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THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE VOTING BEHAVIOUR OF TERTIARY STUDENTS IN THE WA MUNICIPALITY: GHANA'S 2016 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN PERSPECTIVE

MOHAMMED ABDUL-MAJEED

2019

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2016 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN PERSPECTIVE

BY

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[UDS/MDS/0378/15]

THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AND GENERAL
STUDIES, FACULTY OF INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT STUDIES,
UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
AWARD OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY
DEGREE IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

JULY, 2019

DECLARATION

Candidate's declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere:

Candidate's Signature: …………………   Date: ……………………

Name: Mohammed Abdul-Majeed

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Supervisor's declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University for Development Studies.

Supervisor's Signature: ……………..………   Date: ……………………

Name: Dr Tuurosong Damasus

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my most profound gratitude to Dr Tuurosong Damasus, my supervisor, for the patience, useful insights and the generous time he gave me right from the inception of this work to the end. My special thanks goes to Dr Patricia Carol Awiah, Mr Amadu Mohammed Faisal and Mr Dominic Paaga whose constructive critique, contributions and useful comments helped shape this research work.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to the Mr Robert of Catholic Relief Service who assisted me with advice, emotional and economic support Finally, I say thank you also to members of the selected Schools.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to my mother Ms. Awudu Zeinab

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the influence of social media on the voting behaviour of tertiary students in the Wa Municipality: Ghana's 2016 general elections in perspective. The agenda setting theory was adopted to serve as guidance for the study. Purposive and Simple random sampling techniques were employed in selecting the respondents for the study. In all 383 respondents were selected for the study. Tools employed for data collection were interview guide, questionnaire and Focus Group Discussions. The findings show Whatsapp as a frequently used social media tool. The study established that, 107(30.1%) of respondents from the four schools (UDS, Wa Poly, Jahan Training College of Education and the Wa Nursing Training College) reported that political parties employ social media very extensively. The findings further revealed that, some messages received from the NPP reported by respondents were; "vote nana for change, NPP's transformation plan, National ID for every Ghanaian, One district; one factory, Good Education, For Jobs, Free SHS, one village; one dam, restoration of allowances, One million dollar per constituency, Better NHIS, Better salaries. Respondents revealed that some used social media to attack opponents, spread false rumours, hate and inciting messages, and digitally manipulate images, messages and videos. Institutions such as the National Communication Authority (NCA), and Ghana Independent Broadcaster Association (GIBA) should become more proactive in the censorship of the political campaigns of politicians. The study concludes that social media really influenced voters' decisions. The study recommends that, the National Communication Authority (NCA), and Ghana Independent Broadcaster Association (GIBA) should be more proactive in the censorship of the political campaigns of politicians.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANES	American National Electoral Studies (ANES),
CPP	Conventions Peoples Party
GIBA	Ghana Independent Broadcaster Association
MSD	Media system dependency
NPP	New Patriotic Party
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NCA	National Communication Authority
NHIS	National Health Insurance Scheme
PNC	Peoples' National Convention
PPP	Progressive People's Party
SHS	Senior High School
SM	Social Media
WNTC	Wa Nursing Training College
UDS	University for Development Studies
USA	United State of America

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The use of social media in politics is on the rise. The initiation of the social media networks has changed the landscape of communication and information. People are getting involved in using social networking media day-by-day, especially the students. By the end of 2016, two thirds of the world's population had a mobile subscription of total of 4.8 billion unique subscribers. Regional penetration rates are forecast to increase to 50% in Sub-Saharan Africa (GSMA, 2017). Ghana has over 27 million mobile phone subscribers while data penetration in Ghana stands at about 40% of the total population and this has increased Internet and mobile-based tools for sharing information among Ghanaians. Leading social media websites are Facebook, Twitter, WhatsaApp and YouTube (Smith, 2011).

Although social media has gained popularity worldwide in recent years, the concept is not new. During the mid-90s with widespread adaptation of personal computers users were also attracted to services like chat rooms, newsgroups and instant messages (Thurlow, Lengel & Tomic, 2004). What is new is the expansion of social media and its use for more than just a means of socializing on Internet. Initially the messages on these social media platforms were considered insignificant and were more often overlooked. They were just a means of either marketing to a targeted group or posting statements describing regular personal activities to listed friends on the network. For

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instance, in late 2006, when Twitter was launched, its creators stated that the purpose of tweets was to tell one's followers what one was doing (Jackson & Lilleker, 2011). However, social media in the second decade of the 21st century is used not just for triviality but is also for disseminating serious political messages to the targeted audience.

One of the explanations behind its popularity is the network effect. The popularity comes from the users finding social media more effective and efficient in reaching a larger number of people (Dijk 2006). Social media is particularly fascinating because it differs from traditional media such as newspapers and television as it facilitates a two-way interaction with a large number of people at the same time without middlemen that control contents and its free membership. It has become an integral part of public discourse and communication in the contemporary society. The fast development of social media has caused major changes pertaining to the way people find groups of individuals with similar interests (Stieglitz, Dang-Xuan, 2012: 1). It has had major effects on fields such as advertising, public relations, communications and in particular, political communication (Husain, et al., 2014: 224).

Boyd and Ellison (2009) defined social network sites as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (p211)". The platform that social media is carried out on is a system that allows individuals to share information with other individuals. They list and find new individuals through their

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friends' lists. Some social media tools include Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, WhatsApp, blogs and Instagram. These sites have many users in Ghana, particularly among tertiary students.

Young people tend to get political information from social media more than any other age group. It is becoming clear that online tools play a significant role in shaping public opinion and setting political agendas (Wallsten, 2007; Woolley et al. 2010). More recently, the prominence of social media has been particularly highlighted in politics, given the fact that the use of social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are believed to have the potential of positively influencing political mobilization and participation (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012: 1). For instance, the 2008 USA presidential elections remained in history for the unprecedented use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube (Paletz et al., 2015: 259).

The use of social media within the presidential campaign in 2008 was also continued and even amplified in the 2012 presidential campaign, when both Obama and Romney spent a considerable amount of money on social media, with the specific purpose of reaching the younger generation. Potential voters extensively engaged in these social media platforms by posting, commenting and video-sharing to the extent that the mainstream media covered the social media war between the two campaign teams (Paletz et al., 2015: 276). More so, the use of social media in recent elections has significantly intensified, especially among young adult voters. Of interest for this particular age group is the rise of social media use for political

information, creating user-generated content and expressing political views. As an answer to the growing political use of social media, researchers have investigated these media effects on political behaviour such as political participation, voter turnout and voting patterns.

Regardless of a politician's party affiliation or previous history "social media simplifies word of mouth and facilitates collaboration" (McConnell, 2007), a concept key to generating and maintaining interest in a campaign. In addition, social media has significantly altered the accessibility and availability of information on specific candidates. Social media use by politicians vary: Some sites focus highly on design and applications while others rely on content quality or even the informality of speech to draw in voters (Hellweg, 2011). By using easy social networking sites, people have the ability to challenge existing powers and elect the rulers of their choice (Loader, 2012).

Through the social media, people no longer have to be passive consumers of news or political propaganda. Rather, they have the power to challenge discourses, publish their opinions and to share their perspectives (Loader, 2012). The openness in social media enables "mass collaboration" of groups and individuals. These groups and individuals in turn provide sources for new ideas and innovations for democratic practices. In democracy, the people of the country participate in the selection of their leader by choosing from among a number of contestants, and the candidate most of the electorate make their preference for wins the contest. In this regard, most political parties and the politicians run campaigns to promote their agenda and their candidates

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with the hope of winning massive votes. For this reason, most of them use social media to enhance their popularity and followers who may in turn vote for them. Social media is democratic as it gives voice and power to the people who have neither. These advantages lead to an important conclusion: social media makes it easy for people to evaluate their counterparts' actions and is therefore beneficial as an electoral strategy.

In Ghana, like in many other African countries, social media are gaining more and more popularity with every passing minute. Arguably, the use of social media in politics is widespread and shows no sign of abating. During the 2016 Presidential and Parliamentary elections in Ghana, various political parties made feverish preparations to craft attractive messages and explore many new and diverse ways by which they could reach out to a large segment of the population. One of such new strategies of attaining this goal was the use of the social media platforms. Today, the social media are essential to democracy, and a democratic election campaign is impossible without media. A free and fair election is not only about the freedom to vote and the knowledge of how to cast a vote, but also about a participatory process where voters engage in public debate and have adequate information about parties, policies, candidates and the election process itself in order to make informed choices (Dailygraphiconline, 13th October 2016).

The gradual switch from traditional media to social media is something that must be taken into account by all political campaigns because if taken advantage of, social media opens up the possibility for politicians to structure their campaign to address constituents with different beliefs on a more

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personal base. With political discussions occurring on these sites, a relevant question arises: could activity on sites like Twitter be a predictor of election results? Tumasjan et al. (2011) discovered that the relative volume of tweets closely mirrored the results of the German federal elections. Getting information and being active in politics are used more by well educated people. The more the public relies on Facebook and Twitter as not only necessary lines of communication, but as rewarding parts of the communicative process, the more value and influence Facebook and Twitter will have. Aside from campaigning, politicians have found social media useful for connecting with their constituencies.

Yet, despite the advantages, the widespread use of social media does not guarantee participatory democracy (Unwin, 2012) and as well the tools such as text messaging, e-mail, photo sharing, social networking, and the like - do not have a single preordained outcome. There is therefore, the need for ruling systems to adopt social media platforms that serve the interest of everyone (Unwin, 2012). One can observe a variation in politicians' usage of social media during elections and its impact on student voters. This thesis seeks to examine this phenomenon.

1.2 Problem Statement

In spite of the numerous benefits associated with the use of the social media platform, the technology also has its own challenges. Crowdsourcing is notably a major challenge in the use of social media in electioneering campaigns. That is, due to the changing Internet environment, there are

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opportunities to involve and empower citizens in campaigns and work of representatives and government (Effing, van Hillegersberg, and Huibers, 2011). Participants on social media should have the desire to actively engage and to become both producers and consumers of information (Williams and Chinn, 2010).

Most of the social media sites are viral. With this high speed, it only takes few words to destroy a candidate or a political campaign. Subsequently, any inappropriate remark is immediately read and also shared by many people (Smith, 2011). Almost all politicians and aspiring candidates want to interact directly with their online followers. Some end-consumers could get the impression that anonymous accounts are used to enable employees to post fake messages and overly-positive feedback, which could severely damage the credibility (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Consequently, the candidates lose thousands of followers and tarnish their reputation (Smith, 2011). There are also some social media sites that cannot be controlled. Regarding this, a social media site such as Twitter can only be operated by the candidate since they post their opinions. Therefore, the candidate may post something insensitive, which will, in, turn, be used against them.

Social media also can be used to fuel rioting. For instance, in Ghana, the Inspector General of Police (IGP), John Kudalor in 2016 maintained that it would be unwise to ignore the potential of social media as an incendiary point for violence. He remarked, "*At one stage I said that if it becomes critical on the eve and also on the election day, we shall block all social media as other countries have done. We're thinking about it,*" (citifmonline.com Thursday,

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May 26 2016). Social media also raises the issue of authenticity. It is difficult to establish if political leaders are writing the information themselves or is the data being posted online on their behalf from specialists they have hired to influence voters. In such scenarios some groups get informed differently. There are also many risks associated with it like lack of proper information; an overkill of information or even misinformation and manipulation may enter the realm of information exchange to people (Smith, 2011).

