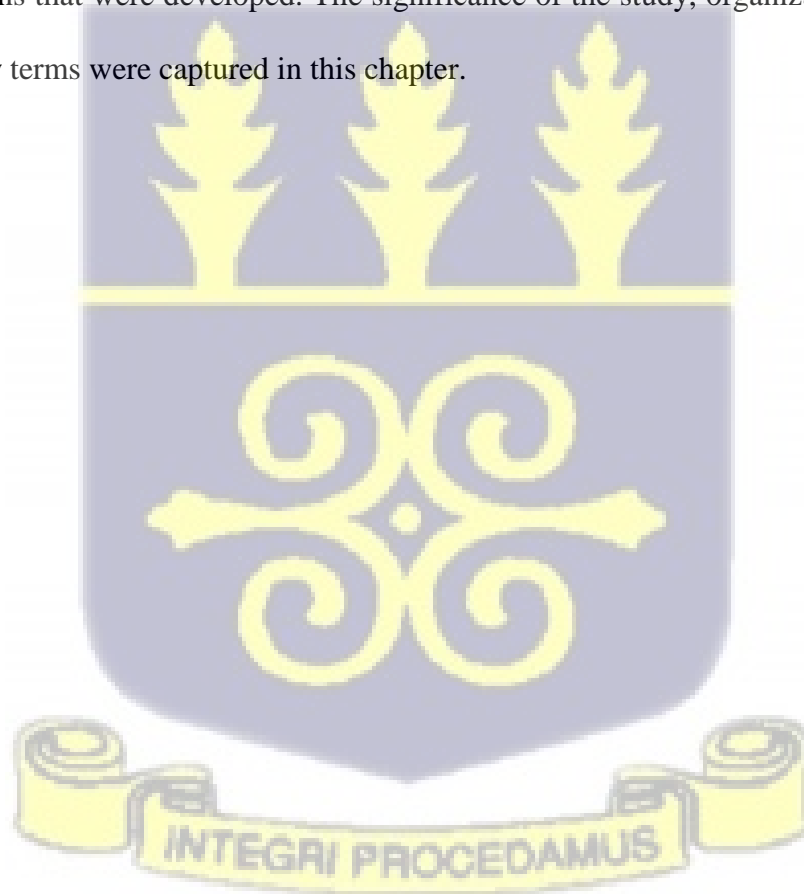
**Perception of influence of advertisements:** Refers to how individuals perceive the impact or persuasive power of advertisements on their attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and decision-making processes. It relates to how people perceive the ability of advertisements to shape their opinions, preferences, and actions.

**Demographics:** It describes the specific characteristics and traits of a population or a specific group of people. These characteristics are typically quantitative in nature and include factors

such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, education level, income, marital status, occupation, and geographic location.

## 1.9 Chapter Summary

The chapter one presented a discussion on the study's background with emphasis on political communication, and political advertising and its history in Ghana. The problem statement and rationale for the study were presented. The objectives were outlined based on the research questions that were developed. The significance of the study, organization of study and definition of key terms were captured in this chapter.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

Political advertising on electronic media has become the preferred means of political communication for most political parties and candidates to convey messages to voters (Afful, 2016). Political advertisements on television offer political parties and candidates the opportunity to project their personalities to influence voters' attitudes and behaviour in elections. Scholars such as Canen and Martin (2020), and Kaid (2007) have suggested that political advertisements stimulate the political interest of voters and contribute to the voting decisions of voters during elections.

This chapter critically reviewed previous research on political advertisements and their effects on voters in order to place the study in its proper scholarly context. This chapter aimed to find common themes, patterns, and implications of political advertisements in the media by synthesizing and analyzing pertinent studies. To give readers a thorough grasp of the topic, the review looked at the different types of political advertising, rhetorical appeals, and the impact of advertising on voters. Numerous research studies have been carried out regarding the impact of political advertising in Ghana and globally. To give a more comprehensive understanding of this study, a number of relevant papers that aligned with the aims were reviewed thematically. Since there aren't many research on the topic in Ghana, the literature review has been arranged

according to how comparable studies have been carried out in other nations in order to provide a worldwide perspective on political advertising.

The chapter started by delving into studies that have examined influence of media on voter decisions. It also elaborated political advertising in the media and its influence. The review also addressed rhetorical appeals in political advertisements, key issues of political advertisements, positive and negative political advertising in the media, and demographic differences and political advertisements. By synthesizing the current knowledge political advertising and its influence on voters, this chapter aimed to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the role political advertisements play in contributing to the decisions of voters during the 2020 general elections of Ghana. Furthermore, this literature review is concluded by identifying the gaps that previous studies have been unable to address.

## **2.1 Influence of Media on Voter Decisions**

The media have a strong influence on voters. The influence on the voters is a result of the media providing information on all the current affairs, latest news and other incidents in elections (Bastia, 2015). The influence is manifested when voters receive information through the media and begin to discuss and respond to the information. Moreover, the media have become the source of images and messages that relate to political and social context. In elections, the public mostly rely on the media as a source for information. Most voters do not know candidates personally, so they turn to the media to get information on the stance of candidates on

particular issues to make an informed decision (Lupia, 2016). This instance describes how the public as well as voters are influenced by the media.

Mass media over the years have been proven to influence voters in elections. Oftentimes, electorates have pre-existing knowledge of candidates. The media reinforce the existing knowledge and influence electorates on the decisions they make in approving or rejecting candidates. Alotaibi (2013) suggested that the influence produced by the media helps to strengthen the probability that the individual will vote following his or her initial political dispositions. A crucial influence of the media is felt by voters whose dispositions and stated preferences are incongruent at the onset of political campaigns, thus drawing voters back to their predisposed choices.

The media provide political information to voters in electoral periods. According to Jamieson and Campbell (2000), due to the media's informative role, they affect voters' decision. The information received by voters helps them to decide on the ideal party or candidate they prefer to vote for in elections. There is some evidence that media effects occur due to the media transmitting information to voters to create chances and improve the selection of politicians and other political candidates (Stromberg, 2015).

The media set the agenda and increase priming effects to change people's perceptions and judgements or evaluations of parties and candidates (Green-Pedersen & Stubager, 2010). The agenda-setting of the media to influence voters varies strongly due to the content, source, presentation, object, media channel and the immediate environment of the media audience. The influence or effects produced by the media are mostly short-lived and voters flash them out after

elections. Other media programmes also produce lasting effects on voters if the programmes are repeated over a long time (Königslöw, 2016).

Several studies conducted around the globe on how the media influence voters in decision making during elections have revealed diverse significant findings. To cite few studies, Lindberg and Morrison (2008) examined in their study how Ghanaian electorates vote during elections as a result of their exposure to media messages. The researchers found that after the exposure to media messages, most Ghanaian electorates vote based on affiliation and clientelist (a person who exchanges goods and services for political support). The voters consider voting for candidates they support or have the ability to meet their expectations after the provision of political messages about the candidates by media.

Franz et al. (2009) studied the influence of media by focusing on television advertising in the 2000 presidential campaign in the United States. The researchers utilized a panel design whereby data were gathered from 2,004 eligible voters through surveys after the voters were exposed to political advertisements during the 2000 U.S. presidential campaign. Changes in candidate evaluations and vote choice were also examined. The study uncovered that political advertisements had a modest influence on candidate evaluations and vote choice, with effects varying based on factors such as advertising tone, viewer partisanship, and media consumption habits.

Odunlami (2013) explored which media were dominant or preferred as a source of political information and a greater influence on young voters' political knowledge and behaviour in Nigeria. A survey was used to collect data from 4,700 respondents who were undergraduates.

The findings showed that exposure to electronic media such as radio, television and the internet predicted higher political knowledge and behaviour among respondents than print media. Also, the study revealed a significant influence of media exposure on the young voters' political behaviour. As a form of the predictive factor of the voters' political behaviour, television was the dominant source of political information among young voters.

Moreover, Bastia (2015) examined the perception of voters of Loksabha in India's 2014 elections and the influence of media messages on voting behaviour. Using a quantitative method with questionnaires, data from 120 first time voters from different colleges and universities were collected and analyzed. The study revealed that media messages are one of the key factors of influence in voting decisions. The role of media influence on first time voters was exceptional. Media messages and news representation were very visible during the elections which had a strong impact and influence on the voters. The perception of voters revealed by the study was as a result of exposure of media messages to voters.

Johnson et al. (2017) examined media exposure and their influence on voter decision-making in previous US presidential elections. The researchers utilized a longitudinal design whereby data were gathered from 1,500 registered voters. The voters were surveyed at multiple points during election campaigns to capture changes in their attitudes, knowledge, and candidate preferences. In the analysis of data, descriptive statistics was used to summarize participant demographics, media usage, and candidate preferences, whilst regression analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between media exposure and changes in voter attitudes and candidate preferences, controlling for relevant variables. The study found that media exposure significantly

influenced voter decision-making. Voters who were highly exposed to media demonstrated greater knowledge about the candidates and positive attitudes towards the presidential candidates. High exposure also increased the likelihood of voters to support those candidates. The influence of media exposure was high among undecided voters.

Furthermore, Johnson et al. (2018) explored the effect of media on voter decisions by focusing on framing of political issues during elections. The study was an experimental design where 500 registered voters in the United States were randomly selected through digit dialling and assigned to different framing conditions. The researchers selected positive, negative and neutral media frames that were related to political presidential candidates through news articles. Data were collected through surveys immediately after the selected voters read the political articles. In terms of data analysis, the researchers used descriptive statistics to analyze the voters' demographics, whilst inferential statistics, such as chi-square tests and regression analysis also were applied to examine the relationship between media framing and voter decisions. After this process, the study found that media framing significantly influenced voter decisions. Voters exposed to positive media frames were more likely to express support for the candidate, whilst those exposed to negative frames showed decreased support. The influence of the United States media and their framing was mediated by individuals' prior party affiliation and political ideology.

In another study, Smith et al. (2019) utilized a mixed-methods approach to study the role of traditional and social media in shaping the decisions of United States voters. A survey was used to gather quantitative data whilst content analysis was employed to gather qualitative data.

A total of 2,000 eligible voters were selected through a stratified sampling technique to ensure representation across different age groups, political affiliations, and geographic regions. The voters were surveyed about their television, radio, and social media usage, exposure to political content, and subsequent voting decisions. The researchers also analyzed the content and tone of political posts on various social media platforms. After the collection of data, descriptive statistics was employed to analyze voters' traditional and media usage patterns, exposure to political content, and voting decisions. The content analysis technique was also used to categorize and analyze the content and sentiment of political posts on social media platforms. The study revealed that both traditional and social media exposure had a significant impact on voter decisions. Voters who were exposed to a greater amount of political content on the two media forms were more likely to change their voting decisions or support a different candidate. The content analysis also indicated that the tone and sentiment of political posts on social media platforms could sway voters' perceptions and choices.

Lastly, Adams et al. (2020) employed a survey design to assess the impact of media exposure on voter decision-making. A total of 1,200 registered voters selected through random-digit dialling were surveyed before and after exposure to political news coverage. The researchers collected data on voters' attitudes, knowledge, and candidate preferences. The researchers employed descriptive statistics to analyze the voters' demographic characteristics. The researchers conducted paired t-tests and regression analysis to examine changes in attitudes, knowledge, and candidate preferences before and after media exposure. The study found that media exposure significantly influenced voter decision-making. Voters who were exposed to positive news coverage of a candidate exhibited more favourable attitudes towards that

candidate, increased knowledge about the candidate's policies, and a higher likelihood of supporting the candidate. Conversely, exposure to negative news coverage had the opposite effect.

The aforementioned studies have indicated the diverse ways the media influence voters in their voting decisions. Exposure to media messages increase the knowledge and information of voters about political candidates or parties during elections.

## **2.2 Rhetorical Appeals in Political Advertisements**

Rhetorical appeals play a significant role in shaping voter perceptions and behaviour in political advertising. Political advertisements oftentimes convey rhetorical appeals which are aimed to persuade voters (Marcus et al., 2010). The rhetorical appeals conveyed by political advertisements are persuasive strategies aimed at appealing to emotions, reasoning, or credibility (Marcus & MacKuen, 2019). The use of rhetorical appeals in political advertisements has three forms which are ethos, pathos, and logos (Lutzke & Henggeler, 2009).

Ethos describes the credibility and trustworthiness of the speaker or source. In political advertising, candidates often establish ethos by highlighting their qualifications, experience, and integrity. Smith and Boyer (2019) suggest that candidates who project authenticity and sincerity in their advertisements are more likely to gain voter trust and support during elections. Additionally, endorsements from respected figures or organizations can enhance a candidate's ethos (Jamieson & Campbell, 2019). However, the effectiveness of ethos in political advertising

may vary depending on the candidate's perceived trustworthiness and the credibility of the endorsers (Marcus et al., 2010). Smith and Boyer (2019) investigated ethos in political advertising in the previous elections of the United Kingdom. The two researchers employed content analysis to investigate the content of a dozen political advertisements that were aired during a gubernatorial election campaign. The researchers focused on the presence of candidate endorsements, personal narratives, and references to past achievements conveyed by the political advertisements. To complement the study, a total of 500 voters were then surveyed to assess their perceptions of candidate credibility and trustworthiness based on the advertisements they viewed. The study uncovered that the candidates employed ethos in their political advertising. Different forms of ethos featured in the advertisements were authentic personal narratives and endorsements from respected political candidates and other figures. The application of ethos significantly enhanced candidate credibility and trust among voters which led to increased support during the elections.

Moreover, Jamieson and Campbell (2019) examined the impact of endorsements in political advertisements on candidate credibility and voter perceptions. The study combined content analysis and survey to gather data from political advertisements that featured endorsements from various individuals and organizations and 1,500 registered voters from swing states during national elections in the United States. In terms of the survey, the voters were assessed based on their perceptions of the candidates' credibility and trustworthiness after watching the political advertisements. The study revealed that endorsements from respected figures and organizations significantly enhanced candidate credibility and positively influenced voter attitudes and intentions to support the endorsed candidate.

Pathos, as another form of rhetorical appeal describes a speaker's ability to persuade an audience by using emotions and values. The majority of political advertisements frequently use emotional triggers such as fear, hope, anger, and empathy to connect with voters on a deeper level (Ridout & Franz, 2011). For instance, advertisements that feature personal stories or imagery evoking patriotism often evoke strong emotional responses. Slothuus and de Vreese (2019) argue that emotional appeals can influence voter attitudes and preferences, especially when coupled with vivid and memorable visuals. However, excessive use of emotional manipulation in political advertisements can backfire, leading to skepticism and cynicism among voters (Fridkin & Geer, 2020). Scholars like Slothuus and de Vreese (2019) examined the impact of emotional appeals in political advertisements on voter attitudes and behaviour in the United States. The study adopted a randomized controlled experiment where a total of 1,000 registered voters were shown different versions of political advertisements with varying emotional appeals (such as fear, hope, and anger). After viewing the advertisements, the voters completed surveys assessing their emotional responses, attitudes toward the candidate, and intentions to vote. After the analysis of data, the findings indicated that the emotional appeals were particularly those that evoke hope and empathy. The emotional appeals were found to significantly influence voter attitudes and intentions to support the candidate.

Marcus and MacKuen (2019) analyzed the emotional appeals in political advertisements during the 2016 presidential election campaigns in the United States. The researchers conducted content analysis of televised political advertisements that were aired during the campaign which focused on emotional appeals such as fear, hope, and anger. Additionally, a total of 2000 voters were surveyed to determine their emotional responses to the advertisements and attitudes toward

political candidates. The study brought to light that emotional appeals, particularly fear-based messages, were prevalent in political advertisements. The emotional appeals were effective in influencing voter perceptions and preferences, especially among undecided voters.

Logos, on the other hand, appeals to reasoning and logic, often through the use of facts, evidence, and rational arguments (Lutzke & Henggeler, 2009). A lot of political advertisements frequently employ statistics, expert opinions, and policy proposals to persuade voters of the candidate's competence and effectiveness. According to Bartels (2018), voters are more likely to respond positively to advertisements that provide substantive information and address relevant issues. However, the effectiveness of logos in political advertising may be limited by partisan biases and selective perception, with voters often interpreting information in a way that confirms their existing beliefs and attitudes (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009).

Furthermore, Brians et al. (2013) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the content and effects of campaign advertisements during the 2008 U.S. presidential elections. The study involved content analysis of 100 television advertisements aired by presidential candidates Barack Obama and John McCain, focusing on the presence of rational appeals such as policy proposals, candidate qualifications, and factual claims. Additionally, the researchers employed a survey to assess voter attitudes, perceptions, and voting behaviour. The survey component involved a nationally representative sample of 1,000 voters. The study found that rational appeals, which were policy discussions and factual claims were prevalent in campaign advertisements during the 2008 presidential election. Voters who were more politically

knowledgeable and engaged tended to respond positively to rational appeals, as they were more likely to engage in systematic processing of information.

The reviewed studies brought to light that candidates and parties have the intention to persuade voters during elections. The candidates and parties many a time employ ethos, pathos and logos to persuade voters.

### **2.3 Key Issues of Political Advertisements**

Key issues are political messages that are considered to be relevant in resonating or meeting the expectations of electorates. The presentation of key issues to meet voters' expectations is critical to electoral campaigns. Political advertisements play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion and influencing voter behaviour through the conveyance of key issues pertinent to electoral campaigns (Fowler & Ridout, 2009). Political advertising serves as a primary medium through which political candidates and parties communicate their messages to electorates. According to Ansolabehere and Iyengar (2005), political advertisements provide voters with valuable information about candidates' policy positions, qualifications, and campaign promises. Moreover, Geer (2006) suggests that political advertisements often prioritize both positive and negative messages or issues that encourage substantive policy discussions which leads to public political discourse.

In the design of political advertisements, political candidates and parties strategically frame key issues to appeal to specific voter demographics. Chong and Druckman (2007) argue

that framing effects significantly influence voter perceptions and attitudes towards political issues. For example, candidates may frame economic policies as either promoting prosperity or safeguarding against economic inequality, depending on their target audience and political agenda.

To highlight key issues conveyed by political advertisements, candidates and parties mostly present policies and programmes on economics, health, education, and other important policies that are considered to be the pressing needs of electorates (Guess et al., 2019). The candidates and parties present these key issues to influence the decisions of voters during election periods (Lau et al., 2007).

Key issues conveyed by political advertisements oftentimes come in the form of campaign promises. The key issues are strategically framed as campaign promises to resonate with target voters to convey a sense of credibility and competence. According to Kaid and Johnston (2001), candidates often present issues that are persuasive to emphasize their competence and credibility. The key issues which are presented as campaign promises are typically tailored to address pressing needs and concerns that are raised by voters (Djupe & Peterson, 2002).

Moreover, key issues which are presented as campaign promises significantly influence voter behaviour and electoral outcomes. According to Bartels (2008), voters tend to reward incumbents who fulfil their promises and punish those who fail to do so. Key issues in the form of campaign promises serve as rallying points for supporters and mobilize voter turnout,

particularly among demographic groups that stand to benefit from specific policy proposals (Gerber & Green, 2008).

Several scholars have found intriguing results following the examination of the key issues conveyed in political advertisements. Ridout and Franz (2011) analyzed the content and effects of political advertising in U.S. presidential campaigns. The researchers employed a content analysis method to gather and examine 500 political advertisements which were aired during the 2008 U.S. presidential campaigns from various media markets across the United States. The study found that political advertisements primarily focused on a few key policy issues, such as the economy, healthcare, and national security.

Kahn and Kenney (2009) examined issue salience and candidate evaluations in political advertising in the United States election cycle. The researchers adopted a longitudinal survey to gather data from 2,500 registered voters after the voters were exposed to political advertisements. The study found that the issue salience in political advertisements were specific policies presented by candidates. Candidates who effectively framed their advertisements around policies saw increase in support and favourable evaluations from voters.

Lastly, Marcus et al. (2000) studied the perceptions of key issues and policy proposals in political advertisements in the United States. An experimental design was employed by the researchers to examine the political advertisements which highlighted key issues and policy proposals presented by candidates. A total of 800 registered voters were randomly assigned to different experimental conditions. The study found voter perceptions of key issues and policy

proposals presented by candidates. Voters elicited greater support and enthusiasm for key issues and policies.