The use of emotional appeals and propaganda in political campaigns to increase support for a candidate or decrease support for an opponent is a widely recognised practice and a common element of any campaign strategy in politics (Brader, 2006). Campaigns and political strategists often seek to instil positive vibes and this is done to improve voter turnout, political activism and support while seeking to raise fear and anxiety about the opposition (Marcus et al, 2000).

The influx of social media in Ghanaian political discourse particularly in the 2016 elections has made student voters privy to any kind of information about politicians and their lives as there are no longer any isolated places or hiding holes. The educational background; family affairs; job performance; past mistakes and even health of Ghanaian politicians have found their way onto social media platforms often laced with the most viable propaganda. Also, many politicians have been found in compromising positions with their words or phrases taken out of context and magnified to huge proportions by opposing parties in order to discredit them (citifmonline.com, graphiconline.com, 2016). All these media messages go a long way in

influencing voters' behaviour and posing a challenge to development in the region.

Importantly, many recent studies have been conducted to determine the impact of social media on political fields such as political knowledge (Baumgartner and Morris, 2010) and political participation (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010; Bakker and de Vreese, 2011; Dimitrova and Bystrom, 2013). Existing literature on the political utility of social media provides mixed evidence, however. Although some studies have uncovered its beneficial effects on political outcomes such as social capital (Kim and Geidner, 2008; Utz, 2009; Valenzuela, Park, and Kee, 2009), others have reported no significant linkage between social media use and voting behaviors (Ancu and Cozma, 2009; Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer, & Bichard, 2010).

The relationship between social media and politics is rooted in the desire for change. But at the same time the quest for transparency and free flow of information raises questions about over democratization, what is reality and what is humour and fake following. Given the fact that the majority of social media users and consumers are students, it is imperative to investigate the influence of social media on the voting behaviour of tertiary students in the Wa Municipality of Ghana.

1.3 Research Questions

The main and specific research questions for inquiry under this study are stated below.

1.3.1 Main Research Question

The main research Question is how has social media influenced the voting behaviour of tertiary students in the Wa Municipality of Ghana.

1.3.2 Specific Research Question

i.   What are the types of social media frequently used by tertiary students?

ii. To what extent do political parties employ social media in convincing tertiary students to vote for these parties?

iii. Which messages do political parties communicate on social media platform for the benefit of tertiary students?

iv. To what extent do tertiary students base their voting patterns on messages from social media?

v.   What challenges do political parties encountered in using social media for campaign?

1.4. Main Research Objective

The main objective of this study is to investigate the influence of social media on the voting behaviour of tertiary students in the Wa Municipality of Ghana.

1.4.1 Specific Research Objectives:

i.   To examine the types of social media frequently used by tertiary students.

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ii.   To examine the extent to which various political parties employed social media in convincing tertiary students to vote for these parties.

iii.   To determine the various messages which political parties communicated on social media platform for the benefit of tertiary students.

iv.   To establish the extent to which tertiary students based their voting patterns on messages from social media.

v.   To find out challenges that political parties encountered in using social media for campaign communication.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Social media networks have become an important tool for political campaigns and communication particularly in Ghana. The study seeks to add to the body of knowledge on the theoretical and empirical perspectives of social media in relation to voting behaviour of students and the youth in general. The outcome of the study may help to unearth the mode of operation of politicians using social media as a platform and how this contributes to electoral outcomes.

The findings will be useful to development practitioners and other stakeholders who are interested in issues of social media and politics. It will help politicians, chiefs and opinion leaders on political issues and provide clear directions for policy formulation in the area of youth and voting behaviour. This data would also be of significance to political campaigning heads, future political contenders and the Electoral Commission of Ghana. The

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research can help them formulate their strategies for future upcoming elections. The research will also help to improve the public understanding of what role social media plays in an election campaign in today's scenario. Finally, the results of this study will add to the existing knowledge on the role of social media in elections. The results may also serve as impetus for further research studies on social media usage and electoral outcomes.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study is limited to the influence of social media on voting behaviour of Tertiary students in the Wa Municipality. It was restricted to the University for Development Studies, Wa Polytechnic, Wa Nurses Training College and the Jahan College of Education. These institutions were selected because they are the main tertiary institutions in the Municipality. It is as a result of the existence of telecommunication industries and increase in access to electricity the region can now boast of enhanced access to information by politicians. The region was selected due to the nature of development verses the existence of political parties.

1.7 Limitations of the study

A limitation encountered in this study was organisational access and reluctance to respond to the questionnaire. Some methodological limitations were also encountered. For instance, the use of semi-structured questionnaire alone may not be adequate enough since such instruments are liable to subject manipulation (McMillan, 1996). To overcome these, appropriate time was

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scheduled for focal persons in the various tertiary schools selected for the study. Finally, the researcher explained the purpose of the research to respondents to enable them to give feedback necessary for the study.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

WhatsApp: Refers to a cross-platform instant messaging application that allows iPhone, BlackBerry, Android, Windows Phone and Nokia smartphone users to exchange text, image, video and audio messages for free. It enables users to send, read, and forward text-based messages using up to 65536 characters.

Twitter: An online social networking and microblogging service that enables users to send, read, and forward text-based messages using up to 140 characters.

Followers: Those who have actively chosen to receive tweets from individuals, groups, organizations, or any user of Twitter.

YouTube: A video-sharing website where videos can be uploaded and widely viewed.

Virtual communities: Groups of individuals with shared interests, objectives, or goals who use internet based social media sites as a means of communicating.

Facebook: A social networking site where users can post videos, photographs, texts, and links to other sites where full access to user's postings is by permission.

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1.9 Organisation of the study

This study is organised into five chapters. Chapter one provides the framework for the rest of the study. It deals with the introduction which covers the background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions and objectives, scope of the study, significance of the study and how the entire work is organized.

The second chapter reviews literature that is relevant to the issue under investigation. It provides the theoretical, conceptual and empirical framework for the study. The procedures and techniques that were employed to carry out the study are described in Chapter Three. It presents the study area, research design, target population, sampling technique, sources of data, data collection instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis, limitations and ethical issues. Chapter Four is devoted to results and discussions. Chapter Five presents summary, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research. The appendix section presents the questionnaire, interview guide and Focus Group Discussions used in the survey for this research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature on social media and voting behavior. The review covers various issues related to theoretical, conceptual and empirical issues.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frameworks that underpin this study are the Agenda Setting Theory (Main) and Media Systems Dependency Theory (Supporting theory).

2.2.1 Agenda Setting Theory

The mass media influences political perceptions and co-determines voting behaviour of groups and individuals (Campus, Pasquino & Vaccari, 2008; Pabjan & Pekalski, 2008; Schmitt-Beck & Mackenrodt, 2010). Multiple election studies documented the significance of the media in political campaigning using agenda-setting theory effects as the underpinning theory (Campus, Pasquino & Vaccari, 2008; Dunn, 2009; Balmas, & Sheafer, T, 2010; Nesbitt-Larking, and kincall, 2010). This explanation theorizes that the media have a strong influence on audiences by their choice of what stories are considered newsworthy and by the amount of prominence these are awarded. The theory postulates silence transfer. This is regarded as the ability of the

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news to transfer issues of importance from the media agenda to the public versions.

In 1972, McCombs and Shaw (1972) demonstrated the concept of agenda- setting, which is defined as the process through which certain issues become more relevant than others. Their agenda-setting hypothesis treated the public agenda as a dependent variable influenced by the independent variable of media agendas (Dunn, 2009). The theory was derived from their study on the role of the media in the 1968 United States presidential campaign.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) surveyed 100 undecided voters on key issues and reflected those on the actual media content. The outcomes validated their hypothesis. Balmas and Sheafer (2010) also confirm this theory in their study on second level agenda setting and affective priming. They presented further evidence on media influence on political opinion and voting intention. Concerning the media effects almost all the publications refer to media in their traditional manifestation. As stated in the introduction the recent impact of social media demands a shift in focus towards these interactive information applications is widely acknowledged.

It is not irrational to say that, for reasons other than political, the purpose for setting an agenda is to achieve or maintain a level of control and power. Business decisions are often made to determine what actions can be taken to achieve economic gain, and the language of communication becomes an instrument for accomplishing this objective.

Although Deetz (1992) studied business organizations to form his critical theory of communication by examining the choice of words and

language used to advance organizational objectives, his theory has applications for the political exploitation of power. For example, Deetz (1992) observes that the focus on election-day politics gives legitimacy to arrangements and conflicts becoming forms of resolutions that enable certain choices and suppresses others.

Suppression, however, is not the same as stifling and eliminating conflicting speech. On the contrary, power differences in the creation of meaning, identity, and access to information is considered more important than the fear of censorship and the right of self-expression. Deetz (1992) asserts that the right of self-expression is more central than the right to be informed.

In terms of our governance, through participation in elections, people feel secure and protected by the state whose policing action is thought to be legitimate. While the state provides a protection for the less advantaged segments of society, it generally provides the necessary regulation for corporate development and successful commerce (Deetz, 1992). Yet democracy is more than the promotion of capitalism. In terms of organizational influence, there is also an ethical component. Deetz (1992) sees "representation, communication, and morality" as mutually defining terms, seeing the desire for a stronger, practical democracy being deeply shared in our society.

2.2.2 Media Systems Dependency Theory

Media system dependency theory (MSD) was developed by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin Defleur in 1976 (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). The theory is grounded in classical sociological literature positing that media and their audiences should be studied in the context of larger social systems (Ognyanova & Ball-Rokeach, 2012).

Media system dependency theory ties together the interrelations of broad social systems, mass media, and the individual into a comprehensive explanation of media effects. At its core, the basic dependency hypothesis states that the more a person depends on media to meet needs, the more important media will be in the person's life, and therefore the more effects media will have on the person.
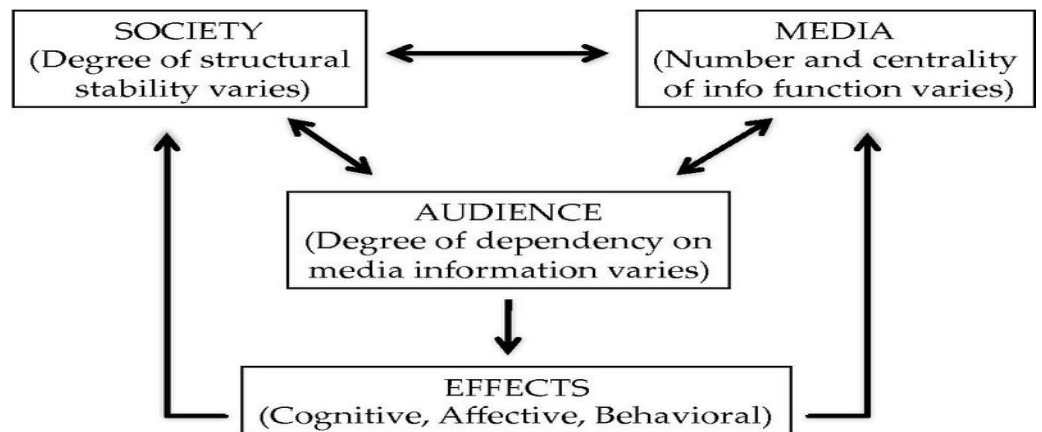
Figure 2.1: Media system dependency theory (MSD)
Source: Adopted from Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur (1976).

The relationships between social media use, information and behavioural changes are presented in Figure 2.1.

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2.3 Media Influences

When considering the impact of social media, the public's relationship with the outlet becomes essential. Facebook, Twitter and a host of other social media platforms have become a part of the way we talk, socialize and spend our time; social media has begun to take precedence over other communication outlets in part because of its heightened accessibility and usability.

In turn, dependence on these outlets to provide individuals with rewarding interactions has become greater. Baran and Davis (2006) explain the media systems dependency theory as "the more a person depends on having needs gratified by media use, the more important the media's role will be in the person's life, and therefore the more influence those media will have" (Baran & Davis, 2006: 127). Therefore, the more the public relies on Facebook and Twitter as not only necessary lines of communication, but as rewarding parts of the communicative process, the more value and influence Facebook and Twitter will have on the public.

Twitter and Facebook have also created an audience that is aware of not only the elements in the message but of processing those elements. Twitter and Facebook have the unique ability to reach individuals who choose to seek a company, person or cause out (Comm., 2009:).

This makes social media an effective marketing tool, enabling succinct communication with individuals who have already expressed an interest. More importantly, it enables public figures "to build deeper relationships" (Comm.,

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2009:) with clients, partners and individuals, creating an easy, far-reaching campaign tactic for modern-day politicians.

Indeed, sources of information to the young adult voter vary widely to include 'traditional media' Television (TV), radio and the newspaper. However, with the emergence of online social media platforms, most voters can access an array of information and public debates on policies as well as give feedback on their own views, opinions and expectations from the party and the party's candidate from the comfort of their homes.

Although the use of social media by political parties and campaign strategists has helped in increasing the popularity of candidates and their parties, it has the tendency and capacity to make or mar their chances. It can also influence voter perception of the party or its candidates either positively or negatively.

Research shows that it is possible to influence a person's attitude towards a political candidate by using carefully crafted information about such a candidate online, which in turn, may influence the voter's behaviour towards the candidate. Social media can also be used by political parties to propagate false news and propaganda about the opposition in order to cause disaffection for the party or its candidate. This has a huge influence on voter behaviour as many voters make decisions based on such news they consume online.

For instance, rumours, falsehood, negative propaganda and derogatory information about individual candidates or political parties are common on social media and actually spread faster than anticipated, often with disastrous outcomes. This is largely attributed to the lack of editorial filtering.

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The anonymous nature of social media users presents a vast opportunity for the publication of false stories and the spread of rumours about political parties and their candidates. This often has a huge influence on voter behaviour, as most young adult voters who read or view these online stories or messages have a tendency to believe such media contents without cross-checking facts and often than not, make decisions based on this propaganda. This is a popular practice among political parties who engage in these social media antics to bring down their opponents.

2.4 Theoretical models of voting behaviour

In the study of voting behaviour of people, three schools of thought emerged. First, the sociological model, often identified as School of Columbia, with the main reference in Applied Bureau of Social Research of Columbia University, whose work began with the publication of the book *The People's Choice* (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944) and focuses on the influences of social factors. The second school of thought is the psychosocial model, also identified as School of Michigan, which has its major reference in the work of Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes (1960), *The American Voter* and assumes that party identification is the main factor behind the behaviour of voters; and the third is rational choice theory, also referred to as a model of economic voting, or even as School of Rochester, whose landmark work is the work of Anthony Downs (1957), *An Economic Theory of Democracy* and that puts emphasis on variables such as rationality, choice, uncertainty and information.

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In this section, the main theoretical assumptions underpinning these three models will be presented, emphasizing the continuity and theoretical complementarity linking the psychosocial model to sociological model and the rational choice theory. This is done for easy understanding and analysis.

Sociological model of voting behaviour

The theoretical assumptions of the sociological model of voting behavior are defined in three essential works: *The People's Choice* (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944), *Voting* (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954) and *Personal Influence* (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). The research conducted by Lazarsfeld et al. (1944) at Ohio State (Erie County), using questionnaire as a technique of investigation for the first time in the study of a U.S. presidential election, one which opposed Franklin Roosevelt to Wendell Willkie in 1940 cuts away from the type methodological approach that hitherto characterized the study of voting behaviour (Barnes & Kaase, 1979).

Paul Lazarsfeld, whose previous interests had focused on the study of the psychological mechanisms involved in the processes of choice and in the effects of publicity, advertising and mass media on consumer behaviour had two main objectives in this research: to study the effects of exposure to the media, that is, to know how voters arrive at their decisions and the role of media in this process; and to test a new methodology of successive interviews with a panel of subjects and a control group (Rossi, 1964).

The study, whose report was published under the title *The People's Choice* (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944), begins by characterizing the

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supporters of the two main political parties in the U.S. using a panel of 600 subjects who were interviewed seven times over the seven months of campaign, to then identify the voters who changed their position during the campaign period, comparing three groups: those who decided their vote before beginning the campaign, those whose decision was taken during the party convention and those that decided their vote only at an advanced stage of the campaign.

The central hypothesis of Lazarsfeld et al. (1944) was that the act of voting is an individual act, affected mainly by the personality of the voter and his exposure to the media. The results, however, contradict the main thesis, suggesting that the effect of the media in electoral decision was minimal and that the decisive influence was the social groups to which they belonged. In the final two chapters of his book, "The Political homogeneity of Social Groups" and "The Nature of Personal Influence" the focus is exactly on the theoretical elaboration of these conclusions, which are presented as revealed by news research: "The significance of this area of political behavior was highlighted by the study but further investigation is necessary to establish it more firmly" (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968: 69).

Psychosocial model of voting behaviour

The psychosocial model has its origin in studies conducted by the Survey Research Centre at the University of Michigan during the 1948 U.S. presidential elections, its results analyzed by Campbell and Kahn (1952) in *The People Elect a President*; the elections of 1952's report was presented by Campbell, Gurin and Miller (1954) in *The Voter Decides*; and elections in

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1956, where results, combined with those obtained in previous investigations, have led to the book *The American Voter*, written by Campbell, Converse Miller and Stokes (1960).

These works mark the beginning of a long series of studies conducted by the Survey Research Centre and more recently by the Center of Political Studies at the University of Michigan, which extend to the present day, although currently falling under American National Electoral Studies (ANES), investigations that involve a greater variety of institutions, maintaining, however, the initial theoretical basis.

The central concept of this model of voting behaviour is partisanship, which is designed as a psychological affinity, stable and lasting relationship with a political party that does not necessarily translate into a concrete link, namely registration, or consistently voting and systematically militancy with this party. The notion of partisanship, introduced in the study of voting behaviour by Campbell et al. (1960), was influenced by the concept of reference group (Hyman & Singer, 1968) and has similarities with the idea of anticipatory socialization introduced by Merton and Kitt (1950) to define the situations in which individuals choose a reference group to which they do not belong and begin to act according to what they perceive as the rules of that group.

According to these authors, partisanship is acquired through a socialization process, influenced by the values and attitudes of family, colleagues and peers, a process that Miller and Shanks (1996) considered similar to that which leads subjects to identify with a religion. This emotional

link the subject to "their" political party can be achieved with varying degrees of involvement in a process analogous to what happens with the connection of individuals to a religion, manifested in ways as different as going from non-religious to deeply religious.

In this perspective, partisanship is a genuine form of social identification in which "*citizens have an enduring sense of what sorts of people belong to various parties and whether they identify with these social groups*" (Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002, p. ix). Notably, the model also does not match partisanship with the voter's choice. This separation between the psychological nature of partisanship and the objective nature of voting behaviour is reflected, in methodological terms, in the option of not measuring this variable from the actual voting of the subject, but through their self-positioning.

Rational choice theory

The theoretical background for an economic explanation of voting behaviour has been submitted by Downs's 1957 work on "An Economic Theory of Democracy." This theory is commonly referred to as Rational Choice Theory. This is an attempt to explain electoral behaviour taking as its starting point the work done within the political economy by Kenneth, 1986 that relate economic parameters resources, goods and technology with a political outcome or choice.

The premise is simple: if the assumptions of rational choice are able to explain the market, then they can explain the political functioning. It establishes a direct analogy between consumers and voters and between

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enterprises and political parties. If companies seek to maximize profits and consumers act to maximize the utility, we can, then, theorize in the sense that voters seek to maximize the utility of their vote as the parties act to maximize electoral gains obtained from their political proposals.

The main thesis is that parties in democratic politics are analogous to entrepreneurs in a profit-seeking economy. As to attain their private ends, they formulate whatever policies they believe will gain the most votes, just as entrepreneurs produce whatever products they believe will gain the most profits for the same reason. In order to examine the implications of this thesis, we have assumed that citizens behave rationally in politics. This premise is itself a second major hypothesis (Downs, 1957, pp. 295-296).

The operation of the model is based on three fundamental premises: (1) all decisions, those that are made by voters and political parties are rational, that is, guided by self-interest and enforced in accordance with the principle of maximization of action's utility; (2) the democratic political system implies a level of consistency that supports predictions about the consequences of decisions made by voters and political parties, that is, their agents, voters, parties and government are responsible and trustworthy, which makes it possible to make predictions about the consequences that result from different choices, and (3) the democratic system assumes, despite the consistency stated in the previous point, a level of uncertainty, sufficiently important to allow different options.

According to this understanding of rationality, elections serve to choose a government and, consequently, rational behaviour in an election is

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one that is oriented towards this objective and not to any other. The axiom of self-interest applies equally to activities of political parties. According to rational choice theory, political parties seek to win elections, not by any altruistic motive relating to the application of a political program, but to gain prestige for itself and the gains inherent to being in power.

Since the prestige and profits that political parties pursue are concretized by electoral victories, then we can say that the main objective of parties is winning elections. The rational objective is materialized if they can get more votes than any other party. Namely, the activities of political parties are themselves guided by the principle of utility maximization of action: "*Upon this reasoning rests the fundamental hypothesis of our model: parties formulate policies in order to win elections, rather than win elections in order to formulate policies.*"(Downs, 1957: 28).

The rationality of the political system derives from the fact that voters, political parties and government have always several interconnected options available to choose from, ordered from most to least favourable. The order of preference is transitive so that if the subject prefers A to B and B to C then also prefers A to C (Downs, 1957).

Under this approach, when faced with two alternatives, the rational subjects compare the expected benefits of each option. In cases of electoral choice, they compare the expected results for the election of the party in government, with the expectation of earnings in case of winning the opposition party. If the difference between these two values is positive, they

vote for the governing party. If the difference is negative, they vote for the opposition. If the value is zero, they will abstain from voting.