## 2.4 Positive and Negative Political Advertising

Positive and negative advertising are two fundamental strategies used in political campaigns to influence voter behaviour. Positive advertising focuses on promoting a candidate's strengths, achievements, and vision. Positive advertising aims to create a favorable image of the candidate and build a connection with voters by emphasizing their qualifications, values, and policies (Lau & Rovner, 2009). Positive advertising portrays what the party or candidate is capable of doing when voted into power. Both parties in power or parties in opposition can advertise positively. The party in power using positive advertising praises itself or projects its achievements through the media to electorates. The party uses these projections to convince electorates on maintaining tenure in office. Opposition parties on the other hand, also use positive advertising to project to the electorates their plans when voted into power. Positive advertising supports political parties or candidates, their achievements, leadership, governance and policies.

Moreover, positive advertising influence voters in diverse ways. Content-wise, advertisements that focus on the positive issues or aspects of a candidate is considered to produce favourable influence on voters when the voters evaluate the candidate. Positive advertising becomes effective when viewers do not have strong interest in politics and information about the political campaigns (Malloy & Pearson-Merkowitz, 2016). The airing of

positive advertisements can result in recruiting voters by increasing the positive traits associated with the candidate and also increasing the availability of the positive traits to the minds of voters. Positive advertisements leave voters with the sense that candidates are always likely to be civil towards an opposing view. This in turn increases the evaluation of voters on candidates when making decisions.

Scholars that have investigated the impact of positive advertising on voters include Fridkin et al. (2008), and Malloy and Pearson-Merkowitz (2011). Fridkin et al. (2008) analyzed the impact of positive campaign advertisements on candidate evaluations and advertising evaluations in the US. The researchers conducted a meta-analysis by synthesizing the results of multiple studies to gain a comprehensive understanding of the effects of positive campaign advertisements. As a result, they collected data from a wide range of studies from different contexts and election campaigns, allowing for a more robust analysis of the effects of positive campaign advertising. The meta-analysis revealed that positive campaign advertisements had a positive impact on candidate evaluations. Voters tended to view candidates more favourably when exposed to positive campaign advertisements. The study also found that positive advertisements had a significant influence on candidate evaluations particularly when the advertisements highlighted the candidate's personal characteristics, achievements, and issue positions. Voters generally held more positive attitudes toward positive campaign advertisements compared to negative or contrasting advertisements.

In 2011, Malloy and Pearson-Merkowitz explored the effects of positive campaign strategies on mobilizing Latino voters in America. The researchers specifically focused on

understanding how positive campaign messages influence Latino voter turnout and participation. A survey experiment was conducted to gather data from 1,500 Latino voters by exposing the voters to different types of campaign messages, including positive campaign advertisements that highlighted candidates' achievements, issue positions, and personal characteristics. After data analysis, the study revealed that positive campaign messaging had a significant impact on mobilizing Latino voters. Voters exposed to positive campaign messages demonstrated higher levels of political interest, intention to vote, and the likelihood of participating in campaign-related activities compared to those who were not exposed to such messages.

Negative advertising, on the other hand, focuses on criticizing or discrediting an opponent. Negative advertising aims to raise doubts about the opponent's qualifications, policies, or character, often by highlighting their perceived weaknesses or failure (Lau & Pomper, 2001; Lau & Rovner, 2009; Stevens, 2012).

Negative advertising is a common strategy for candidates in countries with vibrant elections and strong democracy (Lau & Pomper, 2001; Stevens, 2012). Such advertising takes a contrasting form by involving the parties or candidates to produce advertisements that compare their performances and policy promises in a more favourable way than those of their political opponents. This idea of negative advertising makes voters consider such advertisements as fair, reasonable, and informative to aid these voters in their voting decisions.

Negative advertising sometimes can become more aggressive and very pervasive. Its aggressiveness results in the advertisements being regarded as "attack advertisements" (Davis, 2017). The 'attack advertisements' criticize opponents with varying degrees of negativity (and

sometimes truthfulness) on the performances, the policies and even the personality or character of the opposing parties or candidates. Many a time, candidates employ negative advertising to counter attack their opponents to signal a deficiency in a democratic process, by pointing out the shortcomings or the weaknesses in their opponents' experiences or policies (Geer, 2006; Jackson & Carsey, 2007).

Dunaway et al. (2018) argued that negative advertising induces voters to learn more. The content of negative advertisements is negative information that has a more powerful and enduring influence on voters than what neutral or positive information in advertisements would do (Soroka & McAdams, 2015). Soroka and McAdam's (2015) study revealed intriguing findings in the examination between negative and positive political advertisements' information. The researchers focused on type of advertisements people regularly pay attention to in the United States. After the gathering of quantitative data through a survey from over 500 people, it was revealed that many people pay attention to negative information for a longer period with a strong consideration for it than they would do for positive information during decision-making. Negative information was more memorable than positive information. The research revealed that exposure to political advertisements with more emphasis on attack advertisements renders viewers attentive and also educates them about candidates, parties and policy issues.

Moreover, Davis (2017) in his study examined the effects of negative political advertising on Australian voters. Data were gathered from 800 voters through surveys by using a questionnaire as a data collection instrument. Davis (2017) analyzed the effect of negative advertising by employing a regression analysis. The study found that negative advertising had a

causal effect on vote intentions. When vote intentions for candidates or political parties weaken, voters tend to rely on negative advertising to make voting decisions. A drop in voter support for a particular party motivates the party to engage in negative political advertising.

Amegatcher (2015) analyzed the content of political advertisements played on television preceding the 2012 general elections in Ghana. The study revealed that the two major political parties, the ruling party (NDC) and the opposition party (NPP), relied on negative advertising to achieve their aims. Additionally, the NPP relied heavily on negative advertising (attack advertisements) as opposed to their opponents, the NDC relied more on the party's achievements to get its messages across to the voters. The negative advertising, in turn, affected voters' decision to vote. It was also found that both parties sometimes focus their advertisements on negative issues rather than focusing on their candidates. These findings were brought to light after the study analyzed the content of 71 television political advertisements.

Furthermore, in the United States, Kahn and Kenney (1999) examined the relationship between negative campaigning and voter turnout. The principal aim of the researchers was to determine whether negative campaigns mobilize or suppress voter participation. In the determination, the researchers conducted a field experiment during a local election. They randomly assigned 4,100 households to different treatment conditions, including exposure to negative campaign advertisements, positive campaign advertisements, or no campaign advertisements. The findings of the study after analysis of data indicated that negative campaigns had a suppressive effect on voter turnout. The households exposed to negative campaign advertisements showed lower levels of voter turnout compared to those in the positive campaign

or no campaign advertisement conditions. Additionally, negative campaign advertisements were more effective in suppressing turnout among independent voters compared to partisans. Independents voters were more likely to be discouraged by negative campaign messages, leading to lower levels of voter participation. The findings of the study left the researchers to argue that the negativity in campaign advertisements might have discouraged individuals from participating in the election.

Notwithstanding, positive and negative advertising play crucial roles in determining the tone and effectiveness of political advertisements. Positive advertising determines the positive tones whilst negative advertising also determine negative tones. For positive tones, the advertisements focus on highlighting a candidate's strengths, achievements, and policy proposals (Geer, 2006). Positive tone is generally optimistic, aiming to inspire and motivate voters by presenting a hopeful vision of the future (Ridout & Franz, 2011). On the other hand, for negative tones, the advertisements focus on criticizing opponents, highlighting their flaws, and raising doubts about their competence or character. The tone is often aggressive, aiming to undermine the opponent's credibility and sow distrust among voters (Brader, 2006).

## **2.5 Voter Demographics and Political Advertisements**

Political advertising is often tailored to specific voter demographics, which include age, gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, education level, and geographic location. Understanding these demographics is crucial for crafting effective political advertisements that resonate with different segments of the electorate (Kenski & Stroud, 2006). By analyzing voter

demographics, campaigns can target their messaging more precisely, maximizing the impact of their advertisements.

### **2.5.1 Gender and Political Advertising**

Gender differences play a crucial role in politics. Gender differences guide voters to consider and analyze candidates, political parties and political issues (Brians, 2005; Schaffner, 2005). When it comes to politics, men and women have different views of analyzing political issues, and different ratings of political candidates or parties. Men and women have different preferences for the different types of political advertisements that are used by candidates or parties. These different types of political advertising messages affect the gender of voters in making vote choices during elections.

The issue of gender plays an important role in the kinds of campaign messages voters receive during elections. Male and female voters have different interest in campaign messages that are conveyed by political advertisements. The difference in interest of the campaign messages contributes to how male and female voters are influenced. Díaz-Soloaga and Muñiz (2007) assert that the degree of influence of media messages as well as political content of advertising spots affect the gender of voters. This statement explains that male and female voters will have different preference for messages conveyed by political advertisements.

Moreover, in some instances, women voters are often targeted with advertisements that address healthcare, education, reproductive rights, and gender equality. Women are more responsive to emotional appeals and advertisements that emphasize compassion and community

(Huddy & Terkildsen, 2013). Candidates often highlight their policies on these issues to appeal to female voters. Men, on the other hand, may be more responsive to advertisements that focus on economic policies, national security, and law enforcement. Political advertisements targeting men often use assertive language and emphasize strength, leadership, and fiscal responsibility (Kaid & Johnston, 2001).

According to Holman et al. (2015), political candidates and parties mostly design political advertisements to influence the vote choice of specific group of voters especially using gender. Candidates or parties design messages accompanied by different advertising appeals to targeted voters. Voters are influenced by their preferences for political messages that political advertisements convey. In a study, Holman et al (2015) focused on examining political advertising messages that target and influence gender identity. The researchers investigated the preference of advertising messages by male and female voters, and how message appeals affect their voting choices. After an experimental design using a nationally representative sample of American voters, the study revealed that political candidates use political advertisements to affect votes based on gender. The use of appeals such as endorsement from people in advertisements persuaded female voters whilst males became unaffected by the appeals.

Moreover, according to Aalberg and Jenssen (2007), the assessment of identical political messages by males and females differ. In analyzing the same political messages, both males and females will have different perspectives in their analysis. The manner in which male voters analyze similar political messages differs from that of female voters. In a study conducted by Kahn (1999) on gender preference for political messages, findings indicated that male voters

concentrate on economic issues whilst female voters focus on social issues before making voting choices. Also, electoral research by Aalberg and Jenssen (2007) demonstrated how men and women sometimes have different political preferences. The research indicated that men are typically thought to be more concerned about taxation, business policies, etc., whilst women care more about issues related to the welfare of the state.

### **2.5.2 Educational Level and Political Advertising**

Educational level is a significant factor in the design of political advertisements. Voters with different levels of education tend to process information differently, as well as respond to different types of messages (Brader, 2005). Sometimes the rate at which voters are influenced is associated with the educational level of voters. Educational level contributes to voters' knowledge about candidates and parties' political messages, thereby enhancing voters' evaluations of messages conveyed by political advertisements (Martin, 2012).

In studying voting behaviour using personal characteristics such as educational level, voters that are less educated and less politically informed tend to be more responsive to political advertisements (Durante & Gutierrez, 2014). According to Valentino et al. (2004), advertising tends to have greater effects on less informed and less educated individuals. The explanation to Valentino et al.'s (2004) argument is less educated individuals do not critically analyze the messages conveyed by political advertisements but they become satisfied once the messages coincide with their political beliefs or expectations.

Moreover, advertisements targeting voters with lower levels of education may focus on straightforward messaging related to economic issues, job creation, and healthcare. These advertisements often avoid complex policy details and instead emphasize clear, relatable narratives (Kenski & Stroud, 2006). In contrast, highly educated voters may respond better to advertisements that discuss detailed policy proposals and intellectual debates on issues like climate change, healthcare reform, and international relations. These advertisements may use more sophisticated language and data-driven arguments (Carmines & Stimson, 2010).

Durante and Gutierrez (2014) investigated whether political advertisements influence voters during Mexico's 2012 presidential elections. Voters were grouped into categories in which they were more likely to be influenced based on their differences in cognitive abilities and prior political information. The categories were educational level of voters, and voters that voted for the same party in the previous elections. Data were collected through survey and analyzed to reveal the effects of advertisements on voting intentions. The study found that political advertisements had a positive significant effect on voting intentions. Moreover, political advertisements had no impact on voters' knowledge of candidates' political message, but the advertisements became more effective in convincing individuals that were more educated, and those who voted for the party in the past. To an extent, more educated people and previous party supporters were highly informed about politics.



## 2.6 Conclusion

Political advertisements remain a central component of parties or candidates' electoral activities (Hermann, 2012). The 2020 elections in Ghana was one of the election periods that made political parties and candidates use the media for massive political advertising to disseminate messages, ideologies and agenda to the Ghanaian electorates ((Alhassan, 2021). During the 2020 general elections, political parties and candidates employed various forms of political advertising by using, especially television, and other media forms such as radio, print media, outdoor billboards, and online platforms to reach out to voters, promote candidates, and share political messages.

In the history of Ghana's general elections in the fourth republic and since the practice of democracy, the 2020 general elections had the highest voter turnout in terms of total number of registered voters and total number of votes cast. That is, in the 2020 general elections, the total number of registered voters was 17,027,941, the total number of votes cast was 13,432,857 and the voter turnout was 79% (Ghana Web, 2020). Over the years in Ghana's general elections, political parties and candidates invest and employ political advertisements to convey messages that aim to influence voters in terms of decision-making. However, the 2020 general elections led parties and candidates to invest heavily in employing political advertisements to influence voters since the elections had a record of over 17 million registered voters (Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), 2021).

However, much attention and analysis have been given and done on campaign events, rallies, manifestos and interviews of political candidates and party representatives as the major

factors considered for a party or candidate to win an election by the media and political pundits. The media and political pundits have taken much time to scrutinize the aforementioned factors and provided little attention to the influence of political advertisements in the context of the 2020 general elections. Moreover, political parties, and both presidential and parliamentary candidates invested heavily in political advertisements during the elections but immense scholarly attention has not been given to how these advertisements contributed to the factors that influenced the decision of voters in terms of voting for a particular party or candidate in Ghana's 2020 elections. As a result, this study sought to investigate the contributing role of political advertisements in the decision-making of voters during the 2020 general elections in Ghana.

Apart from the aforementioned gap, the communication literature has indicated that political advertisements contribute to the influence of the media on voters when they make voting decisions in elections. In reviewing the literature, specific studies on political advertisements and voting decisions in the context of Ghana's 2020 general elections are limited or in other circumstances not extant. Majority of the studies that were reviewed as literature were conducted in the United States, some parts of Europe, and Asia, as well as in Nigeria. For this reason, conducting this study contributes to literature by providing answers to the ways through which political advertisements are perceived to influence the decisions of voters in the 2020 general elections in Ghana.



## 2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the six themes that emerged in the review of the literature. The themes that were discussed in this chapter were influence of media on voter decisions, political advertising in the media and its influence, rhetorical appeals in political advertisements, key issues of political advertisements, positive and negative political advertising, and demographic differences and political advertisements. The chapter was concluded by identifying the gap in the literature.



## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the theories that underpinned this current study. The Aristotle's theory of persuasion and media audience reception theory underpinned this current study. The Aristotle's theory of persuasion is rooted in communication which emphasizes on persuasion which is often associated with the use of language to influence and persuade others, whether through speech, writing, or other forms of expression. Media audience reception theory, on the other hand, focuses on how audiences interpret and make meaning of media texts. In this chapter, the evolution, tenets and assumptions of the two theories have been elaborated. The chapter also discusses the two theories in the context of political advertising and the relevance of the theories to this current study. Lastly, the chapter is ended with a summary of the key points discussed.

#### 3.1 Aristotle's Theory of Persuasion

Aristotle's theory of persuasion is one of the rhetorical theories which describes the use of effective communication, encompassing the use of language and symbols to persuade or influence audience's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. It has ancient origins and has been studied and practised for centuries. Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, is often considered the

father of rhetoric. His work, *Rhetoric* is a foundational text that outlines the three primary modes of persuasion: ethos (credibility), pathos (emotion), and logos (logic) (Aristotle, 2007).

. Aristotle's insights on rhetoric provide a framework for understanding how speakers can persuade audiences effectively.

Aristotle's theory of persuasion continues to evolve and adapt to contemporary communication contexts, including political discourse, advertising, and digital media. It provides a valuable framework for understanding how messages are crafted and received in various contexts, making it a foundational discipline in the study of communication and persuasion. Through evolution, modern rhetorical studies incorporate various perspectives, including feminist rhetoric, critical rhetoric, and visual rhetoric. These perspectives have expanded the scope of rhetoric to include issues of power, identity, and social justice (Crowley & Hawhee, 2012).

### **3.1.1 Modes of Persuasion (Rhetorical Appeals)**

According to Aristotle, a speaker's capacity to convince an audience depends on how successfully they appeal to that audience through the use three persuasion appeals, namely; logos, ethos, and pathos. (Lutzke & Henggeler, 2009).

Logos, which is a Greek word for reason is the application of logic and reasoning to convince an audience (Lee, 2002). Aristotle emphasized that logos is essential for constructing a persuasive argument because it provides the foundation for rational discourse. The goal of logos

is to persuade an audience by using true and accurate facts in any manner possible. By presenting clear, logical, and well-structured arguments, a speaker can effectively persuade an audience based on reason and evidence (Aristotle, 2007). Logos can also be achieved through the composition of the text, how authors choose to define problems, support claims, validate premises, state conclusions, and so on. (Lutzke & Henggeler, 2009).

Aristotle outlined several key components that contribute to a logical argument. Some of the components include deductive reasoning (drawing specific conclusions from general premises), inductive reasoning (making generalizations based on particular instances or observations), evidence (using data, statistics, facts, examples, and expert testimony to support claims), examples and illustrations (providing concrete examples and illustrations to clarify abstract concepts), and analogies and comparisons (drawing analogies and comparisons to highlight similarities and differences to clarify and reinforce arguments) (Aristotle, 2007). To effectively use logos in persuasion, Aristotle (2007) posits that arguments should be clear and precise, have a logical structure, be consistent, address and refute counterarguments, and be supported by statistics and data.

Pathos which is another persuasion appeal is a Greek word for suffering or experience, and it involves appealing to the emotions of the audience to create a connection and influence their perceptions and decisions (Kennedy, 1991). Aristotle recognized that emotions play a crucial role in human behaviour and judgment. By tapping into the audience's emotions, a speaker can persuade them to accept a particular viewpoint or take specific actions (Aristotle, 2007). Aristotle identified that several emotions such as fear, anger, pity, joy and love could be

leveraged in the persuasion of an audience by a speaker. According to Aristotle (2007), a speaker can employ the techniques of storytelling, vivid imagery, diction and tone, analogies and metaphors, and examples and illustrations to evoke emotions in the audience.

The third rhetorical appeal of Aristotle is Ethos. Ethos in Greek means "character", and it involves the perception of the speaker's credibility, which significantly affects the persuasive power of the message (Kennedy, 1991). A speaker with a strong ethos is seen as trustworthy, knowledgeable, and morally upright (Aristotle, 2007). The ability to persuade someone based on the values of confidence and credibility (trustworthiness) is at the core of ethos, which is defined as the author or speaker's credibility and authority (Polynice, 2021). This appeal mostly deals with facts and evidence. The perceived integrity and authority of the writer are particularly important in discourse where honesty and candour are seen as essential elements of credible communication.

Aristotle further breaks ethos into three components which are *phronesis* (practical wisdom) which is associated with a speaker's ability to demonstrate good judgment and expertise in any subject matter, *arete* (moral virtue) which also portrays the ethical integrity and virtuous character of the speaker, and *eunoia* (goodwill) which exhibits goodwill towards the audience showing that the speaker has the audience's best interests at heart (Aristotle, 2007). The components of ethos collectively contribute to the audience's perception of the speaker's credibility.