The rational choice presupposes, therefore, not only the possibility of making predictions about the behaviour of other individuals, political parties and government, but also the possibility to compare them. The question that arises is how those subjects calculate the expected value in each of the alternatives. In relation to the government party, they may calculate the expected value according to the previous action of that party, assuming there will be continuity of policy pursued while in government, however, the opposition party does not have an indicator of the same nature.

Once the hypothesis is that the rational comparison is one that uses the same time unit as a benchmark, that is, the mandate that expires, then the voter compares the performance of the government party to what is supposed that each opposition party would have done if they had still been in government. Of course, calculating this differential can only be done if we assume that parties are responsible and reliable, that is that there is consistency in their behaviour. If there is any consistency in the behaviour of political parties and government, this situation leads to the impossibility of rational choice and consequently the collapse of the democratic system.

We saw earlier that the rational choice theory argues that the rationality of political behaviour leads voters and parties to act according to their own interests. In the case of political parties, it is their interest to enjoy the benefits of exercising power and the benefits it brings. Once that is achieved only by obtaining more votes than other parties, we would expect

rational behaviour of parties would lead them to defend the proposals that safeguard the interests of the majority of the electorate and that this move would lead inevitably to a situation of non-differentiation of their proposals. We note, however, that this is not what happens.

Political parties argue and present proposals to the electorate sufficiently differentiated to mobilize voters to turnout. According to Downs (1957) the diversity of societies and social conflicts introduce levels of uncertainty that lead both to the emergence of ideologies and ambiguity in relation to social groups that may be more useful for the electoral victory, and consequently, the differentiation of the proposals submitted by political parties.

The dynamism of democratic societies also highlights the uncertainty about the electoral effects that can be obtained with proposals that appeal to some social groups but displease others. According to the model, the parties define their ideologies in order to maximize support among the largest possible number of social groups.

We have, once again, a perfect analogy with the economic explanation for the functioning of the markets. If the electoral market (political system) is dominated by one brand (political party), other brands only can grow if they bet on strategies that enhance the specific needs of a market niche (social minority groups) not satisfied with the products (policy proposals) provided by the big brand (dominant party) and/or the specific needs of a significant fringe of consumers (voters) of this dominant brand (party). *For example, let us assume that three parties form and appeal to three different social groups, and*

one of these parties consistently wins by overwhelming votes. In order to 'get back in the swim', the other two parties must revise their ideologies to attract votes from the same groups as perennial winner. The each party will be trying to combine a specific segment of the predominant group with parts of minority groups for electoral votes (Downs, 1957, p. 101).

This movement to adjust the parties' election proposals to the interests of social groups is limited by the need for consistency to which we referred earlier. So that voters may consider a party in their calculations on the differential gain, it is important that they can predict their future behaviour from their political discourse and in relation to their actions in the past that is the party must be reliable and responsible. The consistency required to produce forecasts of the performance of the parties is, therefore, implied by the existence of ideological coherence and inertia.

The rational choice theory considers that what matters to voters is not ideology but concrete actions that governments take. However, voters do not know in detail all government decisions and it takes effort to fully understand and evaluate all the consequences. Thus, the ideologies of parties allows them to focus their analysis on only a few variables and making generalizations from this sample for all other proposals of that party: "*With this short cut a voter can save himself the cost of being informed upon a wider range of issues*" (Downs, 1957, p. 98).

Although what matters to voters are not the intentions or the political discourse of the parties, that is, their ideology, but their concrete actions, the rational choice theory argues that the comparison between ideologies is only

used if the voter already has previously concrete indicators relating to actions carried out effectively. If the voter does not have any previous data on the concrete actions of the parties and they are only able to distinguish them by their ideology, this means in practice that they are equal with regard to the interests of the voter.

According to the model of rational choice, the likelihood of citizens to vote is higher if their expectations regarding the critical importance of their vote and the expected benefits from voting are larger than the costs. Faced with the choice between several candidates the voter must determine what the difference to their interests, resulting in victory (or loss) of candidate A, B or C. If this analysis does not expect significant differences associated with victory or defeat of any candidates, the potential benefit of voting is zero and the higher the probability of not participating in the elections. Likewise, if the voters realize that their vote will not have decisive importance for the election result, the probability of not voting increases.

Blais (2000) presents a critical analysis of this theory based on the finding that, "*unfortunately for the theory, many people do vote. In fact, a clear majority vote in the most important elections, where the numbers of voters is extremely large and the probability of casting a decisive vote is minuscule*" (p. 2). Research conducted by Blais allowed him to conclude that the rational choice model has a very low explanatory power of voting behaviour.

In fact, the results of the study show that about half of voters vote without making any calculation of costs and benefits, but are driven by the

duty to vote. Even among those whose sense of duty is not so strong, the variables related to the benefits and costs of voting do not have the influence that the rational choice model predicts. Blais (2000) concludes that even the cost seems to have no significant influence on voting behaviour. Given the initial estimates of the model, he found that voters are more likely to vote if they feel that their vote can make a difference, but overestimate its importance.

What seems to work is not the perception that one vote can make a difference, but that the result can be very close: *Some people may reason that, they decide not to vote, that decision would imply that others with similar political attitudes will also abstain ... that is each citizen may regard his or her single vote as diagnostic of millions of votes, which would substantially inflate the subjective probability of one's vote making a difference* (Blais, 2000, p. 139). This same criticism had been made previously by Uhlan (1989), who concluded that the rational theory has difficulty in explaining individual participation in collective action, which in the case of voting behavior, was tantamount to finding that "*Unfortunately for theory, people do vote* "(p. 300).

Green and Shapiro (1994) took this and other arguments of a methodological nature in what is one of the most important critics of rational choice theory. The approach of these authors focuses on methodological issues, which criticize the post hoc development of the theory: "*many of the methodological failings of applied rational choice scholarship are traceable to a style that places great evidence on the development of post hoc accounts of known facts*" (Green & Shapiro, 1994, p. 34), the absence of empirical tests:

"*those who seek to derive testable propositions from rational choice models frequently find, moreover, that these theories are constructed in ways that insulate them against untoward encounters with evidence* " (p. 38), as well as the selection, use and interpretation of selected data: "*the biased fashion in which evidence is selected. (…) subtler ways in which evidence is projected from theory rather than gathered independently from it. (…) the strategic retreat from domains in which the theory is found to perform poorly*" (p. 42).

Voter turnout, which the author analyses in detail in his book, is used to illustrate the methodological weaknesses that link to rational choice theory (Green & Shapiro, 1994, pp. 47-48). This underlying requirement that voters have accurate and detailed information about their interests and parties proposals is the main weakness of this model. The proponents of this approach try to overcome this weakness using the concept of heuristics and cognitive shortcut to explain how voters would be able to make decisions based on little information (Lupia, McCubbins, & Popkin, 2000; Popkin, 1994; Simon HA, 1955, Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock, 1991).

It is argued that voters, unable to cope with the complexity and information overload, use indicators such as the positions taken in relation to candidates and electoral issues by certain media, public figures, organizations or entities, heuristics for reasoning about the interest of the electoral proposals. What we are talking about is not, however, information about political issues and electoral proposals, but the trust that voters have in sources of heuristic reasoning.

Lacking information on the issues and electoral proposals, voters believe the position of a candidate is favourable or unfavourable to their interests according to the trust they place in a medium of mass communication, in an organization, an entity or a personality. That is, voters decide, in fact, based on trust, not based on the information. Then we return to the proposals of the sociological model, that people vote according to their social group, and psychosocial that people vote according to their partisanship. This brief presentation of the main explanatory models of electoral behaviour allows us to identify a complementarity between them. The sociological models value the contribution of social and historical contexts that gave rise to the emergence of political parties and that, according to this view, justify the party political divisions and the resulting behaviour of voters; the rational or economic models that consider the crucial role in shaping the voting behaviour is played by the evaluation of political and economic factors that characterize each election *per se*; the psychosocial models put emphasis on the relationship between these two types of factors (distal and proximal), a relationship that is mediated and moderated by the psychological link established between voters and political parties, that is, partisanship.

Antunes (2008) in a study into the reasons that lead individuals to change their vote from one election to another, argues that studies which take as a theoretical reference to the sociological model (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944; Lipset & Rokkan, 1967) or psychosocial approach (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960, Miller & Shanks, 1996) provide a consistent explanation for the stability of

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electoral choices, but show to be quite fragile in clarifying the reasons why some voters to vote differently in consecutive elections.

In turn, the approaches in the framework of rational choice theory (Buchanan & Tullock, 2001; Downs, 1957), although they provide interesting clues for understanding the fluctuations in voting behaviour, are insufficient when it comes to explaining the fact that a considerable majority of voters vote with a remarkable stability.

To bridge this gap and integrate the contributions of all these approaches Antunes (2008) proposes a revision of the central concept of the psychosocial approach, partisanship in the light of current studies of social identity, trying to show, theoretically and empirically, that the reconceptualization of the concept of partisanship helps to explain situations where changes in electoral behaviour occur, maintaining the potential of the psychosocial model in understanding the stability of voting options.

2.5 The Determinants of the Voting Behaviour

The analysis of the determinants of voting behaviour has been the subject of several studies, both theoretical and empirical (Gaxie, 1989; Dubois & Fauvelle-Aymar, 2004; Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2006). These researches group the explanatory variables of voting in three categories: structural variables, conjunctural variables and media and opinion polls.

Structural variables: Also known as heavy voting behaviour variables or long-term variables, correspond to demographic, socio-economic and

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cultural factors that seem most significant and explanatory of vote (Gaxie, 1989; Dubois & Fauvelle-Aymar, 2004, Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2006). However, Ghiuţă (2014) emphasizes the importance of individual and psychological variables in determining voting behaviour.

Demographic variables: This includes age, gender and region. Regarding the age, several researchers confirmed that older people vote differently from youths and that the more a person is old, the more he/she is likely to vote (Blais et al., 2002; Nevitte et al., 1999; Rubenson et al., 2003). According to Héran (2004), the youngest and the oldest people abstain the least. Other authors consider that age has an effect mostly on the stability of electoral choices and the vote of youths is more volatile than that of elderly (Ysmal, 1990; Muxel, 2001).

Today, the women vote is aligned with that of men (Ysmal, 1990). Thus, gender is no longer very discriminatory in the voting behaviour and femininity has ceased to be a conservative element (Sineau, 1988; Rubenson et al., 2003). Finally, regarding the impact of Region: André Siegfried, sociologist, geographer and historian tried to show that certain geographical aspects could affect lifestyles thus favouring the left or right vote.

Socio-economic variables depend on the professional status, the income level and the importance of patrimony. These variables play an important role in electoral choices. The relationship between socio-economic status and voting behaviour has been the subject of numerous studies (Michelat & Simon, 1985; Mayer, 1986; Blais, 2000).

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Cultural factors include the level of education and the religion. According to the current literature, voter turnout increases with the level of education of voters (Blais et al., 2002). A high level of education increases the likelihood to vote and to be interested in politics. In other words, a voter with a high level of study is less-abstainer and adopts strategist behaviour (Blais et al., 2002; Gidengil et al., 2004). Previous research shows that the religious variable explains vote better than class variable. The vote of the left varies more depending on the religious practice more than on the objective belonging to the working class (Guy & Simon, 1977).

Psychological variables: Voting behaviour can be explained by reference to a number of internal factors such as perception, attitude, motivation, emotion, learning and memory (Ghiuță, 2014).

Conjunctural factors: In this case about a challenging vote or all the election political factors which may influence the choice of the voters in the short term. These factors are related to the party system and the electoral system as well as to the candidate's personality.

2.6 The media and young voters

The media, both traditional outlets and the Internet, are active in the lead-up to elections. Traditional media (radio, television and newspapers) continue to be the main sources of political information, a view supported by many scholars including Saune and Murdock (2013). The Internet is gaining

popularity and as access increases many people, particularly the young, will opt for the Internet as their source of information. In the lead-up to elections, social media is labelled Round (2014) as a battleground, because political parties and politicians take to social media as an alternative campaign strategy.

Social media is used to address time and resource constraints as well as young people's lack of engagement in traditional party politics. Social media has become particularly useful for young activists and politically conscious young people in an environment where the traditional media is restricted. Active political engagement on social media became the domain of urban, educated young people, perhaps those who needed the least convincing when it came to voting. The extent to which social media influenced the election outcome is unknown because it is highly likely that family and friends would have been influential, particularly for undecided young voters.

2.7 Technology and Social Media

Technology is one of the fastest growing invention which has affected all aspects of human life including communication. Marshall McLuhan (1964) in his theory of media ecology, envisioned many of the characteristics of global communication that have come from the creation of the World Wide Web. The Internet, with its social media offshoots, is fully embraced as part of the Electronic Age, one of four epochs McLuhan and Fiore (as cited in Griffin, 2009) expound on in their description of the evolution of media and communication. Dividing history into four periods: The Tribal Age, The Literacy Age, The Print Age, and The Electronic Age, McLuhan and Fiore (as

cited in Griffin, 2009) show how the medium of communication has evolved over the millennium.

Social media platforms, as a form of electronic media, are examples of what McLuhan (1964) meant when he wrote of electric media abolishing spatial dimension, and allowing for the creation of "person-to-person relationships as if on the smallest village scale" (p. 341). What McLuhan (1964) refers to as the "global village" is not one of proximity, but rather the ability to act with common focus, attitudes, and responses as if residing in the same village.

Additionally, McLuhan (1964) thinks of media as an extension of the human body or mind, just as clothing would be an extension of the human skin. Continuing along this thread, he sees the electronic age translating us into a form of information that moves toward the technological extension of consciousness. As humans put their physical bodies inside this electronic nervous system by means of electronic media, all such extensions of our bodies will be translated into information systems. The evolving nature of media technology, therefore, is ecological in nature. While McLuhan proposes this idea of media ecology, it is Neil Postman (1985) who develops the concept.

Postman (1985) views technology as part of a Faustian bargain, simultaneously giving to and taking away from society attributes such as freedom, independence, skill, and culture. In other words, there is always a price to be paid for technological development. While technology is being oversold and envisioned as a panacea for the ills of society (Postman, 1995), it

becomes ecological in society, not becoming just something added, but changing society itself.

A major precept of media ecology, therefore, is that the medium must be appropriate to the message it is carrying. Whereas smoke signals may be a poor medium for a philosophical discussion (Postman, 1995), Twitter seems to be more than adequate to relay succinct and impactful statements.

However, technology is neither evenly distributed nor equally exploited. It favours some and harms others (Postman, 1995), and can have both a benevolent and a dark side. This is where the form and meaning of content, or the agenda and purpose of what is being said, can have important theoretical basis in the study of social media.

2.8 The influence of media and opinion polls

Sociological research showed the ability of media to influence and shape the citizen's opinion. So, when media focus on the negative aspects of a political party, this may influence the perceptions of voters. Political leaders are aware that media have an effect on the vote's behaviour that is why they try to present a positive media image.

Regarding the opinion polls, they can affect the behaviour of the electors in general. For instance, voters can stay at home if the result seems to be inevitable. In some countries, opinion polls are banned as they influence the eventual outcome.

2.8.1 Participation Effects

Participation effects are those influences which generally induce individuals to participate in the political process. Claasen (2007) claimed that "in a spatial model, citizens participate when their proximity calculations reveal a non-zero policy stake in the election outcome" (p. 370). In other words, if an individuals recognized that their personal beliefs are not challenged by either candidate in an election, they will not participate.

And conversely, an individuals on the opposite end of the political spectrum from a candidate would be much more likely to participate as their personal beliefs are challenged. Although this theory had been the traditionally accepted theory, Claasen went on to claim that extremity of views may not play as large a role in political participation as previously believed.

Claasen (2007) ultimately concluded that extreme policy-motivated individuals participated in the political process because of their extreme views regardless of the election, whereas proximity-motivated individuals only participated when they have a perceived stake in the outcome of the election.

In addition, studies done in the 60s and 70s showed that racial solidarity also proved to be a factor in political participation (Chong & Rogers, 2007). However, Chong and Rogers pointed out that the same correlation between racial solidarity and political participation have been lacking in more recent studies. Chong and Rogers attributed this declining correlation to differences in definition of both group solidarity and political participation. They went on to find that there are two types of group solidarity within the black community: common fate and black autonomy.

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According to Chong and Rogers (2007), those members of the "common fate" group tended to participate in a more traditional manner, where those members of the "black autonomy" group tended to favour more radical forms of political participation, such as protests and rallies.

These findings had the potential to be applied to other ethnic groups, however Chong and Rogers warned against applying them without first doing further research. Considering that solidarity can change over time, Chong and Rogers reasoned that it can also change across racial and ethnic groups.

2.8.2 Voter Choice Effects

Voter choice effects refer specifically to those influences that impact who a voter chooses to vote for in a presidential election. McClurg and Holbrook (2009) stated that partisanship and presidential evaluation are the fundamental influences on voter choice. However, McClurg and Holbrook claimed that these influences can "vary in importance across campaign contexts of differing intensity" (2009: 495).

They believe that those voters in states that are heavily exposed to campaign materials will have more easily predicted votes, whereas those voters in states where campaign exposure is limited will be less predictable. While voters in battleground states were more likely to participate, and be heavily exposed to the candidates and messages, voters in non-battleground states receive much less information about the candidates. This ultimately made predicting the choice of voters in battleground states much easier than predicting the choice of voters in non-battleground states.

Gilens, Vavreck, and Cohen (2007) focused on whether a decline of available information about political candidates is correlated with a decline in voters' ability to make informed decisions. Focusing on the period from 1952-2000, Gilens et al. found that news consumption had fallen dramatically over the past 50 years. While some of this is attributed to new news sources being harder to track, Gilens et al. stated that this does not make up for the majority of the decline.

With such a sharp decline in available information, a similarly sharp decline could be expected in the ability of voters to choose a candidate for president. However, Gilens et al. found that there was no reason to believe that voters had decreased information about candidates. In addition, Gilens et al. found that voters' likelihood of citing policy-based reasons for their vote choice has increased over time while the likelihood of citing character-based reasons has decreased.

2.8.3 New Media Effect

The influence of new media on candidate evaluation has become an increasingly important issue as the Internet becomes a more widely available medium. Tolbert and McNeil (2003) suggested that as the Internet became more widely utilized as a source of information about political candidates, voters are more likely to be well informed and participate in the political process.

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Tolbert and McNeil concluded that the Internet could help to fill a void that is left by broadcast and cable news. The void that has occurred with broadcast and cable news is an increasing amount of distrust among citizens.

According to Tolbert and McNeil (2003), cable and broadcast news is riddled with gatekeepers and newsmakers with biases. While they stated that increased use of the Internet in political campaigns should increase political participation, Tolbert and McNeil also believed that increased Internet use could have a negative effect on political participation.

At this time, Internet use has increased and has enabled those who were already predisposed to political participations: upper-middle class, college educated citizens to make informed choices. Tolbert and McNeil reasoned that if political information was more heavily distributed on the Internet, groups without access to these resources may find themselves with a lack of information leading to a lack of motivation to participate politically. Tolbert and McNeil concluded that new media, specifically the Internet, provided a solid opportunity to disseminate information and influence voter choice.

Morris (2002) attempted to see if new media sources dramatized news more than traditional media sources, and if so, if this would ultimately negatively affect perceptions of political leaders. Morris conducted an experiment in which one group of participants was exposed to what they thought was real news. The news presented to the first group was actually falsified, overly-dramatized news, while a second group was exposed to un-dramatic news.

Through this experiment, Morris came to the conclusion that in reality overly-dramatic news did have a negative influence on perceptions of political leaders. Morris also found that those participants who were exposed to overly-dramatic news were much more hostile toward media sources than those who were exposed to un-dramatic news.

While the dramatization of new media news sources has been a cause for concern, the concept of new media encouraging ideological and partisan extremism has been discussed. Baum and Groeling (2008) looked at three distinct online news sources in an effort to distinguish the newsworthiness of their headlines in comparison to wire service headlines.

They focused on DailyKos.com, FreeRepublic.com, and FoxNews.com, because "one clear manner in which the Internet appears to differ from other mass media is the degree of niche targeting of political information-oriented Web sites" (Baum & Groeling, 2008: 347).

Baum and Groeling (2008) acknowledged that one of the principle difficulties in establishing a media bias is deciding what a bias inherently is. To avoid this problem, they compared the headlines from the aforementioned partisan outlets to those that are least likely to show bias, namely the wire services Reuters and the Associated Press. Baum and Groeling (2008) accomplished this by completing a content analysis of the partisan news outlets and the wire services.

In doing so, Baum and Groeling assumed that non-partisan news outlets, whether traditional or new media, did not select news stories because

they would be advantageous to a certain political party. However, they did believe that this would be a driving factor behind partisan news outlets.

Ultimately, Baum and Groeling (2008) found that DailyKos.com, FreeRepublic.com, and FoxNews.com all showed an inherent bias in news story selection. They found that each of these news sources was more likely to choose stories based on their implied ability to benefit the political party most closely associated with their ideologies. Although they admitted that the Associated Press showed a slight slant at times, overall wire services were markedly less biased in their story choice.

Baum and Groeling cited a 2006 survey by the PEW Center on Media Consumption that found that while fewer people tend to follow partisan news sources, those who do follow partisan news sources are "more likely than typical individuals to discuss politics with others and, in doing so, to disseminate their views to the broader public" (2008: 360). This eventually suggested that an increase of new media use for partisan means would have a large impact on the amount of partisan ideas disseminated.

2.9 Social Media Effect

The emergence of internet and digital communication technologies has a great contribution largely in the revolution of youth:-oriented media. Internet technology has provided a new outlet for dissemination of information, and it has repurposed the old content (Owen, 2008). Social networking media has changed the concept of old media. Now our societies are using Facebook, Twitter and blogs as a sources of information (Hamillton, 2011).

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Social networking media also serve as an information store which facilitates its users to have access to a variety of contents. Social networking sites also provide the opportunity to expand their contacts with whom they can get information and exchange their thoughts. It also provides the quick and easy way to circulate messages to a large circle of people without physical movement and from the comfort of their homes (Teresi, 2012). For the youth, social networking media is a hot cake because it provides them the opportunity to stay connected with their friends, and a platform where they can exchange ideas, share pictures and videos. Social networking sites are playing the vital role for welfare of the societies, because it provides the platform for the members of the community to raise money for charity and humanitarian events (Keeffe & Pearson, 2011).