Aristotle's theory of persuasion has been widely applied in the analysis of political advertisements to understand how messages are crafted to persuade voters. Kelley (2017)

employed Aristotle's theory of persuasion to examine the rhetorical strategies used in the 2016 U.S. presidential election advertisements. The study found that both presidential candidates used ethos, pathos, and logos differently to appeal to their target audiences. Trump's political advertisements heavily relied on fear and anger (pathos), whilst Clinton's advertisements focused more on credibility (ethos) and logical arguments (logos). Olson et al. (2010) explored the use of visual rhetoric in political advertisements during the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign. Underpinned by Aristotle's persuasion theory, the study found that visual elements such as imagery, colour, and symbolism were crucial in conveying emotional and ethical appeals to the electorate. Also, the theory guided Brader et al. (2014) to reveal that there was a balance between emotional (pathos) and logical (logos) appeals in political advertisements during the 2012 presidential elections in the U.S. after the examination of emotions and reasoning in political advertising. The scholars also found that advertisements that combined emotional and rational appeals were effective in influencing voter attitudes and behaviours.

Furthermore, as this current study also analyzes the nature of political advertisements voters were exposed to in the 2020 general elections of Ghana, Aristotle's theory of persuasion was deemed appropriate. Aristotle's theory of persuasion plays a significant role in analyzing campaign advertisements as political candidates and parties use persuasive languages and communication techniques to influence voters. The application of the theory to campaign advertisements helps analyze how candidates craft their messages and appeal to the electorates.

The three Aristotle's persuasive appeals, ethos (credibility), pathos (emotion), and logos (logic) were employed to determine the persuasive nature in the content of campaign

advertisements in this current study. These appeals guided in the analysis of campaign advertisements to see how candidates establish their credibility, evoke emotions, and present logical arguments in the advertisements (Birdsell & Groarke, 2007).

To explain further in relation to campaign advertisements, the ethos takes care of how candidates in campaign advertisements establish their credibility and trustworthiness. The analysis was done by looking out for personal anecdotes, endorsements, qualifications, or references to past accomplishments that established the credibility of candidates and parties (Birdsell & Groarke, 1996). In the campaign advertisement, a candidate may highlight their years of public service, educational background, or endorsements from respected figures to build credibility and trust among viewers.

Pathos, also considered how campaign advertisements used emotional appeals to connect with viewers. Emotional stories, personal narratives, music and imagery were regarded as powerful tools to evoke feelings of empathy, anger, hope, fear or other emotional responses in the analysis of the advertisements (Birdsell & Groarke, 2007). A campaign advertisement might feature a touching story of a struggling family to evoke empathy and highlight the candidate's commitment to addressing economic hardship.

Logos, on the other hand, evaluated the logical and rational arguments presented in campaign advertisements. Logos analysis helped to reveal statistics, evidence, and policy proposals in advertisements that made a reasoned case for supporting the candidate or party to persuade voters (Birdsell & Groarke, 1996). In a campaign advertisement, a candidate might

present data on job creation or economic growth, using this evidence to argue that their policies will benefit the economy.

Lastly, rhetorical questions were embedded in the campaign advertisements. Rhetorical questions are often used in campaign advertisements to engage viewers and lead them to a specific conclusion or viewpoint (Walton, 2008). A campaign advertisement may ask, "Do you want a future of uncertainty and division?" or "Can we afford to go back to the policies of the past?" with the implied answer being that the candidate offers stability and unity or a better future.

### **3.2 Media Audience Reception Theory**

Another ideal theory that underpinned this present study is the media audience reception theory. The theory examines how audiences interpret and engage with media messages. It evolved as a response to earlier communication models that depicted audiences as passive receivers of media content (McQuail, 2010). This theory highlights the active role of audiences in making meaning from media texts based on their personal, cultural, and social contexts (Tufekci, 2014).

Stuart Hall is considered the early originator of the Reception Theory. The theory took shape in the 1970s and moved beyond the simplistic models of media influence towards understanding audience interpretation (Hall, 1973). Hall (1973) emphasized that media messages are encoded with particular meanings by producers and decoded in various ways by audiences.

The theory posits that media messages are encoded with specific meanings and ideologies by producers and decoded by audiences in multiple ways. The audience reception theory also illustrates that viewers actively interpret media content based on their cultural background and personal experiences (Morley, 1980).

In the process of decoding media messages by audiences, Hall (1973) identified three processes. The first process is the dominant reading which describes that the audience interpret the message as intended by the producers. The second process is negotiated reading which also explains that the audience partially accept the message but adopts it according to their context. The third process is also the oppositional reading which highlights that the audience reject the message or interpret it in a way contrary to the intended meaning (Hall, 1973).

The theory after its development by Hall (1973) has evolved into several perspectives. Barthes (1972) further developed the theory by introducing the polysemy and active audience which explains that media texts can be interpreted in multiple ways. The concept of polysemy and active audience reinforced the idea that audiences are active in their engagement with media content, interpreting messages through their lenses (Barthes, 1972).

According to Jenkins (1992), the reception theory has been used to analyze various media forms, including television, film, and digital media. It helps in understanding phenomena such as fandom, media consumption patterns, and the impact of media on identity and culture (Hodkinson, 2011). Recent studies have employed media audience reception theory to understand how political advertisements are received and interpreted by audiences. Ebre and Çelik (2011) in Antalya, Turkey employed the media reception theory to examine audiences'

interpretation of advertisements. After the evaluation of the reactions of 21 participants to television advertisements, the study revealed a difference in interpretation based on the gender of the audiences. Female and male audiences interpret advertisements with symbolic expressions and advertisements with direct messages differently. Aminudin (2018) analyzed how the audience understood the meaning of the hashtag #2019GantiPresiden in Indonesia. The study used a qualitative approach with a theory of media audience reception analysis to obtain in-depth data from 10 audiences. The study revealed the key components that were evident in the understanding of audiences. Audiences showed dominant reading, negotiated reading and the oppositional reading of reception. Also, differences in the social affiliation background of the audiences gave dissent over the issue of #2019GantiPresiden. Also, guided by the media audience reception theory, Echeverría (2023) explored how users engage with political advertising on social media in the 2021 federal campaigns in Mexico. Focus group sessions were conducted with 34 social media users. Findings indicated that digital political advertisements often blurred with other content types such as infographics and memes, and users' connections significantly influence user attention and attitudes towards these advertisements.

In the application of the theory to explain voters' engagement with political advertisements which is one of the central themes of this current study, media audience reception theory offers valuable insights into how political advertisements are interpreted by various audience segments. When applied to this present study, the media audience reception theory helps to explain the diverse ways individuals respond to and make sense of political messages based on their social, cultural, and personal contexts. Using the two concepts of the theory (encoding and decoding) is crucial for analyzing political advertisements. Political

advertisements are encoded with specific meanings and ideologies by political parties and strategists, and decoded by audiences (voters) in multiple ways. The effectiveness of these advertisements depends on how well they align with the voters' existing beliefs and values. For the dominant reading in the process of decoding, an advertisement's message can be interpreted well as intended by the political parties or candidates to reinforce the intended ideology or political stance. For a typical example, an advertisement that promotes a candidate or party's economic policy might be accepted by voters who already support that policy. In terms of the negotiated reading, voters after watching a political advertisement may partially accept the advertisement's message but interpret it in the context of their own experiences and values. Such an instance can be portrayed when a voter agrees with some aspects of a candidate's policy but disagrees with the presentation or certain details. Also, in the oppositional reading, voters can reject or critique the advertisement's message based on their perspectives and ideologies. Voters with opposing political views may criticize an advertisement as misleading or biased.

### **3.3 Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided a detailed account of the theory of rhetoric. The discussion indicated that the theory of rhetoric has three appeals which are the ethos, logos and the pathos. The three appeals play a key role in the use of political advertisements to influence voters. The three appeals were also discussed in the context of political advertisements and voting decisions. Moreover the chapter concluded with the relevance of the theory of rhetoric to the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODOLOGY

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed account of how this present study was undertaken. This study examined the contributions of television political advertisements in influencing the decisions of voters in the Ledzokuku Constituency in the 2020 general elections. Specifically, the study looked at the nature of political advertisements, voters' engagement with these advertisements, and the perception of the content of the advertisements during the 2020 general elections. These were specifically assessed to make meaning of the role of political advertising in influencing voting decisions.

The study adopted a mixed methods approach to examine the role of political advertisements played on television by combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative component involved a detailed analysis of television advertisements and voters experiences after watching the advertisements. On the other hand, the quantitative component employed a statistical technique to quantify the frequency voters' engagement, perception and reception of the content of political advertisements.

The preceding sections of this chapter describe the various research strategies and methods that were adopted in the collection and analysis of data in this current study. The research approach, data collection method and instrument, population and sample size, sampling

technique, data analysis, analytical tool, reliability and validity of the constructs in the data are discussed in this chapter.

#### 4.1 Research Approach

Mixed methods approach was adopted for this study. The mixed methods approach combined both qualitative and quantitative research approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the present study's topic (Smith, 2017). In the mixed methods approach, both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered to gain an insight about the relationship that exist between the content of political advertisements and voters' decisions in the 2020 general elections. In the adoption of the mixed methods for this current study, general observations, depth, and verbal descriptions alongside numerical measures were used to seek answers for the research questions of the study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In one leg of the mixed methods, qualitative approach was employed to examine the nature of messages of advertisements exposed to voters during the 2020 general elections. In the qualitative approach to research, data were gathered through the employment of qualitative content analysis and focus group discussion to gain in-depth understanding of the study's topic. In the other leg of the mixed methods, the quantitative research approach involved the use of quantitative data, that is, data in the form of numbers and statistics (Neuman, 2014). In the quantitative research aspect, the collection of numerical data was done through surveys, followed by statistical analysis to draw conclusions and generalize findings to a larger population. The numerical data were used to explain the voters' engagement and the perception of the content of political advertisements in

the 2020 general elections. Moreover, the qualitative and quantitative research approaches were suitable for this study as they provided both describable and measurable data which allowed for the conclusion of facts and the revelation of different research patterns which explain the significant role television political advertisements played in the voting decisions of voters in the Ledzokuku Constituency.

#### 4.2 Study Area

The study area is the Ledzokuku Constituency. The constituency is among the 275 constituencies in Ghana. The constituency shares boundaries with Krowor and La-Dadekotopon Constituencies in the Greater Accra Region. The constituency is comprised of twelve (12) electoral areas which are West Akromadeokpo, East Akromadeokpo, Nii Ashitey Akomfra, Okesekor, Aborle-Bu, Sutsurunor, Agblesan, Tsuibleoo South, Tsuibleoo Central, Tsuibleoo North, South Teshie Nungua Estate and North Teshie Nungua Estate. A total of two hundred and ten (210) polling stations are located within the constituency.

The constituency is a reflection of the larger Ghanaian society; by this, almost all the characteristics of a well-structured society such as the diversity in socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicity, educational backgrounds and political affiliations are really commonplace in the constituency. Moreover, Ledzokuku Constituency is one of the prominent constituencies in Ghana that decides election outcomes for political parties who are likely to win an election. Consequently, elections in this constituency are keenly contested by all political parties. Since elections began in 1992, all Members of Parliament who had the opportunity to lead the

constituency served just a term. This speaks to how assertive the constituents are with their voting decisions. The parliamentary elections since 1992 have been won by only the two prominent parties (NPP and NDC) in Ghana (Ghana Elections, 2020).

#### **4.3 Population of the Study**

In this study, the population represented a group of people or items that shared certain traits which a particular interest to the researcher. According to Krieger (2012), a population is every individual who falls under a particular categorization of individuals, objects, or events. It follows that any object, group, or set that makes up a population must share at least one trait or quality with the others in the group. As a result, the study's population represented its target, as established by its goals and objectives.

The study had two sets of population for the mixed methods approach. The first population were all political advertisements of the political parties that were aired on television. Prior to the elections, political advertisements were aired on television to convey different political messages to the Ghanaian electorates. However, there were no specific recorded data on the total population of advertisements played during the 2020 elections.

The second population for the study were the voters who reside in Ledzokuku Constituency. The unit of analysis for this study was voters. The constituency is ranked the third most populous constituency in Ghana (Ghana Elections, 2020). According to the Electoral Commission of Ghana, the total registered voters in Ledzokuku Constituency stands at 142,995

but 111, 937 of the voters went to the polls during the 2020 general elections. The percentage of voter turnout in the constituency during the 2020 elections was 78.28%. The turnout indicates that more than half of the total registered voters exercised their voting rights during the elections. The high voter turnout in the constituency influenced the researcher to delve deeper in examining the role television political advertisements played in voters' decisions during the 2020 general elections.

#### **4.4 Sampling Technique/Procedure and Sampling Size**

Both non-probability and probability sampling techniques were employed in the study. For the qualitative aspect of this study, a non-probability sampling, which is purposive sampling was employed to select political advertisements and voters. Concerning the sampling of the advertisements, a total of eight (8) political advertisements were selected for the study. The researcher purposively selected four (4) advertisements each from the two major parties (NPP and NDC). The advertisements were purposely selected because they were most widely used by both parties in their campaigns and also, highly televised during the 2020 election period. On the other hand, six (6) voters were purposely selected to provide answers to the research questions that catered for the qualitative aspect of the present study. The selection of the sample sizes for the qualitative aspect of this study was based on the recommendation of Dworkin (2012) who asserted that a sample size ranging from six (6) to fifty (50) is enough for qualitative research.

Moreover, concerning the quantitative aspect of this study, the probability sampling technique, multi-stage sampling was used in selecting the voters. The sampling procedure was

done in three (3) stages. In the first stage, simple random sampling was used to select five (5) electoral areas in the constituency. The names of the electoral areas were written on pieces of papers and five (5) electoral areas were randomly selected from the pieces of papers without replacement. In the second stage, simple random sampling was used to select five (5) polling stations within each of the selected electoral areas. The names of the polling stations within each electoral area were written on pieces of paper from which five (5) of them were randomly selected. In the third stage, systematic sampling was used to select the respondents. The five (5) selected polling stations were used as starting points for the administration of the questionnaires with a purposive choice of sampling interval of five (5) where every fifth respondent was chosen. The sampling interval was purposively chosen due to the large size of the study's population of voters. A calculation of a sampling interval would have yielded a huge margin of sampling interval which would have caused difficulties in the location of respondents and administration of the study's questionnaires. At the various starting points of the systematic sampling, the first voter located by the researcher became the first respondent if he or she voted in the 2020 general elections. Next, the calculated interval was used to locate the second respondent. This procedure was repeated until the questionnaires were administered to total samples. A total of two hundred and five (205) voters were selected through the multi-stage sampling. The selection of the sample size was guided by the simplified formula of Yamane (1967). The population and the sample size allowed for precision and confidence levels of  $\pm 7\%$  and  $\pm 93\%$  respectively. The samples were strictly selected from voters who voted in the 2020 general elections because of their solid memories of the various political advertisements that were aired on television, and the campaign activities that took place during the elections.

## **4.5 Data Collection Methods**

In this current study, three methods of data collection were employed. For the qualitative aspect of the study, content analysis method and focus group discussion were used to gather data. Survey method was also employed to gather data to cater for the quantitative aspect of the study. The focus group discussion and the survey method were employed to confirm voters' exposure to the nature of advertisements that were examined through the content analysis.

### **4.5.1 Content Analysis Method**

The content analysis for the qualitative aspect had the purpose to identify shared and individual meaningful themes or essential descriptions by highlighting keywords and phrases in the political advertisements (Prinsloo et al., 2016). One of the objectives of this current study was interested in analyzing the nature of advertisements that were played on television in the 2020 elections. Since content analysis is the best technique for obtaining and measuring the communication texts and stories (Elo et al., 2014), it was deemed fit to be used to analyze the nature, content and particular messages of these political advertisements. The content analysis was employed to gather the qualitative data, organized the data for the analysis and report the results that were obtained from the political advertisements. The content analysis was employed to gather data on the message appeals, and the key issues that were in the advertisements of the political candidates and parties.

In the procedure of gathering data using the content analysis, a total of eight (8) advertisements were selected. To break it down, four (4) popular advertisements were selected from the NPP advertisements, whilst four (4) advertisements were also selected from the NDC advertisements that were played on television. These advertisements were downloaded from the internet. After this process, the sampled advertisements were grouped under each party for analysis. Some of the advertisements were in English language whilst others too were in the local language (Twi). The advertisements in the local language were meticulously translated to English without distorting the any of the messages conveyed by the advertisements. After this process, the categories under which each content fell within were recorded on the coding sheet.

#### **4.5.2 Focus Group Discussion**

Focus group discussion (FGD) was employed to gather qualitative data from voters. Through the method, in-depth information concerning voters' attitudes, beliefs, experiences, and reactions as a result of their exposure to the nature of political advertisements were gathered. The focus group discussion relied on voters' interactions to generate data, which allowed the researcher to observe not just what the voters said but how they interacted and reacted to each other's perspectives (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Six (6) discussants (voters) were purposely selected to participate in the discussion. The number of the discussants was chosen to allow everyone to participate yet large enough to provide a diversity of perspectives. (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The discussants were selected based on the characteristics of voting in the 2020 general elections.

In the process of the data collection, the study's topic, objectives, and other rules of the discussion were explain to the discussants. The discussants were allowed to watch (exposed to) the political advertisements that were analyzed through the content analysis method in this study. After the exposure to the advertisements, the discussion started. The discussion was led by a moderator who ensured that it stayed on track whiles encouraged participation from all discussants (Barbour, 2007). During the discussion, the moderator asked questions where the discussants were allowed to take their turns in providing responses to the questions. The focus group discussion lasted for almost an hour. Permission were sought from the discussants to record the focus group session.

#### **4.5.3 Survey Method**

The survey method was used in the collection of quantitative data for this study. The survey method involved gathering information from a sample of voters through structured questionnaires or interviews (Fowler Jr., 2013). The use of a survey in this study allowed voters' opinions on the study's topic to be quantified (Ezegwu et al., 2015). The survey was designed to fit into the research needs. By this, the survey was designed based on the study's research objectives and questions (Dillman et al., 2014). That is, the survey was designed to gather data on the demographical information, exposure to political messages, voters' engagement with political advertisements and perception of content of political advertisements played in the 2020 general elections.

In the process of collecting data through the survey, the researcher discovered disparities in education levels. This made the researcher to resort to both self and researcher-administered process of responding to the questionnaires. For the self-administered, the highly educated respondents were able to fill the questionnaires by themselves whilst the researcher guided the less educated respondents in researcher-administered process. The respondents handed over the questionnaires to the researcher after they have finished filling them out.

#### **4.6 Units of Analysis**

The unit of analysis in any research study refers to the primary entity that is being analyzed (Neuman, 2014). In this particular study, the units of analysis were political advertisements and voters who voted in the 2020 general elections in Ghana. In Ghana, the required age for any individual to vote in a presidential, parliamentary or any other form of elections organized by the Electoral Commission of Ghana is eighteen (18) years and above. Accordingly, data were collected from voters who were eighteen (18) years and above who voted in the 2020 general elections of Ghana.

#### **4.7 Data Collection Instruments**

This study adopted the mixed methods approach where qualitative and quantitative data were gathered through the employment of content analysis, focus group discussion and survey methods. As a result, this study had three data collection instruments. The first instrument was

the coding sheet. The coding sheet was employed as an instrument to gather data during the execution of the qualitative content analysis. The coding sheet had categories that were used to describe the nature of advertisements conveyed by the selected political advertisements. The coding sheet had categorized the nature of advertisements into: Message appeals which were ethos, pathos and logos; Key issues which were issues related to educational, economic, employment, and health policies and programmes.

The second data collection instrument was the discussion guide. The discussion guide was employed as an instrument for collecting data during the focus group discussion. The discussion guide had a set of open-ended questions that steered the discussion (Morgan, 2007). However, the guide was flexible to allow the discussion to flow naturally. The discussion guide had questions that addressed the pathos, ethos and logos in the advertisements. Other questions that were on the discussion guide also catered for the key issues of advertisements.