Richey (2008) says that the social networking sites have great impact on voters because the influence of one network member is highly dependent on the members of other. It also enhances the participation in elections. Furthermore, Hanson et al. (2010) say that social networking media play a vital role during the presidential campaign as each of the social media sites provide the platform to obtain political information to its user. According to Diana et al. (2011) social networking media played a vital role in electing Obama as president in the 2008 American elections.

During the United States of America 2008 Presidential Election, social media took off as a viable way for candidates to disseminate information. Kushin and Yamamoto (2010) attempted to determine whether social media usage actually had an impact on political self-efficacy and involvement.

Kushin and Yamamoto (2010 recognized the drastic rise in use of social media by political candidates during the 2008 Election, and the rise in those who utilized social media resources: "27% of adults younger than 30 reported obtaining campaign information from social network sites compared to 4% of adults age 30 to 39 and only 1% older than 40" (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010: 613).

Kushin and Yamamoto (2010) used a survey that was completed two weeks prior to the 2008 Presidential Election at a large North-western University. The survey focused on three major factors of political involvement on the Internet: "attention to social media for campaign information, online expression about the campaign, and attention to traditional Internet sources for campaign information" (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010).

It was expected that attention to social media during the 2008 Election would be positively connected to political self-efficacy and involvement, however, the survey found no significant positive connection between the two. Kushin and Yamamoto (2010) reasoned further that at this point, social media platforms may simply be too new to have any significant impact on political self-efficacy and involvement. They suggested that further studies continue to explore the possibility that social media has an effect on political beliefs and involvement in the political process.

In terms of social media, Facebook has come out as a frontrunner in terms of peer-to-peer interaction. In a political campaign, social media resources, like Facebook, have allowed voters to become more politically engaged with candidates. Johnson and Perlmutter (2010: 555) stated that while

previous elections gave candidates the ability to control their image and message, social media translated to "a new era where the candidates no longer have complete control over the message". This idea lent itself to a new type of political campaign: one that still focused on traditional campaign techniques, but also incorporated and embraced the digital revolution of social media.

Metzgar and Maruggi (2009) also discussed the concept of candidates losing control of their message. They reasoned that on social media, an idea could go from a Tweet, to a blog post, and to a national story in a matter of hours with almost no gatekeepers. This lack of gatekeepers, however, also suggested a lack of fact-checkers and moderators: this ultimately meant that some of the information presented through social media was false.

But, the nature of social media means that once information is put on the Internet it can never be retracted, regardless of whether it is true or false. Metzgar and Maruggi (2009) concluded that while social media can be detrimental to political candidates, if candidates accepted social media for what it is instead of fighting it, the benefits of reaching networks upon networks on untapped populations far outweighs any negative effects.

Diana et al. (2011) explore that social media facilitate the new types of participation and change the forms of established patterns of political engagement. Social networking sites played a vital role in electing Obama as president in the 2008 American election. This American presidential campaign was the mother for the cultivation of social media and its progress is continued and will continue to expand the nature and scope of citizen engagement.

Hamilton (2011) claims that social media has changed the concept of old media. Now our societies are using Facebook, Twitter and blogs as a source of information. Social networking media influences the political campaigns of the world. In the United States during the election years the use of social media by politicians increased to mobilize voters. A study was conducted by researchers to know the impact of social media on the political behaviour of 18 to 24 year aged voters and the results revealed that social media has a great impact on young voters, and it also suggests that the use of social media by the candidates is not always a good and effective way to reach young voters.

Papic and Noonan (2011) argue that in order to mobilize the people social networking media has become an important tool and the role of social media in revolutions and protests is very prominent. Social networking media has made the conditions more complicated for dictators and for the rigid regimes. Social networking media such as Facebook and Twitter helped people in Tunisia and Egypt to organize the people, communicate and to commence public insubordination. The western countries followed the green revolution of Iran via YouTube and Twitter in 2009. The revolution of Moldova in 2009 can be called the Twitter revolution.

Ancu and Cozma in 2009 conducted a survey and argued that the social networking sites like Facebook, YouTube and MySpace, emerged as a political tool for campaigns in November 2006 during the congressional U.S elections. Now these websites became part and parcel medium for any modern political campaign. They also argue that the people are indulging in MySpace,

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Facebook and other social networking sites because they allow the users to communicate with friends and the friends of their friends and this is the most significant feature of the social networking sites.

Teresi in 2009 conducted some research on computer mediated social networks. She adopted an experimental design and proves that through computer mediated social network, political information can successfully be transferred.

The findings confirm that social networking sites enable users to influence the political knowledge of their social network users without physically engaging each member in direct communication. She also measures the significance of greater use of social networking websites over traditional media and finds that people have access to their social sites more than twice as often as they watch a local news program or discuss politics with their friends and family.

Richey in 2008 investigated the influence of social network on political knowledge and on voting behaviour in the American national presidential election of 2000. He applied autoregressive theory and used NES data from 2000 respondents to investigate the impact. He concludes that the social networking sites had great impact on voters because influence of one network member was highly dependent on the members of other networks. Discussions on social networking sites enhanced the chance of participation in elections and vote similarity among the users of social networking sites. He confirms the autoregressive influence of social networking sites on political knowledge and on voting behaviour.

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Owen (2008) claims that the emergence of internet and digital communication technologies contributes largely to the revolution in youth-oriented media because internet technology provides a new outlet for dissemination of information and repurposes old content that had fascinated young voters. Social networking sites have made electronic politics visible to young people. Online videos, blogs, podcasts, online video conferencing and electronic chat rooms are important tools for expressing and getting information. Young people are encouraged and motivated by these communication outlets during campaigns. Facebook as a political forum is impressively versatile in its features like sharing photos and videos, and writing comments on walls. Using shared information has made it an interactive forum to engage and activate the users in campaigns.

2.10 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study shows how some key concepts and variables related to the study are connected. The main concepts in the framework include social media, political socialization, awareness, efficacy, knowledge and political participation as shown in Figure 2.2. Empirical studies (e.g Okafor, 2012; Ahmed *et al.,* 2012) maintain that the media is an active agent of political participation. Figure 2.2 shows a series of direct relationships between social media and other concepts that lead to political participation (voters' behaviour).

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┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│         Social Media            │
│   (Types & characteristics      │
│      including users)           │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                │
                ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│     Political Socialisation     │
│  (Political messages for        │
│        target groups)           │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
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Awareness of political systems (Competing parties, the need to vote, voting process)	**Political efficacy** (Competency in political activities, switching among parties, party agent)

Knowledge in political activities (manifestos, Symbols, candidate potentials, slogans, weakness)	**Political participation** (Decision to participate **or** voter behaviour)

Source: Modified from Dankwah (2016)

Figure 2.2: Conceptual Framework

From Figure 2.2, social media is considered as an agent of political socialization and hence can transform the individual to become acquainted with the political system. Evidences (Almond & Verba, 1963; Hamad *et al.*, 2001) have also supported the fact that in addition to formal education processes, students are very much influenced by social relations/media such as on- campus peer and friends group. This is to say that affiliations to public interest and advocacy groups by university students have been found to have a great impact on their political socialization. Closely connected with the peer group, is political education through campus societies and clubs and most

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importantly, students affiliation with the civil society and advocacy groups outside the campus. This study predicts that such associations and social networks would most often in today's technological revolution be facilitated by social media. Figure 2.2 therefore, indicates that social media can influence the developmental process by which adolescents acquire cognitions, attitudes and behaviours relating to their political environment (political socialization). Political socialization is the process of maintaining or changing political cultures (Emamjomezadeh *et al.,* 2012). Through political socialization, people enter political culture and their orientations are formed toward political objectives. These views imply that political socialization is a mechanism of transmitting political culture from one group of people to another or from generation to generation. The role of social media is therefore, considered important in this transformation process because it will facilitate the process in which an individual acquires information, beliefs, attitudes and values that aid the understanding of the political system. The various types of social media (Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, Weblog, SMS, messages) as well as the type of people using them with convey to voters the existing political messages; leading to political socialization. One key category of voters in this study is tertiary students which may be a target group by party/political agents. It must be noted that social media become pertinent when the elites make use of them. This point is aptly noted by Reuter and Szakony (2012) who submit that political awareness is increased through social media especially if politicized by political elites.

Political messages will create voters awareness of the political systems such as the duration between successive elections, existing political parties, competing political parties, the need for one to involve in politics and the voting process. Young people (tertiary students) will become aware of how power is distributed in society and acquire their orientations and patterns of behaviour as citizens through various political messages. This awareness creation will lead to political efficacy directly or indirectly through increase in political knowledge. It has been conceptualized that people who will become aware of politics will go ahead to understand the competing parties' manifestoes, slogans, candidates potentials and weaknesses. Suck political knowledge will inform the individual decision to vote for a particular political party. This kind of knowledge acquisition is what Almond and Verba (1963) called cognitive socialization, which means the acquisition of knowledge of and belief about the political system, its roles and the incumbents of these roles, its inputs, and its outputs.

On the other hand, both political awareness and knowledge will increase the competencies of the voter to be deeply involved in political campaigns, switching among effective parties, and becoming party agents. This state of political efficacy will have a direct link with the voters' decision to vote for a particular party. This means that the role of social media in influencing the voter's behaviour can be direct but has been considered in this study to have indirect influence as well.

The conceptual framework in Figure 2.2 explains how the norms, beliefs, and traditions regarding politics will be transformed positively through

the use of social media. However, modern students of politics such as Pelevin (2012) conceptualized political socialization as a dialectical process of a person acquiring and losing political qualities, values, traditions and impressions. This position suggests that social media may not only build the political orientation of voters but also has the chance of demoting people's interest after some hidden truth has been discovered through their engagement in social media. This means that social media can also change voters' behaviour negatively by disengaging them from political participation.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the procedures and techniques that were employed to conduct the study. It comprises a discussion of the study area, the research design, the study population, the sample size and sampling procedure, research instruments, data collection procedure and methods employed in data analysis.

3.2 Study Area

The Wa Municipality is one assemblies that make up the Upper West Region of Ghana. The indigenous people in the municipality are the Wala and the Dagaba. Land in the Wa municipality is vested in the "tindana" or families ("tindana" means land owner; the plural is "tindamba"). The "tindamba" are the allodial owners (hold the land in trust for the people), allocate land, are land priests, and settle land disputes between members of the "tindana". The Municipality shares administrative boundaries with the Nadowli District to the north, the Wa East District to the east and the Wa West District to the west. The Municipality lies between latitudes 9º50' N to 10º20' N and between longitudes 9º40' W and 10º15' W. It has an area of approximately 234.74 km2, about 6.4% of the area of Upper West Region.

The climate of Wa is made up of long a dry season and a short rainy season. The dry season is normally from November to April while the remaining months experience the rainy season with its peak in August and

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September. The dry season records high temperatures ranging between 35-40ºC in the months of March and April. Total annual rainfall in the area ranges from 910 to 2000 mm with an average humidity of 95 mm.

The vegetation cover of the area is guinea savanna woodland, which is made up of grasses and tree species such as *Butylosternum Paradoxum* (Shea tree), *Parkia biglolosa* (Dawadawa), *Adansonia Digitata* (baobab), *Anarcadium occidentale* (cashew), *Acacia*, Ebony, Neem and Mango among others. There is a marked change in the plant life of this vegetation zone during different seasons of the year. The vegetation in this area is thus open and dominated by short grasses. In the wet season, the area looks green and in the dry season, the grass dries and most of the trees shed their leaves and prone to bush fires. Human activities such as firewood harvesting, charcoal burning, farming, quarrying, construction etc. are all combined to modify the natural environment.

The Municipality lies in the Savanna high plains, which generally, is undulating with an average height between 160 and 300 m above sea level and has two main drainage systems, Sing-Bakpong and its tributaries to the South and Billi and its tributaries to the North.

The streams dry up during the long dry season thereby reducing available water for agriculture, domestic, industrial and construction users. The population of Wa is approximately 127,284 (Population and Housing Census, 2010). This constitutes l.6% change over estimated population for 2006 and gives a population density of 542 person/km2 compared to 509 in 2006.

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The various educational Institutions in the Wa Municipality are; Nurseries (78), Primary Schools (76), Junior High Schools (59), Special Schools (2), Senior High /Tech. (1), Technical /Vocational (4), SHS (6), Nursing Training College (1), Teacher Training College (1), Polytechnic (1), and University (1) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The existence of educational institutions at all levels suggests that the youth have the opportunity of getting access to education in the Wa Municipality. Of the population of up to 11 years and above, 65.2 percent are literate and 34.8 percent are non-literate. The proportion of literate males (74.1%) is higher than that of females (56.7%). It has been found that six out of ten people (60.7%) indicate they can speak and write both English and Ghanaian Languages. Of the population up to 3 years and above (48,131) in the Municipality, 22.2% has ever attended primary school in the past and 37.0% are currently attending school (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

For the country, the proportion of the population that has ever attended school is 61.2 per cent in 2000, (66.9% of males and 59.5% females). This means that the proportions who have never attended school at the national level is 38.8% (33.1% males and 44.5% females). Comparing these national figures with those for Upper West Region, one observes a very wide gap in the educational attainment between the country as a whole and the Region.

In the Region, 69.8 per cent of the population, aged 6 years and older, have never attended school (65.1% males and 73.9% females) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). This study will therefore, explore how social media influences the voting behaviour of Tertiary students.

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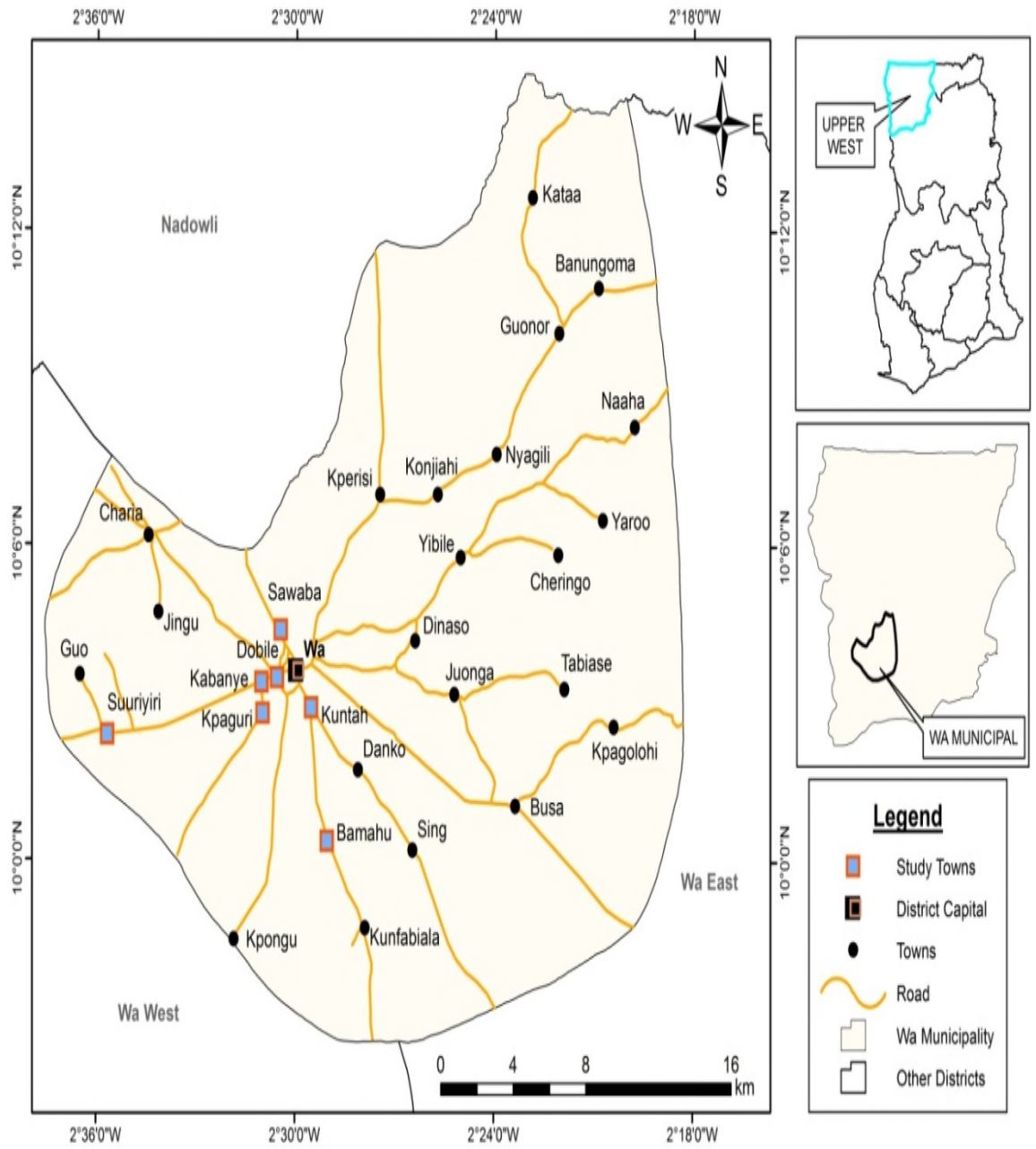
Figure 3.1: **Map of Wa Municipality Source: Cartographic Unit of the Department of Geography and Regional Planning, UCC (2016).**

3.3 Research Design

A research design, according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), refers to all the processes needed for collecting and analysing data gathered for a research. The mixed method design was adopted to serve as research design for this study. According to Creswell (2014) mixed method involves combining or integration of qualitative and quantitative research and data in a research study. Creswell (2014) indicated that there are main approaches to research and these are; exploratory sequential mixed method, explanatory sequential mixed method and convergent parallel mixed methods. All these approaches utilize qualitative and qualitative data.

Convergent parallel mixed method is a design in which the researcher converges or merges quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem (Creswell, 2014). Explanatory sequential mixed method is "one in which the researcher first conducts quantitative research, analyses the results and then builds on the results to explain them in more detail with qualitative research" (Creswell, 2014:44).

In exploratory sequential mixed methods, the researcher "first begins with a qualitative research phase and explores the views of participants" (Creswell, 2014). The data are then analysed, and the information used to build into a second, quantitative phase. Specifically, the study employed the convergent parallel mixed method design. This design was used in order to integrate quantitative and qualitative data to understand the phenomenon under study. Although time-intensive and requiring extensive data collection

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(Sharan, 2002; Creswell, 2014), the design provided a good understanding on social media and voting behaviour of Tertiary students.

Also, the rationale for a mixed design is that neither qualitative nor quantitative methods are sufficient in themselves to bring out details of the situation. Besides, qualitative and quantitative researches each have its limitations; hence, the limitations of one method can be offset by the strengths of the other method.

3.4 Study Population

Kusi (2012) defines population as a group of individuals or people with the same characteristics and in whom the research is interested. The target population is the entire group of individuals or objects to which researchers are interested in generalizing the conclusions (Agyapong and Adam, 2015). The study was limited to the Upper West Region of Ghana. The target population for the study included all tertiary institutions in the Wa Municipality of Ghana.

However, since the tertiary institutions in the region are many, the study was conducted in four tertiary institutions in the Wa Municipality. The study units include both males and females who are between the ages of 18-30; are registered voters; have participated in the 2016 general elections and are active users of social media networks.

It was restricted to second, third and final year students in the various schools. The targeted tertiary institutions for the study include the University

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for Development Studies, Wa Polytechnic, Wa Nursing Training College and the Jahan College of Education.

It also included focal persons from the two major political parties (New Patriotic Party and the National Democratic Congress) in the region who have engaged the services of party "social media committees (SMC's)" for campaigns. This helped the researcher to understand the issues from the perspective of the political parties.

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

As noted by Al-hassan (2015:37), sampling is about using some elements of a population for an experiment with the aim of drawing conclusions relevant to the entire population. A sample of 377 was used for this study. The sample size was calculated using the formula for sample size determination given by Yamane (1967). This formula allows for a geographically dispersed sample to be used with participants simultaneously responding to the study from the study area. It is given as;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N * (\alpha)^2}$$

Where n = required sample size, 1= constant, N = sample frame (2nd years and above in the four institutions= 6,414), α = level of significance or margin of error. In order to have a fair representative sample size, the sample size is determined at a 95% confidence level (at a 0.05 significance level). Thus;

$$n = \frac{6,414}{1 + 6,414(0.05)^2} = 376.9 \text{ approximately: } 377$$

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Therefore the sample size with a population of 6,414 was 377. In order to compare views from the four schools, the sample size for each of the four study areas was determined using the proportional method of sample size distribution as follows;

Table 3.1: Proportionate Distribution of Respondents

Schools	Population Size	Sample Size
UDS	4950	291
Wa Poly	455	27
JTC	900	53
WNTC	109	6
Total	**6,414**	**377**

The study also included a sample six (6) key informants as follows: New Patriotic Party (3) and the National Democratic Congress (3). Eventually the total respondents for the study were 383.

To select the sample, both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were adopted for selecting the subjects. Related to this, purposive sampling and simple random sampling methods were utilized. Purposive sampling was used to select the Tertiary Institutions in the Wa Municipality for the study.

According to Walliman (2005), purposive sampling is a useful sampling method which allows a researcher to get information from a sample of the population that one thinks knows most about the subject matter. The

rationale for the choice of the sampling method is to help select respondents who are abreast of relevant information and knowledge in the issue under study.

In purposive sampling, specific elements which satisfy some predetermined criteria are selected. Although the criteria to be used are usually a matter of the researcher's judgment, he exercises this judgment in relation to what he thinks constitutes a representative sample with respect to the research purpose. It is therefore important to recognize that the representativeness of such samples is only assumed.

When, for instance, a sample includes only those students who are registered voters and took part in the 2016 general election in Ghana, such a sample is purposive or judgmental (Nworgu, 2006). Nworgu (2006) stated further that this type of sampling is similar to quota sampling except that in purposive sampling extra care is taken to select those elements that satisfy the requirements of the research purpose. Purposive sampling is relatively cheaper and easier, and ensures that only those elements that are relevant to the research are included.