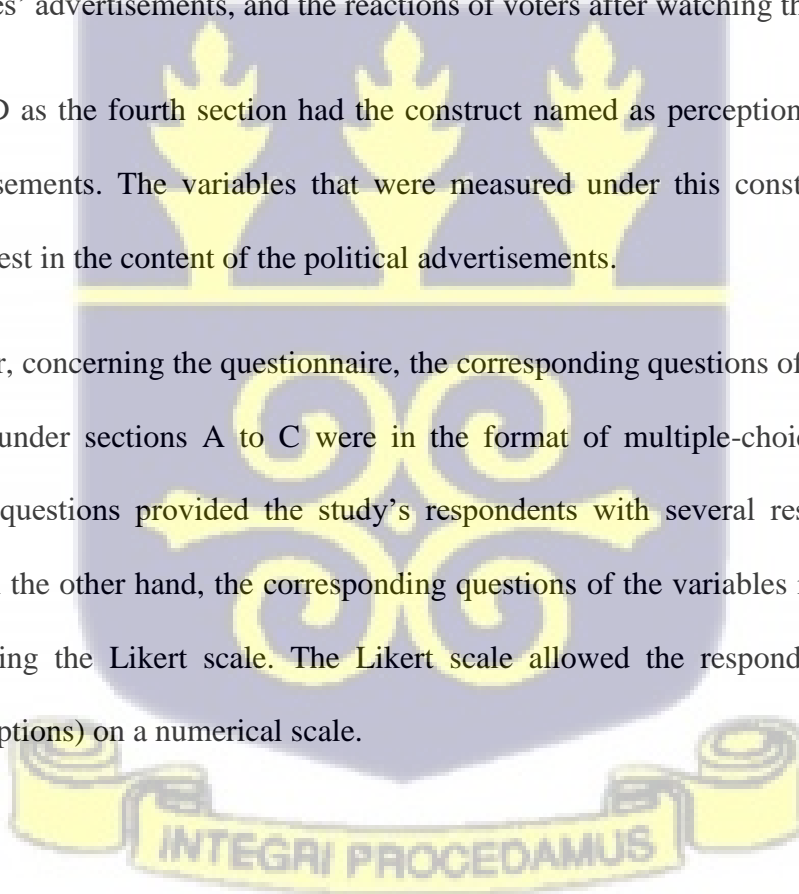
The third data collection instrument was the structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was adopted as an instrument to gather data for the survey. The questionnaire was designed to have closed-ended questions with predefined response options for quantitative data collection. The use of close-ended questions always ensured that the response options were exhaustive and mutually exclusive to avoid ambiguity (Fowler Jr., 2013). The questionnaire had an introduction and four sections. The introduction highlighted a clear and concise explanation of the purpose and relevance of the study to the respondents of the study. The four sections, on the other hand, were designed to collect data on four constructs. The first section was labelled as Section A, and the construct under this section was the demographical information of the respondents.

The second section was Section B which had the exposure to political messages in advertisements as the construct. Under this construct, the variables that were measured included voters' exposure to advertisements that showed the achievements of candidates or parties, celebrities or people endorsing the candidates or parties, the human side of the parties' candidates, policy and programme proposals of candidates or parties, praised the character of candidates, and criticized opposition candidates or parties.

Section C which was the third section had voters' engagement with political advertisements as its construct. The variables measured under the section were frequent watching of political parties' advertisements, and the reactions of voters after watching the advertisements.

Section D as the fourth section had the construct named as perception of the content of political advertisements. The variables that were measured under this construct were voters' believe and interest in the content of the political advertisements.

Moreover, concerning the questionnaire, the corresponding questions of the variables that were measured under sections A to C were in the format of multiple-choice questions. The multiple-choice questions provided the study's respondents with several response options to choose from. On the other hand, the corresponding questions of the variables in Section D were measured by using the Likert scale. The Likert scale allowed the respondents to rate their responses (perceptions) on a numerical scale.



#### 4.8 Pretesting of Data Collection Instrument

The questionnaire was pretested after its design. At the pretesting stage, ten copies of the questionnaire were administered to ten randomly selected voters from the population who had been initially apprised of the nature and primary objectives of the study. The ten respondents were briefed on the nature and primary objective of the study before they proceeded to respond to the questionnaires. After this, the researcher worked on the suggestions of the respondents to provide multiple-choice answers to some of the questions in the questionnaire. The pretesting of the questionnaire was conducted with a small sample to identify any issues with question clarity, comprehension, or response options. (Babbie, 2016). It helped to refine and improve the questionnaire before the actual data collection (Fowler Jr., 2013).

#### 4.9 Analysis of Data

The study gathered both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data gathered through content analysis and focus group discussion, and the quantitative data gathered through survey method were analyzed respectively. The qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed in conformity with that of Riege (2003). Data were gathered based on the study's objectives and theories to provide an excellent study (Riege, 2003).

Thematic analysis was employed in the analysis of qualitative data from the content analysis and focus group discussion. The thematic analysis is a common method used where data

were coded and categorized into themes to reflect the key topics discussed (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

For the content analysis, the data were coded and categorized into themes with the headings such as the message appeals, and key issues of advertisements. The headings of the analysis were arranged in line with the study's research questions. The analyzed data were presented in a narrative style with quotations of various extracts in the advertisements that depicted each category that was analyzed. On the other hand, concerning the focus group discussion, the content of the discussion and the interaction among the discussants were coded and categorized into themes with headings. Similar to the content analysis, the analyzed data were presented in a narrative style with quotations of the discussants that depicted each category that was analyzed.

Moreover, the quantitative data were analyzed and presented by employing only one stream of statistical analysis. The statistical analysis was the descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics was used to summarize and describe the main features of the entire quantitative dataset that were gathered. The variables and their responses under each construct were analyzed to collectively capture different aspects of each of the constructs the study was interested in. With this particular statistical analysis, it provided insights into the characteristics of the data, such that it revealed the various distributions, patterns and trends of the entire constructs (demographical information, advertisements' exposure, voters' engagement, and perception of the content of political advertisements) that were measured. Afterwards, the results from the

analysis were organized and presented in frequency distribution tables with their corresponding percentages.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 23.0) was employed as an analytical tool for the analysis of the collected data.

#### **4.10 Ethical Consideration in Data Collection**

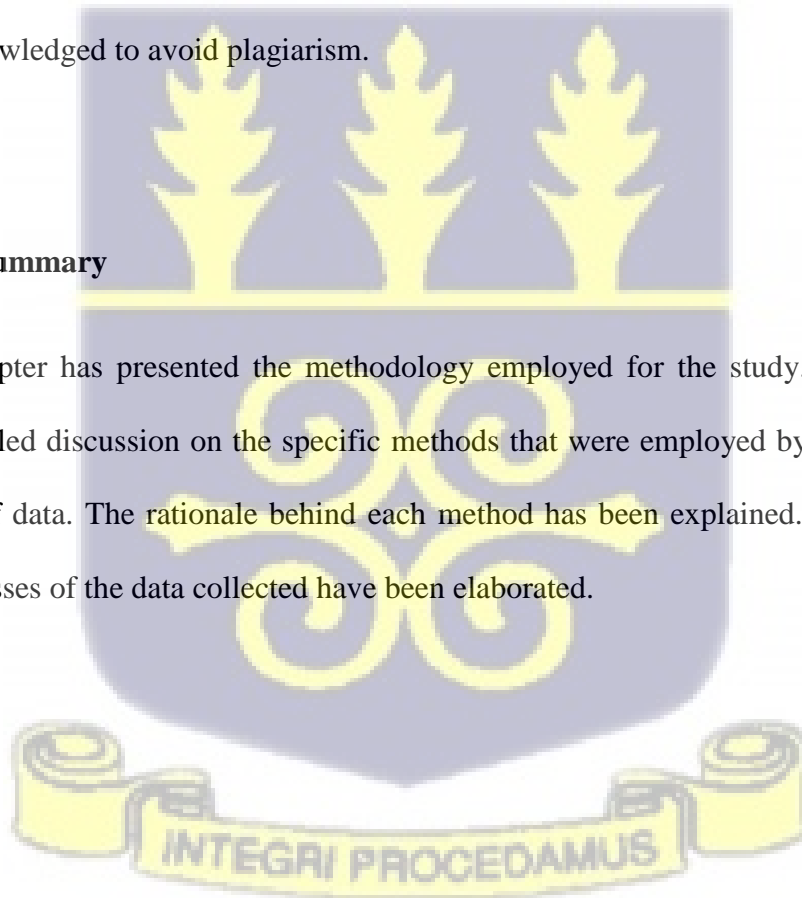
The participants of the study were recruited based on the study's objectives. The study was interested in analyzing the role of political advertisements in the decisions of voters. As a result, the content of political advertisements and voters were studied. In the recruitment of the advertisements, popular advertisements of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC) that were played on television during the 2020 general elections were selected and downloaded from the internet (YouTube). On the other hand, for both focus group discussion and the survey method, the participants were recruited through personal invitations. Each participant was contacted directly through in-person. Incentives were given to the participants to encourage their participation. The participants were screened by asking questions that concerned the 2020 general elections in relation to their previous exposure to political advertisements.

Moreover, in the execution of this study, confidentiality, informed consent, anonymity and acknowledgement were the ethical considerations that were upheld. The participants' rights to confidentiality were respected and any legal obligations on the data were obeyed. The

information provided by the participants during the focus group discussion and filling of the questionnaires were kept only at the disposal of the researcher without divulging the information to any third party or external research group. The information provided by the participants were strictly for academic purpose. The participants' consent were sought upon presenting them with a consent form that was attached to the survey questionnaires and discussion guide. The consent form explained to the participants, their decision to participate in this study and the purpose of using the data gathered solely for academics. The anonymity of the participants were ensured by assigning to them identification codes. This helped to ensure that their identities become untraceable. Lastly, all the political advertisements that were sampled for the content analysis were duly acknowledged to avoid plagiarism.

#### **4.11 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented the methodology employed for the study. The chapter has provided a detailed discussion on the specific methods that were employed by the researcher in the collection of data. The rationale behind each method has been explained. Additionally, the analytical processes of the data collected have been elaborated.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This study examined the exposure and perceived role television political advertisements played in the voting decisions of voters in Ledzokuku Constituency in the 2020 general elections. It specifically looked at the nature of political advertisements voters were exposed to, voters' engagement with political advertisements on television, voters' perceptions about the content of political advertisements, and the demographic differences (gender and education level) in their reception towards political advertisements.

The study adopted the mixed methods approach where both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered through content analysis and survey respectively. The qualitative content analysis was used to gather data from a total of eight political advertisements of both the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC). The survey, on the other hand, was used to gather data from two hundred and five (205) respondents (voters) in the Ledzokuku Constituency. After the collection of qualitative and quantitative data, the researcher employed thematic analysis and descriptive statistics to analyze and make meaning of the data. SPSS as an analytical tool was employed in the analysis of the quantitative data.

Moreover, this chapter presents the findings obtained from the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data gathered. The findings are presented based on the research questions and the theories that underpinned this study.

### 5.1 Demographical Information of Focus Group Discussants and Survey Respondents

The focus group discussion consisted of six discussants. Out of the total number of discussants, three were males, whilst the remaining were females. All the discussants were over 18 years old and voted in the 2020 general elections in Ghana. On the other hand, Table 1 below shows the demographical information of respondents in the Ledzokuku Constituency. The table indicates that out of the total respondents, 110 representing 53.7% were males, whilst 95 representing 46.3% were females. Concerning the age range of the respondents, 64 representing 31.2% were in the age bracket of 31-40 years, 57 representing 26.8% were in the age range of 18-30 years, and 34 representing 16.6% were above 60 years. Only 20 respondents, representing 9.8% were in the age range of 41-50 years. In terms of educational level, 58 respondents representing 28.3% have had basic education, 51 representing 24.9% have also had secondary education, whilst 50 representing 24.4% have no formal education. Only 46 of the respondents representing 22.4% have had tertiary education.

**Table 1: Demographical Information of Respondents**

<b>Gender of Respondents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	110	53.7
Female	95	46.3
Total	205	100.0
<b>Age Range of Respondents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>

18 – 30	57	27.8
31 – 40	64	31.2
41 – 50	20	9.8
51 – 60	30	14.6
Above 60 Years	34	16.6
Total	205	100.0
<b>Educational Level of Respondents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No Formal Education	50	24.4
Basic Education	58	28.3
Secondary Education	51	24.9
Tertiary Education	46	22.4
Total	205	100.0

## 5.2 Respondents' Voting Patterns

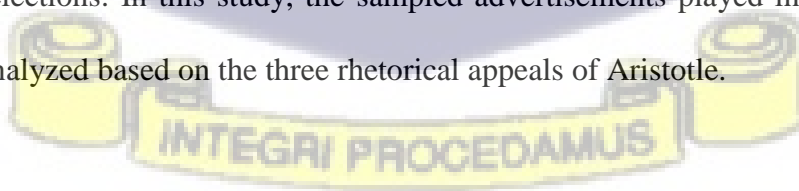
Table 2 below presents the voting patterns of the respondents in the 2020 general elections. Out of the total number of respondents, 107 representing 52.2% voted based on their strong affiliation to a particular political party, whilst 98 representing 47.8% voted without any affiliation. Moreover, 92 representing 44.9% of the total number of respondents voted for the NPP, whilst 83 representing 40.5% voted for the NDC. Only 30 respondents representing 14.6% voted for other political parties that contested in the 2020 general elections.

**Table 2: Respondents Voting Patterns**

<b>Vote Based on Party Affiliation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	107	52.2
No	98	47.8
Total	205	100.0
<b>Political Party Voted For</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
NPP	92	44.9
NDC	83	40.5
Other	30	14.6
Total	205	100.0

### **5.3 Message Appeals of Political Advertisements**

The content of advertisements were examined through the guidance of the three rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos and logos). Rhetorical appeals are also found in political advertising. Political candidates or parties employed the rhetorical appeals to persuade their supporters and other voters in elections. In this study, the sampled advertisements played in the 2020 general elections were analyzed based on the three rhetorical appeals of Aristotle.



### 5.3.1 Ethos in Advertisements

Ethos described the ability to persuade voters based on the values of confidence and credibility (trustworthiness). It is mostly based on the speaker's credibility and authority (Polynice, 2021). In the analysis of the sampled advertisements, the ethos took care of how candidates in campaign advertisements established their credibility and trustworthiness. This was done through personal anecdotes, endorsements, qualifications, or references to past accomplishments (Birdsell & Groarke, 1996).

#### 5.3.1.1 Use of Personal Anecdotes

Personal anecdotes evaluated in the advertisements dealt with the short stories provided by the characters in the advertisements about a candidate or a party. The personal anecdotes provided in the advertisements established the candidates or parties' credibility as a result of their actions. The following extracts depicted the personal anecdotes in the sampled advertisements.

Male Speaker: Ask yourself that the person you are going to vote for, has he swindled you before? *Ayoo*, we were in this country when *ɔyonkoɔ* (someone) took the country's money GHC 15 million which can be used to build 720 educational facilities. What did he use the money for? He said he was investing the money into guinea fowl rearing. Until now, we have not seen even a feather or an egg of a guinea fowl. When he was asked, he looked at us in the face and said that all the guinea fowls had flown to Burkina Faso.

**Extract:** NPP Advertisement titled "Let Us Think About It"

Male Speaker 1: Bro, you know say as I *dey* here, me *naa* I *dey* do my hustles 1 and 2 *dey* get money *dey* take settle my school fees. But right now, John Mahama says *kye mu pe*

(equal division), which means the NDC Mahama-led government will pay 50% of school fees for all tertiary students in the universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, nursing training schools, and so on.

**Extract:** NDC Advertisement titled “*Kye Mu Pe* (Equal Division)”

In the extracts above, both speakers in the advertisements shared a story about the political candidates. The extract in the NPP advertisement depicts a story shared by the speaker to inform voters about the mismanagement of the country’s financial resources by NPP’s opponent. In the speaker’s argument, the implication is that the NPP candidate is frugal in using the country’s resources, whilst the NDC candidate is not. The extract depicted the anecdote employed by the speaker to convince voters to vote against the party’s opponent. On the other hand, in the extract of the NDC advertisement, the speaker presents an argument on the reason to vote for the NDC candidate by using his personal struggles of paying tuition fees to convince voters. The story shared by the speaker serves a strategy to convince other voters who struggle to pay their tuition fees.

### **5.3.1.2 Endorsements of Candidates or Parties**

The endorsements in the sampled advertisements highlighted the support or approval by people to vote for a particular candidate or party. In the context of endorsements, there can also be a rejection or denial of support of a candidate or party by people. In the advertisements, the endorsements of the candidates and parties by the speakers in the revealed the advertisements’

aim of persuading voters. The following extracts indicate the endorsements in the adverts that were sampled.

Male Speaker: This same person has come again to demand our votes. Think twice. Do not politicize it. Think twice. This is disrespect. Let us think about it.

**Extract:** NPP Advertisement titled “Let Us Think About It”

Female Speaker 2: hmmm, I think so. I think you are right. But is it necessary to be wearing the NPP t-shirt?

Female Speaker 1: please wear it to show that you support NPP and free SHS

Male Speaker 1: oh yes, wear it and vote for Nana Addo-Dankwa Akufo Addo so that I can also enjoy free education.

All characters: vote for Nana Akufo Addo. 4 more for Nana. Vote for Nana. He is number 1.

**Extract:** NPP Advertisement titled “Vote for NPP to Continue Free SHS”

Male Speaker: my dear Okada and delivery riders, and your families, please, enough is enough! Let us vote for John Dramani Mahama, so we can feed our families.

**Extract:** NDC Advertisement titled “Legalize Okada”

Female Speaker (Old Lady): Come December 7, 2020, I will vote for John Mahama. The remaining candidates are undeserving.

**Extract:** NDC Advertisement titled “A Testimony About John Mahama”

In the extracts above, both endorsement and rejection by the speakers were depicted. In the first extract of the NPP advertisement, the speaker urged voters not to vote for the NPP’s opponent, whilst in the second extract, the speakers showed support and urged voters to vote for

the NPP candidate. It can be inferred that the arguments presented by the speakers in the NPP advertisements were endorsements and rejections respectively. On the other hand, in the two extracts of NDC's advertisements, the speaker in the first extract endorsed the NDC's candidate. The speaker in the second extract vowed to vote for the NDC's candidate and indicated that other opponents of the NDC are underserving of her vote. Ultimately, the extracts revealed the endorsements and rejections of the candidates by the speakers.

### 5.3.1.3 Qualifications and Attributes of Candidates or Parties

The qualifications of candidates identified in the sampled advertisements described the educational background of the candidates presented the speakers' arguments. The attributes, on the other hand, explained the innate qualities presented by the speakers in their arguments of describing the personality of a party's candidate. The speakers described the qualities of candidates and their parties to entice voters during the elections. The following extracts indicated the attributes of the candidates or parties in the sampled advertisements.

Male Narrator: *agoo agoo*, the time for elections is due again. Have you thought about the person you are going to vote for? Ask yourself that the person you are going to vote for, has he swindled you before?

**Extract:** NPP Advertisement titled "Let Us Think About It"

Adult Speaker: when he saw that there was no justice for Ghanaians, he led the "*ku me pre ko*" demonstration for human rights. He persevered and persevered and mobilize Ghanaians for multi-party democracy which was achieved in 1992.

**Extract:** NPP Advertisement titled "The Perseverance of Akufo Addo"

Female Speaker (Old Lady): a certain man once said in this country that “*yete sika so*” (we are sitting on money). He said, that when he becomes president, he will bring out the hidden money for the country to prosper. I turned a blind eye and a deaf ear from buying into the lies of this man.

**Extract:** NDC Advertisement titled “A Testimony About John Mahama”

Male Speaker 2: *chale herrr*, John Mahama be visionary. *Kye mu pe* go ease pressure from parent and students *dema top paa ooo*.

**Extract:** NDC Advertisement titled “*Kye Mu Pe* (Equal Division)”

In the analysis of the advertisements, the qualifications of candidates could not be indicated in the arguments of the speakers. Only the attributes of candidates were revealed. The above extracts revealed the attributes given to the candidates by the speakers in presenting their arguments to voters. In the extracts of the NPP advertisements, the speakers described the party's candidate as honest (not a swindler), a justice seeker, a human rights advocate and a perseverer. The attributes were used by the speakers to project the personality of the candidate in a favourable way to voters. The speakers in the extracts of the NDC advertisements employed positive attributes in describing the NDC candidate and negative attributes in describing their opponents. In the NDC extracts, the speakers described their candidate as visionary, whilst their opponent as a liar. The attributes presented in the arguments of the speakers were to either entice or voters turn off.



#### 5.3.1.4 References to Past Accomplishments of Candidates or Parties

The reference to past accomplishments described the presentation of a candidate or party's achievements to support the arguments of the speakers in the sampled advertisements. The references to past accomplishments were employed by the speakers to provide a compelling arguments which in turn persuade voters. The extracts below depicted the references made in the advertisements concerning a candidate or party's accomplishments.

Male Narrator: This current president has fulfilled all his promises. Free SHS (Senior High School), 1 district 1 factory, 1 district 1 dam, 1 constituency 1 ambulance and among others.

**Extract:** NPP Advertisement titled "Let Us Think About It"

Male Speaker 1: headmistress, please I do not understand what you are saying. How can our children enjoy free senior high school which has been advertised on radio and television?

Female Speaker 2: please the truth of the matter is we do not have enough classrooms, dormitories, teachers and science resource centres. So please, I cannot admit your child to this school.

**Extract:** NDC Advertisement titled "Preaching Against Free SHS"

The extracts above indicated the referencing of the candidates' past accomplishments by the speakers to support their arguments. In the extract from the NPP advertisements, the speaker cited the accomplishments of the NPP's candidate to support his argument, whilst in the NDC extract, the speaker also supported her argument by attacking the accomplishment of the NDC's opponent. The speakers presented arguments that had persuasive elements to convince voters.

### 5.3.1.5 Discussants' Exposure to Ethos Appeal (Source Credibility) in Political Advertisements

The ethos appeal was revealed by the discussants after watching the advertisements of the NPP and NDC. The ethos appeal dealt with the speaker's ability to persuade voters by establishing their credibility and trustworthiness in the advertisements. The credibility was indicated based on the evidence and facts provided by the speakers. The discussants revealed several facts and evidence that contributed to the credibility or trustworthiness of the speakers in the advertisements. Among the factors were the qualities of candidates, personal anecdotes, endorsements, qualifications, and references to past accomplishments of candidates and parties. Additionally, the discussants shared their experiences in relation to the speaker's statements as evidence of credibility and trustworthiness. In revealing the trustworthiness or credibility of advertisements, the following were the statements of the discussants after watching the advertisements.

Discussant 1 stated that:

I think that all the speakers in the advertisements stated some of the achievements of the NPP and NDC in building their case. We all know that both the NPP and NDC have achievements. In the NPP advertisements, the speakers told voters to vote for the NPP candidate based on his achievements which included free SHS, one district one factory, one ambulance one constituency, and other important infrastructure. Also, for NDC advertisements, the speakers told voters to vote for the NDC candidate by referencing the candidate's achievements.

Discussant 2 shared that:

For me, all speakers in the advertisements gave the characteristics or attributes of the candidates that make the candidates either trustworthy or vice-versa. In the NPP

advertisements, the speakers portrayed the NPP candidate as a deliverer of promises, whilst the NDC candidate as a corrupt person by providing corruption incidents that happened during the administration of the NDC candidate as the former president of Ghana. In the NDC advertisements, the speakers portrayed the NDC candidate as considered visionary, selfless, altruistic and a hard worker, whilst the NPP candidate as a dishonest person due to his failure to solve the economic problems of the country.

Discussant 3 revealed that:

After watching the advertisements, I saw that all the speakers implored Ghanaians to vote for the NPP or NDC candidate. The speakers shared their personal stories or experiences to support the reasons Ghanaians should vote for the parties. For the NPP advertisement, the speaker shared her story of how the free SHS helped her to achieve her academic dreams. The speaker in the NDC advertisement also spoke about how the NDC candidate built classrooms and other educational facilities to improve their children's education.

Discussant 4 also stated that:

I consider the speakers' speech credible in the advertisements. Analyzing the speaker's speech in the NPP advertisement on free SHS, the free SHS policy has given many parents who could not afford the cost involved in their children's to send their children to school. Now children from poor homes can also go to school without paying for tuition fees. In the NDC advertisement against free SHS, it is now evident that the students are suffering in their various schools when it comes to accommodation, classroom facilities and feeding of students. The speakers' criticisms about the free SHS are true, and I find all the speakers' claims credible.

Discussant 5 revealed that:

We all can testify to the fact that in all the advertisements, the speakers endorsed their candidates and urged Ghanaians to vote for either the NPP or the NDC. In the latter parts of the advertisements, it was clear that the speakers endorsed the candidates by even going to the extent of showing voters the positions of candidates on the ballot papers. This endorsement cuts across all the advertisements we have watched. All arguments provided by the speakers to explain their support make sense to me.

Discussant 6 clearly stated that:

Some of the narratives provided by the speakers are true which made me consider the speakers to be trustworthy. You know this is politics, everybody has an achievement and shortcomings. The speakers in the NPP advertisements cited the achievements of the NPP candidate and the failures of the NDC candidate. On the other hand, the speakers in the NDC advertisements shared the achievements of the NDC and the failures of the NPP to convince voters to vote for the NDC candidate.

Moving on, the discussants expressed that the speakers' claims made in all the advertisements were not in doubt. The discussants believed that since they are citizens of the country, they have been witnessing all the activities of the candidates and the parties. Discussant 1 stated that:

I can boldly say that I believe in all the claims made by the speakers concerning the achievements and shortcomings he provided on the NPP and NDC candidates respectively. We all know that the bribery and corruption incidents cited by the speakers have happened in the administration of both the NDC candidate as a former president and the NPP candidate as the current president of the country. I know and have witnessed all the achievements of the NPP and NPP candidates cited by the speakers in the advertisements.

Furthermore, on the issue of doubts about the speakers' claims, Discussant 3 indicated that:

I believe in the claims that the free SHS has helped many parents and students. I have witnessed how many people have benefited from the policy. However, I doubt that the NDC candidate and party would have abolished it if they won the 2020 elections.

Discussant 4 on the other hand emphatically stated that:

I believe that all politicians are the same irrespective of the claims presented by the speaker. They give heavy promises which are difficult to fulfil, and at some point, they fail to fulfil the promises. The speakers in the NDC advertisement spoke well of the NDC candidate to indicate the confidence Ghanaians need to have in him based on his track record and promises. The track record of the NDC candidate makes me have a bit of faith in the words of the speaker.

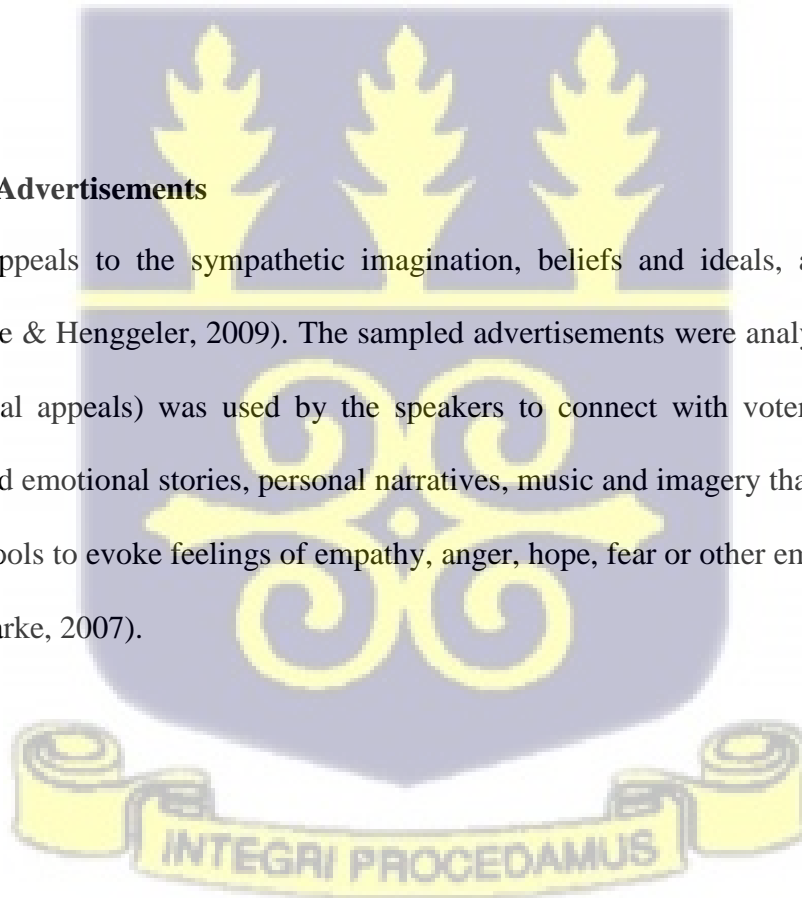
Discussant 5 shared that:

For me, what the speakers said in the advertisements is true. I think the NPP government should have analyzed the free SHS well before implementing it. The current state of the free SHS indicates that the NPP did not critically plan for the free SHS policy. I believe that the free SHS as being criticized in the advertisements by the speakers was a good policy but it should have been scrutinized before its implementation. Without any doubt, the policy has had a positive impact on Ghanaian parents.

The above statements of the discussants revealed ethos in the advertisements. The ethos dealt with the credibility or trustworthiness of the speakers in the advertisements. The credibility of the speakers in the advertisements was confirmed by the discussants. The discussants verified the speakers' arguments by reiterating some of the achievements, qualities, failures, personal experiences and endorsements of both NPP and NDC candidates. The implication here is that the discussants have witnessed the administration and performances of the NPP candidate as a president and the NDC candidate as a former president respectively. As a result, the discussants were able to verify the achievements and qualities of the two candidates as presented by the speakers in the advertisements without any doubts.

### **5.3.2 Pathos in Advertisements**

Pathos appeals to the sympathetic imagination, beliefs and ideals, as well as to the emotions (Lutzke & Henggeler, 2009). The sampled advertisements were analyzed to show how pathos (emotional appeals) was used by the speakers to connect with voters. The emotional appeals described emotional stories, personal narratives, music and imagery that were considered to be powerful tools to evoke feelings of empathy, anger, hope, fear or other emotional responses (Birdsell & Groarke, 2007).



### 5.3.2.1 Music in Advertisements of Candidates or Parties

All the various advertisements that were sampled for the analysis had background music or songs. The songs were either party anthems, patriotic songs or songs composed for the parties by different musicians. In most of the advertisements, the songs were played as intros and outros. The intros were songs played as an introduction to the advertisements whilst the outros were songs played to end the advertisements. Within the advertisements, the parties' songs or anthems were played as the background songs when the characters or the speakers in the advertisements were talking about the achievements, qualifications, intended policies and programmes of the parties or candidates. Moreover, the songs were played to stir up the emotions of voters to support the parties and to remind voters about their voting choices. The following are the background music of the advertisements of the NPP and NDC which portray Pathos.

#### Background Music of NDC Advertisement titled “A Testimony About John Mahama”

<i>Song Intro: Ma oman yi ho hia wo</i>	Let this country be important to you
<i>menka se wonka ho oo</i>	Do not say you are not part
<i>Song Outro: Ma oman yi ho hia wo</i>	Let this country be important to you
<i>Ghana man ye woara wodee ooo</i>	Ghana is your country
<i>Ma oman yi ho hia wo</i>	Let this country be important to you
<i>menka se wonka ho oo</i>	Do not say you are not part

#### Background Music of NPP Advertisement titled “Let Us Think About It”

<i>Asem yi di ka, edi ka</i>	This talk has got to be spoken.
<i>he na b ε ka?</i>	Who will speak it?

<i>Me ara o, me ara</i>	I, myself
<i>ennyɛ obiara o, me ara</i>	It is nobody else, I myself.
<i>Adwuma yi di yɛ, edi yɛ</i>	This work has got to be done.
<i>He na bɛyɛ? Me ara</i>	Who will do it? I myself...
<i>ɔbra yi di bɔ, edi bɔ</i>	This life has got to be lived,'
<i>He na bɛ bɔ? Me ara...</i>	Who will live this life? I myself...
<i>Asem yi be si ne</i>	For this talk to be spoken.
<i>Kwan mua me ara</i>	rightly, I myself
<i>Adwuma yi besi ne</i>	For this work to be done
<i>Kwan mua me ara</i>	the right way, I myself.
<i>ɔbra yi be si ne</i>	For this life to lived
<i>Kwan mua me ara</i>	the right way, I myself.
<i>Hena beka? He na bɛyɛ?</i>	This talk, this work,
<i>Hena bebɔ? Me ara.....</i>	This life, I myself...

The two extracts above indicate the background music of the adverts of both NPP and NDC. The lyrics of the songs invoke a call to action response that is expected of Ghanaians. In the NPP advertisement, the lyrics *Ma oman yi ho hia wo, Ghana man yɛ woara wodeɛ ooo* is a call to action that urge Ghanaians to exhibit the attitude of having the country at heart. In the NDC advertisement, the lyrics *Adwuma yi di yɛ, edi yɛ, He na bɛyɛ? Me ara* is a call to action that imply that Ghanaians must exhibit patriotism in the building of the country. Ultimately, the lyrics of the songs urge voters to love and show strong commitment in nation-building.

### 5.3.2.2 Images in Advertisements of Candidates or Parties

Images were examined in the sampled advertisements. The television adverts were in audiovisuals where both images and audio were seen and heard at the same time. The visuals conveyed the emotional actions (feeling despair and happy) of the speakers in the presentation of their arguments about the candidates. Also, the party colours and logos, party flags, and pictures of candidates' positions on the ballot papers trigger party identification attached to the speakers' arguments in the advertisements. The following are some of the images that were found in the advertisements.



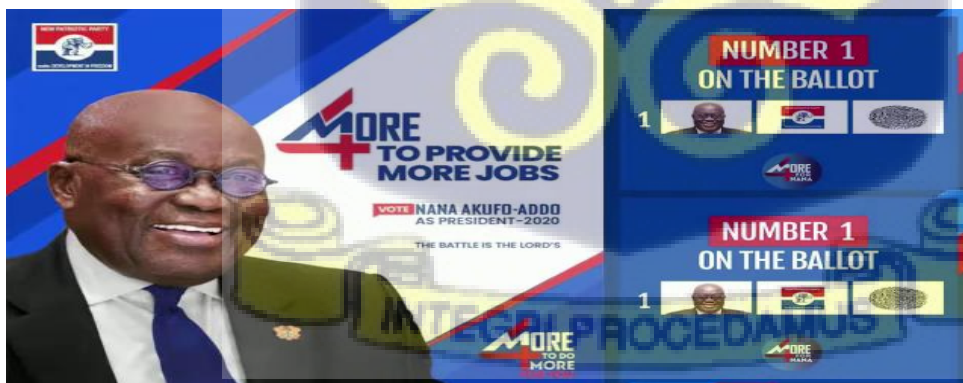
**Extract:** NDC Advertisement titled “A Testimony About John Mahama”



Extract: NDC Advertisement titled “*Kye Mu Pe* (Equal Division)”



Extract: NDC Advertisement titled “Preaching Against Free SHS”

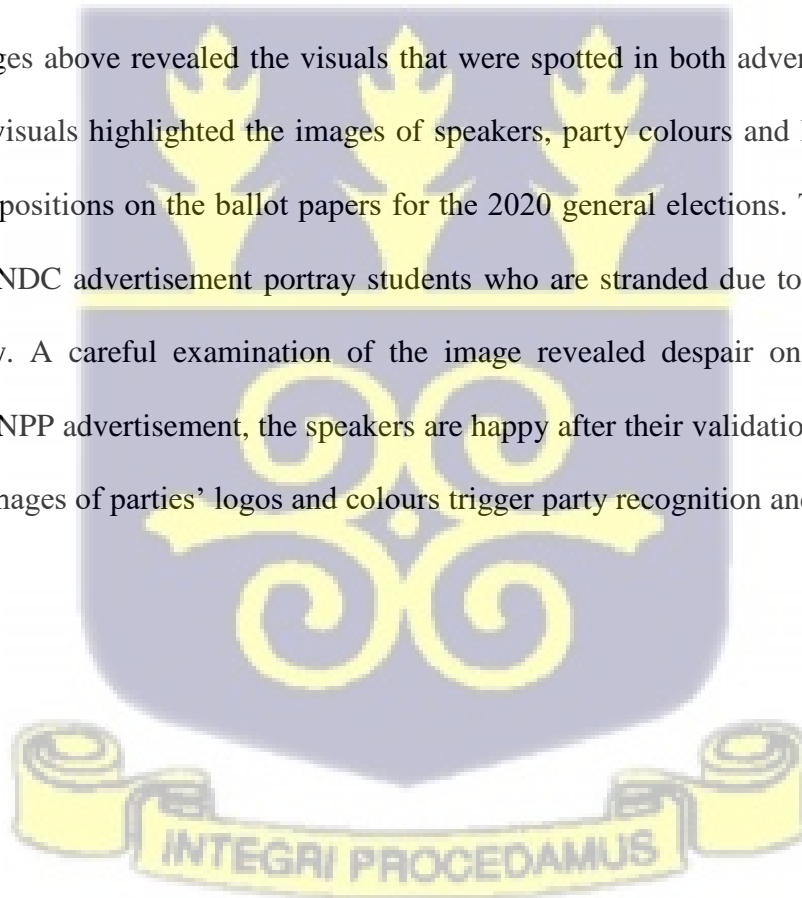


Extract: NPP Advertisement titled “Let Us Think About It”



**Extract:** NPP Advertisement titled “Vote for NPP to Continue Free SHS”

The images above revealed the visuals that were spotted in both advertisements of NPP and NDC. The visuals highlighted the images of speakers, party colours and logos, party flags, and candidates’ positions on the ballot papers for the 2020 general elections. The images of the speakers in the NDC advertisement portray students who are stranded due to the failure of the free SHS policy. A careful examination of the image revealed despair on the faces of the speakers. In the NPP advertisement, the speakers are happy after their validation of the free SHS. Moreover, the images of parties’ logos and colours trigger party recognition and identification by voters.



### 5.3.2.3 Discussants' Exposure to Pathos Appeal (Emotional Impact) in Political Advertisements

Pathos as a persuasive appeal was revealed in the focus group discussion. The ethos appeal brought to light the emotions attached to the speakers' arguments or claims. The discussants revealed their emotions after watching the advertisements. The discussants indicated stories, personal narratives, and music as factors that evoked their emotions towards the speakers in the advertisements. Discussant 1 in taking his turn stated that:

The main emotion I considered in the first NPP advertisement was hope. The speaker urged voters to still have hope in the NPP candidate and continue to vote for the NPP candidate. The speaker's narrative indicated that the NPP candidate and party are the best option for Ghana and voters should still have hope in the NPP candidate since he has fulfilled the majority of his promises.

Discussant 2 indicated that:

I had a mixed feeling after watching the NPP's second advertisement. I felt happy after listening to the initial speech of the speaker as the free SHS policy has helped many parents and their children. In the later part of the advertisement, the speaker stated that we should not vote for the NDC to abolish the free SHS policy. I got a bit scared (fear) and kept thinking that is it possible for the NDC candidate and party to abolish such a good policy if they win the elections.

Also, this was the statement of Discussant 4:

For me, the central emotion portrayed by the NDC advertisement is hope. The speaker started to remind us about the failed promise of the NPP candidate, followed by urging Ghanaians to have hope in the NDC candidate. The speaker reminded me that the NDC candidate had a record of fulfilling his promises when he was president. But the current president, who is the NPP candidate has failed Ghanaians. The expectations of Ghanaians were not met when they voted for the NPP candidate. However, the speaker urged Ghanaians to believe in the NDC candidate based on his qualities and past achievements.

Discussant 6 on the other hand, said that:

After watching the second advertisement of the NDC, I felt a bit sad looking at how the parents were stranded with their children. Currently, the majority of the parents complain when it comes to the living conditions of their children who are the beneficiaries of the free SHS.

Moreover, the discussants indicated that the music in the advertisements influenced their perceptions and emotional responses to the messages conveyed by the advertisements. Different meanings were attributed to the music that was played in the advertisements. Discussant 2 after watching the advertisements stated that:

The background music in the first NPP advertisement is a patriotic song that emulates a call to action. The lyrics of the song implore Ghanaians to have a responsibility in the building of the nation. The lyrics indicate that it is up to us as Ghanaians to build the nation and no one else.

Discussant 3 also said that:

In the NPP's second advertisement, the background music in the advertisement was just a rhythmic sound which slowly accompanied the speech of the speaker. The rhythmic nature of the music was soothing to my ear and it attracted my attention to keenly listen to the message of the speaker in the advertisement.

Discussant 4 in her own words explained that:

I noticed that there is background music in the second advertisement of the NDC. After carefully listening to the background music, I think the lyrics are a call to action. Even in the song, the lyrics inform Ghanaians to hold Ghana in high esteem and partake in nation-building. The background music calls Ghanaians to get involved in every step of building the country.

In the words of Discussant 6, she stated that:

I think the background music of the second NDC advertisement is a party song composed to portray the qualities of the NDC candidate. I think background music contributes to the information on the qualities of the NDC candidate.

The above statements of the discussants confirmed the pathos in the advertisements. The pathos dealt with the emotions attached to the arguments of the speakers in the advertisements. The discussants experienced different emotions based on the political arguments presented by the speakers in the advertisements. The arguments of the speakers subtly conveyed hope, joy, fear, and sorrow. It can be deduced that the discussants had a positive feeling of hope and joy when the arguments of the speakers met their political expectations. On the other hand, the discussants had a negative feeling of fear and sorrow when the speakers' arguments did not meet their political expectations. Moreover, the background music of the advertisements contributed to the emotional response of discussants to the arguments in the advertisements. The background music drew the attention of discussants to think about the qualities of the NPP and NDC candidates and to also exhibit patriotism, and a sense of responsibility (a call to action)

### **5.3.3 Logos in Advertisements**

Logos deals with the application of logic and reasoning by a speaker to convince an audience (Lee, 2002). The sampled advertisements were evaluated to reveal the logical and rational arguments presented by the speakers to persuade voters. In the evaluation, the researcher looked for statistics, evidence, and policy proposals that made a reasoned case for supporting the candidate or party that aimed to persuade viewers based on facts and reasoning (Birdsell & Groarke, 1996).



### 5.3.3.1 Statistics about Candidates or Parties

The statistics in the advertisements described the numerical data that supported the achievements or failures of a candidate or party. The statistics revealed the numerical facts on the accomplishments or failures of the candidates or parties when they were governing the country.

The extracts below reveal the statistics about candidates and parties.

Male Speaker: *Ayoo*, we were in this country when *ayonkoɔ* (someone) took the country's money GHC 15 million which can be used to build 720 educational facilities.

Male Narrator: When *ayonkoɔ* (someone) came, 8 of his ministers were in jail. Also, 25 need to face the law because of bribery and corruption.

**Extract:** NPP Advertisement titled "Let Us Think About It"

Male Speaker 2: the one *edey* freak me be the increase of the students' loans to meet the needs of the students and it will be paid on time. *Herrrh* you know say after John Mahama increased the students' loan to GHC 1,600 in 2016, *Opana* no add *kapre* (dime) since 2017.

**Extract:** NDC Advertisement titled "*Kye Mu Pe* (Equal Division)"

In the extract from the NPP advertisement, the speaker provided numerical facts on the failures of the party's opponent. Statistics were provided on the wrong investment and corruption scandals of the NPP's opponent in order to dissuade voters from voting for the party's opponent. The speaker in the extract of the NDC advertisement also provided numerical evidence by highlighting the accomplishment of the NDC candidate's increment of students' loan amount, and the failure of the opponent to further increase the loan amount. The provision of the statistics in the speaker's argument was aimed to persuade voters to vote for the NDC candidate.

Ultimately, the speakers provided statistics that was aimed to either persuade or dissuade voters to choose a particular candidate or a party.

### 5.3.3.2 Evidence of a Candidate or Party's Accomplishments

Evidence of a candidate or party's accomplishments described the proof or confirmation of a candidate or party's achievements by speakers in the sampled advertisements. The following extracts indicate evidence of a candidate or party's accomplishments in the advertisements.

Male Narrator: This current president has fulfilled all his promises. Free SHS (Senior High School), 1 district 1 factory, 1 district 1 dam, 1 constituency 1 ambulance and among others.

**Extract:** NPP Advertisement titled “Let Us Think About It”

Male Speaker 2: this is why we are pleading and advising Ghanaians to vote for His Excellency former President John Dramani Mahama and the NDC to continue the better Ghana agenda. Because better Ghana agenda has resulted in the development of educational infrastructure such as dormitories, classroom blocks, dining halls, science resource centres, computer laboratories and so on to improve education and help Ghana.

**Extract:** NDC Advertisement titled “Preaching Against Free SHS”

The above extracts provided evidence of a candidate or party's accomplishments. In the NPP advertisement, the speaker gave evidence of accomplishments by mentioning some of the projects the NPP candidate has fulfilled, whilst, in the NDC advertisement, the character gave an account of the NDC candidate's accomplishments when he initiated the better Ghana agenda. In the advertisements, the evidence in the speakers' arguments were accompanied with images of

the accomplishments of the candidates. The accomplishments of each candidate and his party were tabled before voters to make better voting decisions.

### 5.3.3.3 Policy Proposals by Candidates or Parties

Policy proposals described the policies or programmes that were promised by candidates to be implemented or initiated when voted into power in the advertisements. The following extracts highlight the policy proposals by a candidate or party presented in the speakers' arguments in the sampled advertisements.

Adult Speaker: yes but that is one quality people admire in him. So he stood for the elections again in 2012, and again he promised free SHS and industrialization.

**Extract:** NPP Advertisement titled “The Perseverance of Akufo Addo”

Female Speaker 3: Matilda, don't you think that it is equally right for you to also vote for Nana Akufo Addo to retain power so that other young people can also enjoy free SHS education in the next four years?

**Extract:** NPP Advertisement titled “Vote for NPP to Continue Free SHS”

Female Speaker: John Mahama has promised to legalize Okada when he becomes president, and this will help solve the problems Okada riders face every day.

**Extract:** NDC Advertisement titled “Legalize *Okada*”

Male Speaker 1: ah, oh yeah! Abi you hear say John Mahama say he go cancel the guarantor requirement so say students go access the loan without the need for a guarantor

**Extract:** NDC Advertisement titled “*Kye Mu Pe* (Equal Division)”

The two extracts from the NPP advertisements highlighted the free senior high school and industrialization policies of the NPP candidate presented as an argument by the speakers. In the advertisements, the speakers reiterated the policies of the NPP candidate to persuade voters. The NDC advertisements also highlighted the proposed policies of the NDC candidate presented as an argument by the speaker. The speaker in his argument reiterated the NDC candidate's promise to legalize Okada (commercial use of motorcycles) and cancel the guarantor requirement for students' loans to convince voters. All these policies were aimed to entice voters to make better decisions in the elections.

#### **5.3.3.4 Discussants' Exposure to Logos Appeal (Logical Arguments) in Political Advertisements**

The discussants revealed several arguments that depicted the logos in the advertisements. The logos appeal indicated the logical arguments which were based on the true and accurate facts provided by speakers. Logical arguments come in the form of deductive and inductive reasoning, evidence, illustrations and comparisons used by speakers to establish their arguments. The discussants revealed the statistics, evidence, and policy proposals in advertisements as major contributors to the logical reasoning presented by the speakers in convincing voters. The following were the convincing statements identified by the discussants that depicted the logical reasoning in the advertisements.

Discussant 1 identified that:

Here, the main aim of the speakers was to tell Ghanaians to vote for their parties. So in the NPP advertisements, the argument presented by the speakers is that Ghanaians should not vote for the NDC candidate but rather, should vote for the NPP candidate in the elections. The speakers provided evidence of bribery and corruption incidents to support the reasons Ghanaians should not vote for the NDC candidate. Also, the speakers provided statistics on the achievements of the NPP candidate as reasons to vote for him in the elections. Based on the presentation of the statistics by the speakers, I think the speakers' arguments were convincing.

Discussant 3 said that:

Specifically for the NPP's second advertisement, the main argument I considered in the advertisement was providing evidence of how the speaker has benefited from the free SHS policy which was implemented by the NPP candidate. Based on my personal experience, whatever the speaker proclaimed about the free SHS is true. The argument I see here is the speaker telling Ghanaians to vote for the NPP to continue the free SHS policy and at the same time claiming that the NDC will cancel the policy if the party win the elections.

Discussant 4 stated that:

In my opinion, I think the main argument of all the advertisements I watched compared the NDC candidate to the NPP candidate. The comparison hinged on the honesty of the NDC candidate and the deceit of the NPP candidate. The argument in the speaker's narrative indicated that the NDC candidate was truthful to his words and fulfilled all his promises. On the other hand, the speaker revealed that the NPP candidate was deceitful in his words as he promised Ghanaians money and a better economy.

Discussant 5 also pointed out that:

For me, I think the argument in the NDC advertisement is on the free SHS and its implications on students. The speakers brandished that the free SHS has not lived up to expectations. The speakers argued that provisions were not made for the students before the Free SHS was implemented. The speakers argued that free SHS is not achievable since there are no facilities such as classrooms, dormitories, resource centres and other important facilities that make learning conducive for students.

Moreover, after the discussants revealed the arguments in the advertisements, they provided reasons for regarding the arguments as compelling. The discussants found the arguments compelling due to the fact that they have witnessed all the incidents presented in the

arguments provided by the speakers in all the advertisements. The following are the reasons the discussants found the arguments in the advertisements compelling.

Discussant 2 indicated that:

The evidence provided by the speakers in the NPP advertisements is clear because all the policies he cited in the advertisement have been implemented. The anecdotes of bribery and corruption cases he cited also happened under the administration of the NDC candidate when he was president.

Discussant 4 in her words revealed that:

I found evidence in the argument provided by the speaker. In the NPP advertisement on free SHS, the speaker provided evidence of the benefits of the free SHS to her and other young school girls. The speaker revealed the positive impact of free SHS in the lives of many young girls, and we can all testify to that.

Discussant 5 emphatically stated that:

In a way, I find the speaker's argument compelling in the NDC advertisements. The speaker did not lie about the deceitful statement of the NPP candidate. For me, I believe that looking at the current situation of the country in terms of economic hardship, the NPP candidate has failed in his promise of providing Ghanaians with better standards of living.

Discussant 6 indicated that:

For the NDC advertisement, I considered the argument compelling since the speakers backed their claims with facts and evidence on the failure of the free SHS policy. Examining the current state of the free SHS made me believe in the arguments of the speakers.

The statements above confirmed the logos appeal in the advertisements of the NPP and NDC parties. The logos appeal indicated the logical or rational arguments presented by the speakers in the advertisements. Here, the discussants reiterated and confirmed the evidence and facts presented by the speakers which were aimed at persuading voters to vote for the NPP and

NDC candidates. It can be deduced that the evidence and facts reiterated by the discussants reveal the reasons voters need to vote for either the NPP candidate or the NDC candidate. The logical arguments identified in the discussants' statements highlight the statistics, evidence, and comparisons of the achievements, qualifications and bribery scandals of both NPP and NDC candidates. As a result, it can be inferred that the ultimate aim of the logical arguments identified by the discussants as presented by the speakers was to persuade voters. Adding to the aforementioned, the discussants consider the arguments compelling due to the fact that they are aware of and have witnessed all the incidents that make up the logical arguments presented by the speakers in the advertisements.

#### **5.3.4 Message Foci and Audience Exposure**

Table 3 below shows respondents' exposure to message appeals of the political advertisements that were played on television in the 2020 general elections. From the table, 176 respondents representing 85.9% were exposed to advertisements where the speakers stated the achievements of political candidates or parties, whilst 29 representing 14.1% were not exposed to such advertisements. Out of the same total number of respondents, 142 representing 69.3% were exposed to advertisements that showed celebrities or people (speakers) endorsing political candidates or parties, whilst 63 representing 30.7% were not exposed to such advertisements. Moreover, out of the total respondents, 129 representing 62.9% were exposed to advertisements where the speakers described the human side of the parties' candidates, whilst 76 representing 37.1% were not exposed to such advertisements. This indicated that voters were exposed to

appeals put together by candidates and parties which were aimed to persuade the voters in their decision-making as far the elections are concerned.

**Table 3: Message Appeals of Political Advertisements**

<b>Advertisements that showed the achievements of candidates or parties</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	176	85.9
No	29	14.1
Total	205	100.0
<b>Advertisements that showed celebrities or people endorsing the candidates or parties.</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	142	69.3
No	63	30.7
Total	205	100.0
<b>Advertisements that showed the human side of the parties' candidates.</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	129	62.9
No	76	37.1
Total	205	100.0



## 5.4 Key Issues Conveyed by the Political Advertisements

The key issues in the sampled advertisements highlighted the central themes conveyed in the advertisements. Here, the speakers reiterate key issues that are considered to be the dire needs of the voters. Voters are mostly in the expectant mode of watching or listening to political messages that address their challenges. So the speakers present arguments with central themes or messages of candidates and parties to address the needs of voters. The key issues were categorized under educational policies and programmes, economic policies and programmes, employment policies and programmes, health policies and programmes, and other key issues that were employed to persuade voters.

### 5.4.1 Issues of Educational Policies and Programmes

The educational issues described the central themes in the arguments presented by the speakers that depicted the proposals of the candidates or parties in addressing the problems of education when voted to win the elections. The following extracts highlight the educational issues presented by speakers as central themes in their arguments.

Female Speaker 1: then, don't be selfish. Someone voted for Nana Akufo Addo in 2016 for you to enjoy the free SHS education policy

Female Speaker 3: Matilda, don't you think that it is equally right for you to also vote for Nana Akufo Addo to retain power so that other young people can also enjoy free SHS education in the next four years?

**Extract:** NPP Advertisement titled "Vote for NPP to Continue Free SHS"

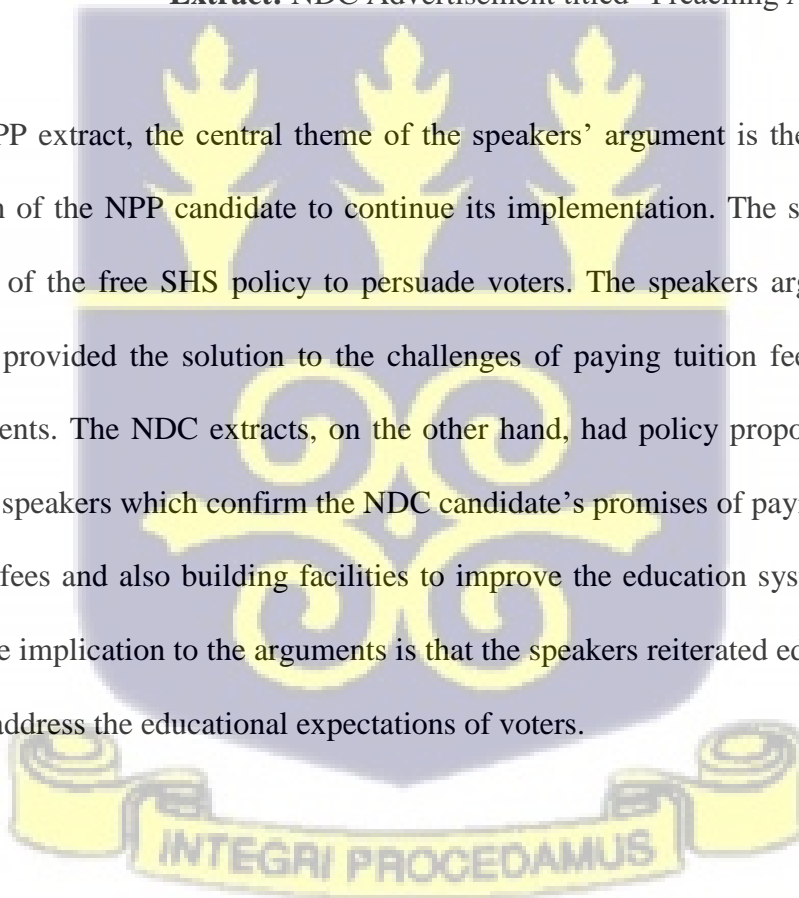
Male Speaker 1: the NDC people's manifesto, *ibi dope waa*. See, not *yaanom*. Bro, you know say as I *dey* here, me *naa I dey* do my hustles 1 and 2 *dey* get money *dey* take settle my school fees. But right now, John Mahama say *kye mu pe* (equal division), which means the NDC Mahama-led government will pay 50% of school fees for all tertiary students in the universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, nursing training schools, and so on.

**Extract:** NDC Advertisement titled “*Kye Mu Pe* (Equal Division)”

Male Speaker 2: this is why we are pleading and advising Ghanaians to vote for His Excellency former President John Dramani Mahama and the NDC to continue the better Ghana agenda. Because better Ghana agenda has resulted in the development of educational infrastructure such as dormitories, classroom blocks, dining halls, science resource centres, computer laboratories and so on to improve education and help Ghana.

**Extract:** NDC Advertisement titled “Preaching Against Free SHS”

In the NPP extract, the central theme of the speakers' argument is the free SHS policy and the intention of the NPP candidate to continue its implementation. The speakers discussed the continuation of the free SHS policy to persuade voters. The speakers argued that the free SHS policy has provided the solution to the challenges of paying tuition fees faced by many students and parents. The NDC extracts, on the other hand, had policy proposals on education presented by the speakers which confirm the NDC candidate's promises of paying half of tertiary students' tuition fees and also building facilities to improve the education system after winning the elections. The implication to the arguments is that the speakers reiterated educational policies as key issues to address the educational expectations of voters.



#### 5.4.2 Issues of Economic Policies and Programmes

The economic issues described the themes in the arguments presented by the speakers that highlighted the proposals of the candidates or parties in addressing the economic challenges when voted to win the elections. The following extract highlights the economic issues presented by speakers as central themes in their arguments.

Male Speaker: my dear Okada and delivery riders, and your families, please, enough is enough. Let us vote for John Dramani Mahama, so we can feed our families.

**Extract:** NDC Advertisement titled “Legalize *Okada*”

The speaker in the NDC advertisement presented an argument that had economic policy as the theme. Here, the speaker reiterated the NDC candidate’s policy that addresses the economic challenges of *Okada* riders (commercial use of motorcycles). The NDC candidate promised to legalize the *Okada* business to help resolve the economic challenges of the riders in generating money to feed their families. It can be deduced from the argument that the speaker reiterated economic policy as a key issue to address the economic expectations of voters.

#### 5.4.3 Issues of Employment Policies and Programmes

The employment issues explained the themes in the arguments presented by the speakers that conveyed the proposals of the candidates or parties in addressing the employment problems when voted to win the elections. The extract below highlights the employment issues presented by speakers as central themes in their arguments.

Speaker: Vote for John Mahama and NDC for jobs and prosperity for all.

**Extract:** NDC Advertisement titled “*Kye Mu Pe* (Equal Division)”

The extract above indicated employment message as the theme in the speaker’s argument. The speaker restated the employment promise tabled before voters by the NDC candidate. The NDC candidate promised voters to create jobs and ensure prosperity which have been the employment expectations of Ghanaians.

#### 5.4.4 Issues of Health Policies and Programmes

The health issues described the themes in the arguments presented by the speakers that portrayed the proposals of the candidates or parties in addressing the health challenges of the country when voted to win the elections. The following extract highlights the health issues presented by speakers as central themes in their arguments.

Male Speaker: This current president has fulfilled all his promises. Free SHS (Senior High School), 1 district 1 factory, 1 district 1 dam, 1 constituency 1 ambulance and among others. Have you thought about it? Let us think about it. Here is a swindler and here is a promise fulfiller. Have you thought about it? Think about it

**Extract:** NPP Advertisement titled “Let Us Think About It”

The underlined message in the NPP extract indicate one of the themes presented in the speaker’s argument. The theme portrays the policy presented by the NPP candidate to persuade voters. The health policy which is the provision of ambulances to all the constituencies addresses the challenge of transporting sick people to health centres in the country.

#### 5.4.5 Issues of Infrastructural Policies and Programmes

The infrastructure-related issue revealed in the sampled advertisements addressed the infrastructural deficit in the country. The following extract indicates the infrastructure issue identified in the advertisements.

Male Narrator: This current president has fulfilled all his promises. Free SHS (Senior High School), 1 district 1 factory, 1 district 1 dam, 1 constituency 1 ambulance and among others. Have you thought about it? Let us think about it. Here is a swindler and here is a promise fulfiller. Have you thought about it? Think about it

**Extract:** NPP Advertisement titled “Let Us Think About It”

The underlined message in the NPP extract portrayed the policy presented to voters by the NPP candidate. The infrastructure policy highlighted the building of factories and dams to increase industrialization and agricultural irrigation systems respectively in the country.

#### 5.4.6 Discussants’ Exposure to Key Issues of Political Advertisements

The discussants revealed the key issues that were conveyed by the speakers in the advertisements. The key issues were messages considered to be relevant in resonating or meeting the expectations of the voters. In this study, the key issues were considered to be messages that highlighted the programmes and policy proposals presented by the speakers to persuade voters in the advertisements. The key issues highlighted the educational, economic, employment, health and infrastructural policies and programmes that met the expectations of voters. The following

statements of the discussants indicated the key issues presented by the speakers in the advertisements.

Discussant 1 clearly stated that:

In the NPP advertisements, some of the main messages the speakers spoke about were associated with poor management of resources that have negatively affected the country's economy. Other key messages were related to education (free SHS), infrastructure and industry (one district one factory, one district one dam), and one constituency one ambulance (health).

Discussant 2 indicated that:

I think all the speakers in the advertisements mentioned messages that were related to key policies and programmes. The key issue noticed in the second advertisement of the NPP was related to the improvement in education in Ghana. The speaker talked about how the free SHS education policy has helped her to achieve her dreams.

Discussant 3 stated that:

In most of the advertisements, I think the key messages were related to the economy of the country. In the NDC advertisement, the speaker criticized the statement of the NPP candidate's opponent which is associated with the economic crisis Ghanaians faced. The speaker testified that the NDC candidate worked hard in managing the country's economy. However, the speaker claimed that the NPP candidate could not improve the economy as promised.

Discussant 6 explained that:

I think in both NPP and NDC advertisements, the main discussion was on the implantation of the free SHS policy by the NPP government. However, the NDC speakers criticized the effectiveness of the free SHS by relying on the inadequate educational infrastructure which is a major driver of the free SHS policy.

The above statements of the discussants revealed the key issues presented by the speakers in the advertisements. Here, the key issues reveal the arguments on programmes and policies presented by the speakers which are aimed to satisfy the political needs of voters. The speakers

presented arguments which meet the economic, educational, health and infrastructural needs of voters. It can be inferred that the candidates were interested in winning the elections, so they presented messages that were tailored to address the challenges of voters in the elections.

#### 5.4.7 Key Issues and Audience Exposure

The survey findings confirmed that the respondents were exposed to the key issues that were analyzed in the content of the political advertisements of the two major parties (NPP and NDC). Table 4 below shows the respondents' acknowledged being exposed to key issues in the political advertisements that were played on television in the 2020 general elections. Out of the total respondents, 173 representing 84.4% were exposed to advertisements that advertisements that showed policy and programme proposals of political candidates or parties, whilst 32 representing 15.6% were not exposed to such advertisements. The results showed that voters were exposed to advertisements presented by candidates and parties which were considered to be the dying needs of voters as far as the development of the country was concerned.

**Table 4: Key Issues of Political Advertisements**

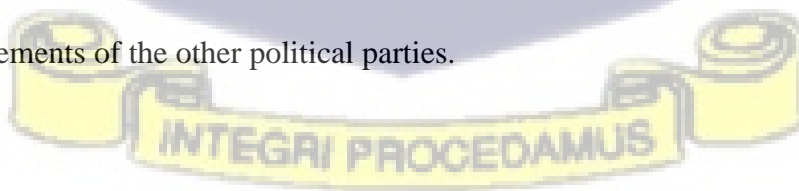
Advertisements that showed policy and programme proposals of candidates or parties.	Frequency	Percent
Yes	173	84.4
No	32	15.6
Total	205	100.0

## **5.5 Voters' Engagement with Political Advertisements**

The current study was interested in assessing how voters engaged with political advertisements. In addition to the exposure to the rhetorical appeals and key issues conveyed by the advertisements, voters' general engagement with political advertisements was assessed by using their tendency to watch the advertisements, reactions, and affiliations to a particular party. Tables 6, 7 and 8 show how voters engaged with the political advertisements that were played on television during the 2020 general elections.

### **5.5.1 Political Parties' Advertisements Frequently Watched by Respondents**

Table 6 below indicates the particular political parties whose advertisements were frequently watched by the respondents during the 2020 general elections. From the table, majority of the respondents that is 111 representing 54.1% frequently watched NPP's advertisements, whilst 67 representing 32.7% also frequently watched NDC's advertisements. Only 27 representing 13.2% watched the advertisements of other political parties on television. Consequently, majority of the voters had the tendency to watch NPP's advertisements more often than the advertisements of the other political parties.



**Table 5: Political Parties' Advertisements frequently watched during the 2020 General Elections**

Political Party	Frequency	Percent
NPP	111	54.1
NDC	67	32.7
Other	27	13.2
Total	205	100.0

### 5.5.2 Respondents' Reactions towards Political Advertisements

Table 7 below presents the actions of respondents after coming into contact with political advertisements played on television during the 2020 general elections. Out of the total number of respondents, 151 representing 73.7% indicated that they were attracted to watch the advertisements when played on television, whilst 54 representing 26.3% did not watch the advertisements when played on television.

**Table 6: What did you do when you came across Political Advertisements on Television?**

Reaction to Political Advertisements	Frequency	Percent
Advertisement attracted my attention to watch	151	73.7
Did not watch the advertisement	54	26.3
Total	205	100.0

Table 8 also shows that when the political advertisements were playing on the television, 121 of the respondents representing 59.0% indicated that they did not watch the entire content of the advertisements, whilst 84 representing 41.0% also indicated that they watched the entire content of the advertisements. It can be deduced from the results that the majority who did not watch the entire content of the advertisements was as a result of the content not meeting their voting needs or not affiliated to that particular party.

**Table 7: What did you do when you were watching the Political Advertisement on Television?**

<b>Reaction to Political Advertisements</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Did not watch the entire content of the advertisements	121	59.0
Watched the entire content of advertisements	84	41.0
Total	205	100.0

### 5.5.3 Party Affiliation and Voters' Engagement with Political Advertisements

Table 9 below presents a cross-tabulation of party affiliation and respondents' engagement with advertisements. Out of the total number of respondents who voted based on their affiliation to a particular candidate or party, 90 representing 84.1% were attracted to watch political advertisements, whilst 17 representing 15.9% did not watch the advertisements. On the other hand, out of the total number of respondents who voted without any affiliation to a candidate or party, 61 representing 62.2% were attracted to watch political advertisements,

whilst 37 representing 37.8% did not watch the advertisements. The results indicate that the voters were interested in engaging with the advertisements of the candidates and parties they supported irrespective of the content of the advertisements. On the other hand, voters who did not vote based on affiliation were rather much interested in engaging with content that meet their expectations.

**Table 8: Cross Tabulation of Party Affiliation and Political Advertisement Engagement**

		What did you do when you came across political advertisements on television?			Total
		Advertisement attracted my attention to watch	Did not watch the advertisement		
Vote Based on Party Affiliation	Yes	Count	90	17	107
		% within Vote Based on Party Affiliation	84.1%	15.9%	100.0%
	No	Count	61	37	98
		% within Vote Based on Party Affiliation	62.2%	37.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	151	54	205
		% within Vote Based on Party Affiliation	73.7%	26.3%	100.0%

### 5.6 Perception about the Content of Political Advertisements

Table 10 below shows the perception of the respondents after their engagement with the content of political advertisements that were played on television during the 2020 general

elections. From the table, majority of the respondents that is 53 representing 25.9% agreed that after content of the political advertisements convinced them after watching the advertisements. Also, out of the total number of respondents, 47 representing 22.9% gave a neutral stance on the issue of the advertisements' content convincing them, whilst 31 representing 15.1% disagreed to the issue that the content of the advertisements convinced them after they watched the advertisements. It can be deduced from the results that the voters perceived the content of the advertisements to have convinced them in their decision-making during the elections. Ultimately, the indication here is that the advertisements played a contributing role in voters' decision to vote for a particular candidate and party during the 2020 elections.

**Table 9: Response of Voters to the Content of Political Advertisements**

Convinced about the content	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	33	16.1
Disagree	31	15.1
Neutral	47	22.9
Agree	53	25.9
Strongly Agree	41	20.0
Total	205	100.0

### 5.6.1 Party Affiliation and Perception of the Content of Political Advertisements

Table 11 below shows a cross-tabulation of party affiliation and respondents' perceptions about the content of political advertisements. Out of the total number of respondents who voted based on their affiliation to a candidate or party, 37 representing 34.6% agreed that the content of

the advertisements convinced them, 34 representing 31.8% strongly agreed, whilst only 9 representing 8.4% strongly disagreed that the content of the advertisements convinced them. On the other hand, out of the total number of respondents who voted without their affiliation to a candidate or party, 33 representing 33.7% gave a neutral position on the content of the advertisements convincing them, whilst only 7 representing 7.1% strongly agreed that the content of the advertisements convinced them. Moreover, the results revealed that party affiliation of voters played a major role in the tendency of the advertisements to convince voters. Once voters engaged with the advertisements of the candidates and parties they supported, they were convinced and their decisions to vote were reinforced.

**Table 10: Cross-Tabulation of Party Affiliation and Perception of Advertisement Content**

			What was your response after watching the political advertisements?					Total
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Vote Based on Party Affiliation	Yes	Count	9	13	14	37	34	107
		% within Vote Based on Party Affiliation	8.4%	12.1%	13.1%	34.6%	31.8%	100.0%
	No	Count	24	18	33	16	7	98
		% within Vote Based on Party Affiliation	24.5%	18.4%	33.7%	16.3%	7.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	33	31	47	53	41	205
		% within Vote Based on Party Affiliation	16.1%	15.1%	22.9%	25.9%	20.0%	100.0%

## **5.7 Demographic Differences and Receptions to Political Advertisements**

The current study was interested in finding out how the demographic differences of voters (gender differences and educational levels) played a role in their interest in the content of political advertisements. Tables 12 and 13 below show the demographic differences of respondents (educational level and gender) and the reception to messages of the political advertisements.

### **5.7.1 Educational Level and Messages on Policy and Programme Proposals of Candidates or Parties**

Table 12 indicates a cross-tabulation that shows the relationship between educational level of respondents and their exposure to advertisements that conveyed policy and programme proposals of political candidates or parties. Out of the total number of respondents, 78.0% of the respondents with no formal education watched advertisements that conveyed messages on the policy and programme proposals of candidates or parties. Also, representing 69.0% of the respondents with basic education qualification watched advertisements that conveyed messages on the policy and programme proposals of candidates or parties. Ninety-eight (98.0%) of the respondents with secondary education qualification watched advertisements that conveyed messages on the policy and programme proposals of candidates or parties. Moreover, for respondents with tertiary education qualification, 44 representing 95.7% watched advertisements that conveyed messages on the policy and programme proposals of candidates or parties. The results show that educational level did not play a critical role in voters' reception of messages on

policy and programmes of candidates and parties. Irrespective of educational level, the voters were interested in receiving messages on policies and programmes that met their expectations.

**Table 11: Cross Tabulation of Educational Level and Messages on Policy and Programme Proposals**

			I watched advertisements that showed policy and programme proposals of candidates or parties.		Total
			Yes	No	
Educational Level of Respondents	No Formal Education	Count % within Educational Level of Respondents	39 78.0%	11 22.0%	50 100.0%
	Basic Education	Count % within Educational Level of Respondents	40 69.0%	18 31.0%	58 100.0%
	Secondary Education	Count % within Educational Level of Respondents	50 98.0%	1 2.0%	51 100.0%
	Tertiary Education	Count % within Educational Level of Respondents	44 95.7%	2 4.3%	46 100.0%
Total		Count % within Educational Level of Respondents	173 84.4%	32 15.6%	205 100.0%

### 5.7.2 Gender Differences and Messages of Celebrity Endorsements of Candidates or Parties

Table 13 below presents a cross-tabulation of the relationship between gender differences of respondents and interest in messages of speakers (celebrities) endorsing candidates or parties. Out of the total number of male respondents, 68 representing 61.8% watched advertisements that showed speakers (celebrities or people) endorsing political candidates or parties. On the other hand, out of the total number of female respondents, 74 representing 77.9% watched advertisements that showed speaker (celebrities or people) endorsing the candidates or parties. It can be drawn from the findings that males did not show much concern on celebrity endorsements in advertisements. Unlike females, they were highly attracted to watch celebrities who endorsed candidates and parties in advertisements.

**Table 12: Cross Tabulation of Gender and Messages of Celebrity Endorsements of Candidates or Parties**

			I watched advertisements that showed celebrities or people endorsing the candidates or parties.		Total
			Yes	No	
Gender of Respondents	MALE	Count	68	42	110
		% within Gender of Respondents	61.8%	38.2%	100.0%
	FEMALE	Count	74	21	95
		% within Gender of Respondents	77.9%	22.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	142	63	205
		% within Gender of Respondents	69.3%	30.7%	100.0%

## 5.8 Chapter Summary

The findings of the study have been presented in this chapter in relation to the objectives of the study and research questions. The content analysis findings presented the message appeals, and key issues, of political advertisements of the two major political parties (NPP and NDC). The survey findings on the other hand, confirmed the findings from the content analysis. The survey findings revealed the message appeals, and key issues of advertisements voters were exposed to in the 2020 general elections. The survey findings also revealed voters' engagement with political advertisements on television, perception about the content of the advertisements, and the demographics differences in the reception to the content of the advertisements.



## CHAPTER SIX

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 6.0 Introduction

This study investigated the exposure and perceived role political advertisements broadcasted on television played in the voting decisions of voters in the Ledzokuku Constituency in the 2020 general elections. Based on the main argument of the study, the set objectives were to examine the nature of television political advertisements voters were exposed to, assess how voters engaged with television political advertisements, examine voters' perceptions about the content of television political advertisements and to find out whether demographic differences (gender and education level) shaped voters' reception practices towards political advertisements during the 2020 general elections. On the other hand, the research questions that were raised in the study were on the types of message appeals, key issues conveyed by political advertisements, voters' engagement with political advertisements, perception of the content of advertisements, and demographic differences (gender and education level) in shaping voters' reception practices towards the content of political advertisements.

This chapter argues that the findings of this present study were consistent or inconsistent with those of other studies that were reviewed as literature. That is, some of the findings of this present study supported or did not support the findings of other studies. Moreover, the findings are discussed based on the research questions that were raised and the theory that underpinned the study. Finally, the chapter is concluded with a summary of whatever have been discussed.

## 6.1 Message Appeals of Political Advertisements

The study found that in order to persuade voters during the 2020 elections, political candidates and parties employed the three rhetorical appeals in the advertisements that are presented to voters. The three rhetorical appeals are ethos, pathos, and logos. The ethos was used by the candidates to establish their credibility and trustworthiness by presenting messages that highlighted personal anecdotes (personal stories), endorsements (people endorsing candidates), qualifications (educational backgrounds or innate qualities of candidates), or references to past accomplishments (achievements of candidates or parties) in order to persuade voters during the 2020 elections. The pathos in the advertisements revealed that candidates and parties relied on emotional appeals which included emotional stories (touching stories), music (party anthems or patriotic songs composed for the parties) and imagery (pictures of characters or actors, candidates, party colours and logos, party flags, and pictures of candidates' positions on the ballot papers) to connect with voters by evoking the feelings of empathy and hope in voters. The logos revealed the logical and rational arguments presented by candidates and parties in the form of statistics (facts and figures to explain achievements), evidence (proof of achievements), and policy proposals that made a reasoned case for supporting the candidate or party. The rhetorical appeals revealed in the advertisements indicated that the main mission of candidates and parties was to present messages that are persuasive to influence the decisions of voters during the 2020 elections. The candidates and parties had the aim of influencing voters' decisions with rhetorical appeals in order to increase their chances of winning the elections. As an evidence, the focus

group discussion and survey findings confirmed that the majority of the voters in the Ledzokuku Constituency were exposed to message appeals in advertisements that highlighted the achievements of political candidates or parties, celebrities or people endorsing political candidates or parties, and human side of the parties' candidates.

This current finding can be explained by the theory of rhetoric which explains that political candidates and parties employ campaign advertisements that have persuasive language and communication techniques (rhetorical appeals: ethos, pathos, and logos) to influence voters (Lutzke & Henggeler, 2009). The application of rhetorical theory to campaign advertisements helps candidates and parties to craft their messages which appeal to electorates. These appeals employed by candidates and parties in campaign advertisements allow them to establish their credibility, evoke emotions, and present logical arguments with the aim of persuading voters (Birdsell & Groarke, 2007). In connection with this study, the candidates and parties employed rhetorical appeals in the advertising messages that were presented to voters with the intention of influencing these voters.

Moreover, the current finding on ethos appeal agrees with that of Smith and Boyer (2019) who investigated the role of credibility and authenticity in political advertising in the previous elections in the United Kingdom by focusing on the presence of candidate endorsements, personal narratives, and references to past achievements conveyed by political advertisements. The researchers found that advertisements that featured authentic personal narratives and endorsements from respected political candidates and other figures significantly enhanced candidate credibility and trust among voters which led to increased support during the elections.

The current study's finding on pathos appeal is consistent with that of Slothuus and de Vreese (2019) who examined the impact of emotional appeals in political advertisements on voter attitudes and behaviour in the United States. Through experimental design and survey of voters, their findings indicated that emotional appeals, particularly those evoking hope and empathy were found to significantly influence voter attitudes and intentions to support the candidate. The current finding on logos is also consistent with Briens et al.'s (2013) findings after conducting a comprehensive analysis of the content and effects of campaign advertisements during the 2008 U.S. presidential elections by focusing on the presence of rational appeals. Their study revealed that policy proposals, candidate qualifications, and factual claims were the rational appeals employed by candidates in campaign advertisements during the 2008 presidential election. However, the current finding on pathos is not consistent with the findings of Marcus and MacKuen (2019) who analyzed the use of emotional appeals in political advertisements during the 2016 presidential election campaigns in the United States. These researchers found that emotional appeals, particularly fear-based messages, were prevalent in political advertisements and were effective in influencing voter perceptions and preferences, especially among undecided voters. In this current study, candidates and parties did not employ emotional appeals which highlighted fear-based messages in their campaign advertisements.

## **6.2 Key Issues Conveyed by the Political Advertisements**

The content analysis revealed the key issues of political advertisements that were presented by candidates or parties to entice voters concerning their voting decisions. The key

issues highlighted messages on political ideas, intentions, policies or programmes that were to be initiated or implemented by candidates or parties after winning the 2020 general elections. The key issues were categorized into educational policies and programmes, economic policies and programmes, employment policies and programmes, health policies and programmes, and other key issues. The educational issues indicated the proposals and programmes of candidates or parties to address the problems of education when voted to win the elections. The economic issues highlighted the proposals and programmes of candidates or parties to address the economic challenges of the country when voted to win the elections. The employment issues conveyed the proposals and programmes of candidates or parties to tackle the employment problems when voted to win the elections. Moreover, the health issues portrayed the proposals and programmes of candidates or parties to provide possible solutions to the health challenges of the country. Another key issue related to infrastructure was proposed by candidates or parties to address the infrastructural deficit in the country. Furthermore, the survey findings confirmed that the respondents were exposed to the key issues which were revealed by the content analysis of the political advertisements of the two major parties (NPP and NDC). The focus group discussion and survey findings indicated that the majority of the respondents in the constituency were exposed to key issues that showed policy and programme proposals (education, economic, employment, health and infrastructure policies and programmes) of political candidates or parties.

This present finding can be well understood by Logos which is one of the rhetorical appeals. Logos explains that candidates or parties in crafting their political advertisements can present logical and rational arguments in the form of statistics, evidence, and policy proposals to

make a reasoned case to persuade voters (Birdsell & Groarke, 1996). For this particular finding, candidates and parties presented policy and programme proposals on job creation, economic growth, health, education and infrastructure to address voters' needs and also entice them.

The above finding supports the findings of Ridout and Franz (2011), and Kahn and Kenney (2009). Ridout and Franz (2011) analyzed the content and effects of political advertisements which were aired during the 2008 U.S. presidential campaigns from various media markets across the United States. The study found that political advertisements primarily focused on a few key policy issues, such as the economy, healthcare, and national security. Also, Kahn and Kenney (2009) examined the impact of political advertising on issue salience and candidate evaluations in the United States election cycle by emphasizing on voters' exposure to political advertisements. The researchers found that political advertising exposure to salience issues influenced voters. Candidates who effectively framed their advertisements around key issues saw increases in support and favourable evaluations from voters.

### **6.3 Voters' Engagement with Political Advertisements**

The study revealed that in the engagement with political advertisements, the majority of the voters in the constituency were attracted to watch when they came across the political advertisements on television, whilst the remaining did not watch the advertisements. Among those who watched the advertisements, the majority of them frequently watched NPP's advertisements, with only a few who also watched NDC's advertisements. It was further revealed that party affiliation played a major role in watching the advertisements by the voters. Based on

party affiliation, most of the respondents were attracted to watch the advertisements of the political candidates or parties they supported.

The present finding can be elaborated by the assertion of Walton (2008) in the contribution to the theory of rhetoric in the context of engagement with political advertisements. Rhetorical appeals are often used in campaign advertisements to attract attention and attract viewers (voters) to engage with these advertisements (Walton, 2008). The viewers (voters) engage with the campaign advertisements by listening to or watching the advertisements. In relation to the present study, the respondents engaged with the advertisements after the advertisements caught their attention and attracted them to watch. Additionally, the media audience reception theory explains that audiences are active in their engagement with media content, interpreting messages through their lenses (Barthes, 1972). In this study, the voters actively engaged with the political advertisements through the lenses of party affiliation.

This present finding on voters' engagement with political advertisements agrees with the findings of Franz et al. (2009), and Brians et al. (2013). Franz et al. (2009) examined the effects of television advertising in the 2000 presidential in the United States and found that voters engaged with political advertisements based on candidate evaluations and vote choice. This confirms the current finding that oftentimes, voters engage with political advertisements based on their expectations from the sponsor of the advertisements, affiliation or media consumption habits of voters. In consistent with the current finding, Brians et al. (2013) who analyzed the content and effects of campaign advertisements during the 2008 U.S. presidential elections with a focus on voters' engagement with the presence of rational appeals found that rational appeals

such as policy discussions and factual claims in campaign advertisements increased voters' engagement and knowledge politically. Moreover, voters responded positively to rational appeals, as they were more likely to engage in systematic processing of information.

#### **6.4 Perception of the Content of Political Advertisements**

The study revealed the perception of the voters after watching the content of political advertisements on television. The majority of the voters agreed to the fact that they were convinced after watching the content of the advertisements. On the other hand, few respondents disagreed that the content of the advertisements convinced them. Further analysis revealed that party affiliation played a key role in the content of the advertisements convincing the respondents. After watching their candidates or parties' advertisements, the majority of the voters agreed that they were convinced about the content of the advertisements of the candidates or parties they supported.

This current finding is well understood by the assertion of Walton (2008) in the contribution to the theory of rhetoric in the context of engagement with political advertisements. According to Walton (2008), rhetorical questions are embedded in campaign advertisements which are often used to engage viewers (voters) and lead them to a specific conclusion or viewpoint. In connection to this study, political candidates and parties presented ideas, policies and programmes through political advertisements to lead voters to a specific conclusion or viewpoint which is being convinced after watching the content of the advertisements. Moreover, the media audience reception theory also explains that active audience can interpret media

texts in multiple ways, and these active audience reinforce the idea that audiences are active in their engagement with media content, interpreting messages through their lenses (Barthes, 1972). In relation to this study, the voters were convinced about the content of the advertisements the lenses of good experience with the candidates or parties.

The above finding is consistent with the findings of Lau and Pomper (2004), and Lindberg and Morrison (2008). Lau and Pomper (2004) examined the effects of political campaigning on turnout in U.S. Senate elections, 1988-1998 and uncovered a significant effect of political advertising on candidate evaluations and vote choices. One of the factors that revealed the effectiveness of political advertising was the message content and characteristics of the target voters to show preference for the messages. Moreover, Lindberg and Morrison (2008) examined in their study how Ghanaian electorates vote during elections as a result of their exposure to media messages. The researchers found that after exposure to media messages, most Ghanaian electorates vote based on affiliation and clientelist (a person who exchanges goods and services for political support). The voters consider voting for candidates whom they support or have the capacity to meet their expectations or needs in terms of the provision of private and public amenities to electorates but not the governments.

### **6.5 Demographic Differences of Respondents' Reception to Messages of Political Advertisements**

The study revealed the respondents' reception to messages of political advertisements based on their demographic differences (educational level and gender). Irrespective of

educational level, it was revealed that the respondents were interested in messages that highlighted the policy and programme proposals of candidates or parties. Moreover, in terms of gender differences, female respondents were more interested in watching advertisements that showed celebrities and other people endorsing candidates or parties than the male respondents.

This current finding can be understood clearly by Pathos as another element of persuasion in the theory of rhetoric. In essence, pathos is a strategy for persuading by inspiring an emotional reaction to a passionate argument (or compelling anecdote) (Kennedy, 1991). Persuading or inspiring emotional reactions depends on the level of the audience's understanding. Thus, the position of the audience in the argument is another way to conceptualize pathos. (Lutzke & Henggeler, 2009). Also, pathos looks at audiences' attitudes to an argument in relation to personal relevance (Polynice, 2021). In this study, the demographic differences (educational level and gender differences) also revealed voters' dispositions on the content of political advertisements. Educational level revealed voters' interests in advertisements that highlighted the policy and programme proposals of candidates or parties. For gender differences, females were induced by the text or speech of celebrities endorsing candidates or parties in advertisements. Furthermore, the media audience reception theory emphasize that media messages are encoded with particular meanings by producers and decoded in various ways by audiences (Hall, 1973). Viewers actively interpret media content based on their cultural background and personal experiences (Morley, 1980). As a result, the voters' interest in advertisement content that highlighted key issues and celebrity endorsements was based on their educational and gender experiences.

The above finding supports the findings of Holman et al (2015) who investigated the preference of advertising messages by male and female voters, and how message appeals affect their voting choices by using a national representation of American voters. After an experimental design, the study revealed that political candidates use political advertisements to affect votes based on gender. The use of appeals such as endorsement from people in advertisements persuaded female voters whilst males became unaffected by the appeals. On the other hand, the finding does not support the arguments of Martin (2012), and Valentino et al. (2004) in terms of educational level and reception of voters to political advertisement messages. Martin (2012) argued that educational level contributes to voters' knowledge about candidates and parties' political messages, thereby enhancing voters' evaluations of messages conveyed by political advertisements. Valentino et al. (2004) also argued that advertising messages tend to have greater effects on less informed and less educated individuals due to the fact that less educated individuals do not critically analyze the messages conveyed by political advertisements but they become satisfied once the messages coincide with their political beliefs or expectations.

## **6.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed the findings of the present study relative to those of earlier studies. Generally, the findings that the political advertisements had three rhetorical appeals were consistent with those of Slothuus and de Vreese (2019), Smith and Boyer (2019), and Brians et al. (2013). The findings on key issues of advertisements supported the findings of Ridout and Franz (2011). Moreover, the findings on voters' engagement and perception of the content of

advertisements were consistent with those of Franz et al. (2009), Brians et al. (2013), Lau and Pomper (2004), and Lindberg and Morrison (2008) respectively. For the findings on demographic differences in voters' reception to political advertisements, they were found to be consistent with that of Holman et al (2015), but inconsistent with the arguments of Martin (2012), and Valentino et al.'s (2004).



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 7.0 Introduction

This present study assessed the exposure and perceived role television political advertisements played in the voting decisions of the voters in the Ledzokuku Constituency in the 2020 general elections. The focus of this study was to examine the nature of television political advertisements voters were exposed to during the 2020 general elections, assess how voters engaged with television political advertisements, examine voters' perceptions about the content of television political advertisements, and to find out whether demographic differences (gender and education level) shaped voters' reception practices towards political advertisements during the 2020 general elections.

This chapter next presents a summary of the major findings. It then goes on to draw conclusions, discuss limitations, and finally makes recommendations for future studies and practice.

#### 7.1 Summary of Major Findings

The major findings of this present study showed that the advertisements of the major parties had ethos (credibility and trustworthiness through personal anecdotes, endorsements, qualifications, or references to past accomplishments), pathos (emotional appeals which included

emotional stories, music and imagery to connect with voters) and logos (logical and rational arguments presented in the form of statistics, evidence, and policy proposals that made a reasoned case for supporting the candidate or party). The focus group discussion and survey findings, on the other hand, confirmed that voters in the constituency were exposed to the three rhetorical appeals that were conveyed by the advertisements of the political parties.

Educational policies and programmes, economic policies and programmes, employment policies and programmes, health policies and programmes, and other infrastructural policies and programmes were the key issues of political advertisements that were presented by candidates or parties to entice voters in their decisions to vote. The focus group discussion and surveys confirmed that the voters were exposed to these key issues.

For the engagement with political advertisements, the majority of the voters in the constituency were attracted to watch when they came across the political advertisements on television. Moreover, among the voters who watched the advertisements, the majority of them frequently watched NPP's advertisements due to their strong affiliation with the party.

Furthermore, the voters perceived that the content of the political advertisements convinced them after their exposure to these advertisements. It was indicated that voters' affiliation to a particular party played a key role in the content of the advertisements that convinced these voters.

Lastly, for the demographic differences in voters' receptions to messages of political advertisements, the educational level did not play any major role in voters' interest in messages that highlighted the policy and programme proposals of candidates or parties. Also, in terms of

gender differences, female voters were more interested in watching advertisements that showed celebrities and other people endorsing candidates or parties than male voters.

## 7.2 Conclusions/Implications

Based on the major findings in the preceding section, one major conclusion or implication from the study is that in order to persuade voters, candidates and parties heavily employ rhetorical appeals in designing their political advertisements. The candidates or parties through the use of rhetorical or message appeals project or present themselves more favourably through their advertisements to persuade voters during elections. Moreover, modern voters can be persuaded by political messages which are in synchronization with their emotions and address their logical reasoning and issues of credibility.

It can be concluded that modern voters are rational and do not vote based on only party affiliation but also consider key issues of political advertisements. This has led to the inclusion of key issues to meet the expectations of voters by candidates or parties in designing political advertisements.

Voters are interested in political advertisements that are designed with catchy concepts which attract attention. As a matter of fact, voters are always ready to engage with advertisements of candidates or parties they support. These voters pay attention to the details of the messages presented in the advertisements by their affiliated candidates or parties. Moreover, voters are convinced when the messages meet their expectations.

It can be concluded that modern voters are very discerning irrespective of their educational level. They are interested in political messages that address their problems and those of society. Also, males are more concerned with the impact of the messages they receive as voters. However, females pay closer attention to the personality of the person presenting the message.

### **7.3 Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

Based on the study's findings, recommendations were made for policy and practice. For practitioners such as communication experts, political communicators and public relations practitioners should pay attention to how the various media especially traditional media works. They should also pay attention to the relationship in helping advance their candidates' agenda.

As a recommendation, political communication should be more positive than negative. Moreover, political communicators should focus on conveying positive messages to voters rather than negative messages.

For media scholars, it is recommended that they should question studies that seek to suggest that political advertising on traditional media is no longer relevant in the era of social media. Media scholars should be able to draw on studies done elsewhere on the interface between voting decisions and social media.

It is instructive that candidates and parties in their political advertising designing process need to factor in voters' behaviour as well as their preferred political messages. The study also

recommends that candidates and political parties during political advertising should focus on conveying political messages across media channels that are readily available to voters.

#### **7.4 Limitations of the Study**

This study was limited to the analysis of political advertisements aired on only television. The role of political advertisements on other media forms such as radio, social media and newspapers were not focused in this study. Hence, it is impossible to generalize the findings to all media forms since the focus of this study was only television political advertisements.

The study was conducted on voters in the Ledzokuku Constituency. The findings of this study is limited to voters in the constituency. Therefore the findings cannot be generalized to voters in other constituencies in Ghana due to differences in voting dynamics.

Lastly, in conducting this study, the researcher faced financial constraints. There were inadequate funds to cover accommodation and transportation within the study site during the collection of data. The request of incentives by the study's respondents before giving out responses to the questionnaires also slowed down the data collection.

#### **7.5 Recommendations for Future Studies**

Based on the limitations, the study gave recommendations. Future studies can broaden the scope of this current study by including other media forms to examine and compare the

differential influence of political advertising on voting decisions. Future studies can broaden the scope of this study by increasing the sample size in exploring the behaviour of voters in their exposure to political advertisements in other Ghanaian constituencies.

Moreover, future studies can expand this current study by examining political advertising strategies to influence voters from the perspectives of candidates and parties. With this suggestion, other research approaches such as qualitative or mixed methods approach can be adopted to explore this phenomenon.

To help solve financial constraints in the execution of academic research, educational institutions can provide funds to support the budget of researchers in their work.



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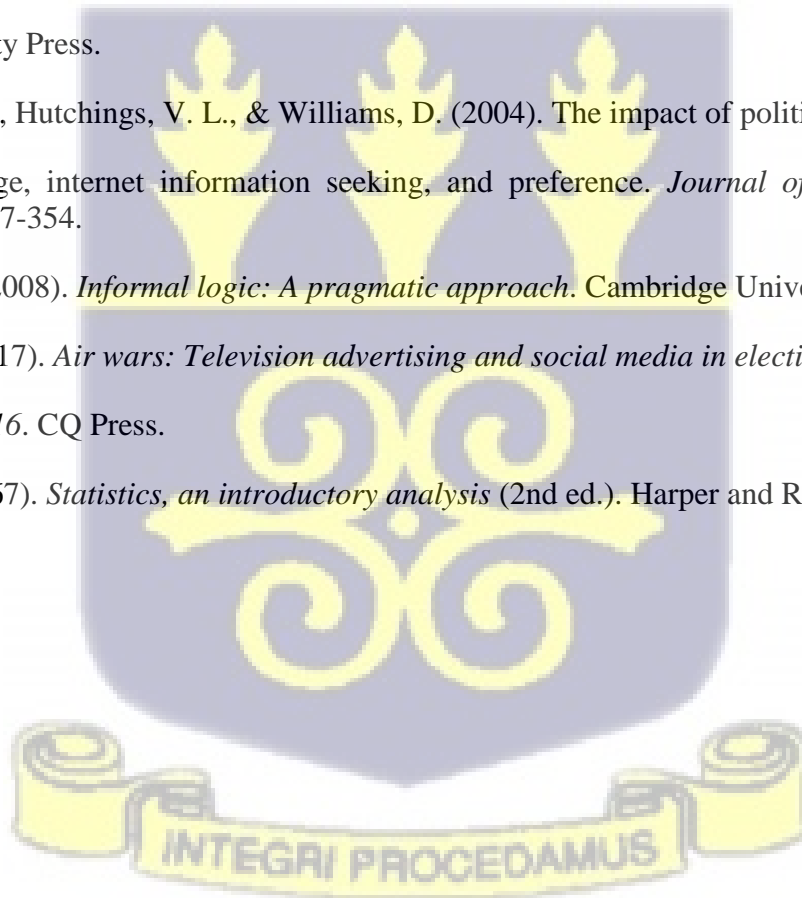
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**APPENDIX 1**

**CODING GUIDE**

**THESIS TITLE: POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS AND VOTING DECISIONS: A STUDY OF VOTERS IN THE LEDZOKUKU CONSTITUENCY IN THE 2020 GENERAL ELECTIONS**

<b>Dominant Appeals in Political Adverts</b>	<b>Name of Party's Advert</b>	<b>Extract of Advert</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<b>Positive and Negative Adverts</b>			
<b>Ethos in Adverts</b>			
Personal anecdotes of candidates or parties			
Endorsements of candidates or parties			
Qualifications of candidates or parties			
References to past accomplishments of candidates or parties			
<b>Pathos in Adverts</b>			
Emotional stories about candidates or parties			
Personal narratives of candidates or parties			
Music in adverts of candidates or parties			
Imageries in adverts of candidates or parties			

<b>Logos in Adverts</b>			
Statistics about candidates or parties			
Evidence of candidates' or parties' accomplishments			
Policy proposals by candidates or parties			
<b>Key Issues Conveyed by Adverts</b>			
Issues on educational policies and programmes			
Issues on economic policies and programmes			
Issues on employment policies and programmes			
Issues on health policies and programmes			
Issues on infrastructural policies and programmes			
Other Issues			



## APPENDIX 2

### Discussion Guide

#### Introduction

Welcome and thank you for accepting to participate in this focus group discussion. The purpose of this focus group is to gain a deeper understanding of political advertisements and voting decisions. As Your insights and experiences are valuable to me and will contribute to a broader understanding of this topic. As part of this study's main objective, this focus group will gather data on the message appeals, key issues, tones, engagements and perceptions after you have been exposed to some selected advertisements of both New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Party (NDC) that were played on television during the 2020 general elections.

Before we begin, it is important to mention that this discussion is confidential. You will be assigned to codes instead of your names to ensure anonymity and confidentiality in any of the comments made during the session, and all data will be reported in aggregate form. I respectfully ask that you respect the confidentiality of your fellow participants by not sharing what is discussed outside of this group. Also, I want this to be an open and respectful conversation where everyone feels comfortable sharing their thoughts. Kindly bear in mind that your comfort and willingness to participate are very important to me. Thank you.

#### 1. Ethos Appeal (Speaker's Credibility)

- How trustworthy do you find the source or speakers in this advertisement?
- What makes you believe or doubt the claims made in the advertisement?

#### 2. Pathos Appeal (Emotional Impact)

- How did this advertisement make you feel?
- How did the music or sound in the advertisement influence your perception or emotional response?

#### 3. Logos Appeal (Logical Arguments)

- How convincing are the arguments or facts presented in the advertisement?
- Did you find the evidence or reasoning provided in the advert compelling? Why or why not?

#### 4. Key Issues

- What are the main messages of this advertisement?

We have come to the end of the focus group discussion. Thank you for your precious time.



**APPENDIX 3**

**University of Ghana**

**Department of Communication Studies**

**Survey Questionnaire**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am Kofi Antwi, an MPhil student at the Department of Communication Studies of the University of Ghana. As part of my programme, I am conducting a study on the topic **“Political Advertisements and Voting Decisions: A Study of Voters in the Ledzokuku Constituency in the 2020 General Elections.”** I would appreciate it if you could take some time off your schedule and assist me by answering the following questions about the study. Please be assured that because these data are being collected as part of academic research, the information shared will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

**Please circle the alphabet next to the options where appropriate.**

**Section A: Demographical Information**

1. Gender  
a. Male                      b. Female
2. Age range  
a. 18 – 30    b. 31 – 40    c. 41 – 50    d. 51 – 60    e. Above 60 years
3. Educational level  
a. No Formal Education    b. Basic Education    c. Secondary Education    d. Tertiary Education    e. Other .....
4. Did you vote based on your affiliation to a particular candidate or political party?  
a. Yes                      b. No
5. Which political party did you vote for during the 2020 general elections?  
a. NPP    b. NDC    c. Other .....

**Section B: Exposure to Political Messages**

**Kindly answer the questions below by indicating Yes or No**

6. I watched adverts that showed the achievements of candidates or parties. a. Yes    b. No
7. I watched adverts that showed celebrities or people endorsing the candidates or parties.  
a. Yes    b. No
8. I watched adverts that showed the human side of the parties' candidates. a. Yes    b. No

9. I watched adverts that had showed policy and programme proposals of candidates or parties. a. Yes b. No
10. I watched adverts that praised the character of candidates. a. Yes b. No
11. I watched adverts that criticized opposition candidates or parties. a. Yes b. No

**Section C: Voters’ Engagement with Political Adverts**

12. Which of the political parties’ adverts did you frequently watch during the 2020 general elections? a. NPP b. NDC c. Other .....
13. What did you do when you came across political adverts on television?
  - a. The advert attracted my attention to watch b. I did not watch the advert
14. What did you do when you were watching the political advert on television?
  - a. I did not watch the entire content of the advert b. I watched the entire content of the advert.

**Section D: Perception of the Content of Political Adverts**

15. What was your response after watching the political adverts? Indicate the extent of the perception in the table below. (Note: 1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly Agree)

Response of Voters	1	2	3	4	5
I was convinced about the message in the advert					