To this extent, some limitation is imposed on any generalizations made from such samples. In addition, this sampling plan requires a great deal of knowledge of the characteristics of the population. In purposive sampling, the researcher takes extra care to select those elements that satisfy the requirements of the research purpose.

The researcher used purposive sampling to select four tertiary institutions which are; the University for Development Studies, Wa

Polytechnic, Wa Nurse Training College and Jahan College of Education as well as key informants from two political parties in the region who have engaged the services of party social media committees.

A simple random sampling procedure was used for the selection of students for the study. Those who were registered voters who have participated in the 2016 general elections and are active users of social media networks were selected for the study. The researcher used this method because it represented all groups of the target population in the sample. Therefore the sampling frame was the list of students which was generated by the researcher. This was done with the aid of Ms. Excel. The random sampling also ensures high reliability of sample, high degree of representativeness, and allows for generalisation of research findings (Babbie, 2005).

This sample was used because the respondents to be selected had the desirable characteristics as well as the information needed for the study. McMillan (1996) supports this idea by stating that the sample chosen should possess the needed characteristics for a research to be conducted.

3.6 Sources of Data

The main sources of data for the study were primary and secondary sources. With regard to the primary data, the researcher used semi-structured questionnaire to collect data from respondents. For the secondary data, books, journals, electronic media were depended on for more detailed information. The secondary data provided the researcher with more information on the issue under study.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

The researcher used in-depth interview guide, semi-structured questionnaire and Focus Group Discussions to collect data from the respondents. The decision of the researcher to use a combination of tools was to integrate and triangulate responses to achieve the objectives of the study.

Interview

The face-to-face interview is the most commonly used technique for conducting a systematic inquiry and most social researchers regard it as a window on the world (Holstein and Gubrium, 1999). This study used an interview schedule which serves as a guide in conducting a face-to-face interview on the field. The respondents were engaged in a semi-standardized interview where some pre-determined questions were asked in a systematic and consistent order.

The essence of a face-to-face interaction is also to create an enabling environment for the respondent to fully participate and express concerns about the subject matter. In this study, interviews were granted to three key informants who are members of the social media committees of political parties for them to share their knowledge on the influence of their work on voting behavior of students.

Questionnaire

Questionnaire for the research was designed based on the objectives of the research. Wegner (2001) contends that the design of the questionnaire is

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critical to ensure that the correct research questions are addressed and that accurate and appropriate data are collected. In designing questionnaire for the study, it was beneficial as both qualitative data and quantitative illustrations were obtained (Bazeley, 2006; Sarantakos, 2005).

A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents in the selected institutions. Both closed-ended and open-ended questions were posed to get direct answers and also to make the respondents express their ideas on the subject under consideration. After the questionnaire was designed, it was pre-tested to make sure the questions are clear and void of any form of ambiguity and that the set of questions effectively measures the subject of interest.

According to Bush (2007) and Zikmund (2000), pre-testing is necessary because it ensures that the questions elicit the expected responses and reveal ambiguous wording or errors before the research begins. The pre-testing also helped to establish the actual time needed to administer each questionnaire.

The questionnaire were tested on ten students each from the schools in January, 2017. As suggested by Francis *et al.* (2004) conducting a pre-test with between 5-10 representative respondents is usually sufficient in identifying potential problems of a questionnaire.

Focus group discussions

Focus groups are particularly useful when there are differences in opinion between participants and decision-makers, when the culture of

particular groups is of interest, and when one wants to explore the degree of consensus on a given topic (Morgan & Kreuger 1993). Focus groups can help to develop questions or concepts for questionnaire and interview guides (Hoppe et al 1995). They are however limited in terms of their ability to generalize findings to a whole population, mainly because of the small numbers of people participating and the likelihood that the participants will not be a representative sample.

Organizing focus group interviews usually requires more planning than other types of interviewing as getting people to group gatherings can be difficult and setting up appropriate venues with adequate recording facilities requires a lot of time. The recommended number of people per group is usually six to ten (MacIntosh 1993), but some researchers have used up to fifteen people (Goss & Leinbach 1996) or as few as four (Kitzinger 1995). Owing to this, a focus group discussion was held in all four schools with eight participants.

Focus group discussions were tailored for tertiary students to obtain data and insights that could not have been obtained in one-to-one interactions. The rationale of using focus group participants was to solicit broad-based information from participants chosen from schools with concern and adequate knowledge about social media and political campaign in the study area.

Participants were at certain times allowed to go outside of the scope of the topics under discussion but only what was required was noted for further analysis. Where clarifications on aspects are needed, they were carefully asked for.

3.8 Pre-testing of Instruments

Pre-testing of instruments on a sample of respondents drawn from the target population for a study is useful in fine-tuning aspects of the questions that could otherwise make it difficult for respondents to interpret questions as intended (Foddy, 1995). Borg and Gall (1996) have stressed the need for pre-testing of instruments before administering the instruments to the respondents. This is done to help check and correct any ambiguity or wrong wording in the questionnaire.

The researcher conducted pre-testing of the instruments on 10 students each from each of the schools. The reason for pre-testing the instruments is to ascertain the validity and reliability of the instruments. It also gave the advance warnings about where the main research project could fail, where research protocols might not be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments will be inappropriate or too complicated. Finally, it was pre-tested mainly to improve the internal and content validity of the instruments. The test re-test method was used for the pre-testing of the instruments.

3.9 Data Collection Procedure

The administration of the instrument was preceded by a letter of introduction which was requested from the University for Development Studies and introducing the researcher to the respondents. The respondents were assured of confidentiality, anonymity of information given and guaranteed that information provided would only be used for academic purpose. The researcher also met one on one with respondents in their various

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departments and offices to agree on convenient time for administration of the instruments.

The main instruments for the collection of data for the study were questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide since some of the respondents did not have time to respond to the questionnaire. The researcher agreed with the respondents on the day and time when they were willing to respond to the questionnaire and grant him interview. As regards the distribution, administration and collection of the answered questionnaire, the researcher used a period of two weeks.

Some of the respondents responded to the questionnaire and others were interviewed using semi-structured questions during the field work. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents. Before the administration of the questionnaire, the rationale for the study was explained to the authorities of the various selected tertiary institutions, students' leaders and students. Copies of an introductory letter were given to the heads of institutions to study and given approval for the involvement of their students in the study.

This helped the researcher to gain the support and co-operation from respondents. The researcher was then granted permission by the authorities of the institutions and students' leaders to collect the data. The rationale for the study again was discussed after which copies of the questionnaire were given out to the respondents to respond.

The researcher took care and time to explain the questionnaire to the respondents who did not seem to understand the questions. Constant follow

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ups were made to help ensure that the respondents responded to the questionnaire in time. The data collection took two weeks and all the instruments that were retrieved from the respondents were used for the analysis.

3.10 Data Analysis

Data from the semi-structured questionnaire were coded, edited and entered to minimise errors and discrepancies that could affect the results of the study. The gathered data were analysed using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 21. Prior to analysis of the data, items that were negatively worded were first reversed so that they sit proper with the model and reduce response bias.

The Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data including means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages. According to Glass and Hopkins (1996), descriptive statistics involves tabulating, depicting, and describing collections of data. Results were presented in tables and figures with accompanying discussions to provide better and further explanations to key findings. The qualitative data were analysed through transcription and interpretations.

3.11 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

The questionnaire was pre-tested to ensure their validity and reliability where necessary, effect early modification if possible as suggested by Cooper and Schindler (2001). According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), an

instrument is valid if it measures what it is intended to measure and accurately achieves the purpose for which it was designed.

They added that validity should involve the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of inferences made by the researcher on the basis of the data collected. The researcher conducted pre-testing of the instruments on 10 students each from the schools. The reason for pre-testing the instruments is to ascertain the validity and reliability of the instruments. It also gave the advance warnings about where the main research project could fail, where research protocols might not be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments will be inappropriate or too complicated. Finally, it was pre-tested mainly to improve the internal and content validity of the instruments. The test re-test method was used for the pre-testing of the instruments.

In addition, copies of the drafted questionnaires were submitted to the supervisor to cross-check for the representativeness and completeness of items.

After the supervisor's comments and constructive criticisms, some refinements were made where necessary. Sarantakos (2007) also found that pre-tests are small tests of single elements of the research instruments, which are predominantly used to check eventual mechanical problems of the instruments.

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3.12 Ethical Issues

Ethical issues are very important in any good research. For this reason, every good academic research is the one that is done taking into consideration all the ethical issues in the study. Such research is done in an ethical manner, and this must be in line with both moral and practical issues in research (Oliver, 2003, Christians, 2005). The consent of the respondents was sought before the study was carried out. Letters were written to the various respondents seeking permission and their consent to carry out the study.

All the stakeholders and the participants were informed about the aims, purpose, likely publication of the findings of the study. Assurances were given to the participants that a copy of the final work would be made available to them upon their request.

The participants for the study were assured of anonymity and confidentiality in terms of how the findings are revealed. Participants were also assured that only pseudo names would be used and specific reference would not be made to institutions or individuals to allow anyone to discern the real persons or institutions which are being referred to in the study. However, the study remained focused on the important issues and neglected trivial issues.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the study data, present and interpret the results of the study. The purpose of the study was to examine the the influence of social media on the voting behaviour of tertiary students in the Wa Municipality of Ghana. To achieve the said objectives, the study obtained the relevant data from students as well as focal persons from the two major political parties: New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The results are presented based on the objectives of the study.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics

Below are the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 4.1: Gender of Respondents

Institutions		Gender		Total
		Male	**Female**	**Total**
UDS	f(%)	168(44.6%)	123(32.6%)	291(77.2%)
Wa Polytechnic	f(%)	11(2.9%)	16(6.2%)	27(7.2%)
Jahan College of Education	f(%)	34(9.0%)	19(5.0%)	53(14.1%)
Wa Nurses Training College	f(%)	4(1.1%)	2(0.5%)	6(1.6%)
Total	f(%)	217(57.6%)	160(42.4%)	377(100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 4.1 presents findings on the gender of respondents. The findings reveal that out of the total respondents (377), 217 (57.6%) were found to be

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males while 160 (42.4%) were females. Of this number, 291(77.2%) were students from the University for Development Studies (UDS), 27 (7.2%) were from Wa Polytechnic (WP), 53(14.1%) are from Jahan College of Education (JCoE) and 6(1.6%) were students from the Wa Nursing Training College. All these institutions are located in the Wa Municipality. Due to the proportionate nature of respondents for this study, majority (44.6%) of respondents who are males were found to be at the UDS. It should be noted that all respondents were between levels 200 and above in all four institutions.

From the table, the findings show that, male respondents outnumber their female counterparts. The difference in percentage of the male in the schools against that of females was 15.2%. The implication of this is that more males participated in this study than females. However, the researcher found that in terms of mobile phone usage both males and females have equal access. The key informants, only one respondent who happened to be part of the NDC social media/communication committee in the region was female. The rest were males (both NPP and NDC).

4.2.1 Age of Respondents

The table below show the age of the respondents.

Table 4.2: Age of Respondents

Institutions		18-20 years	21-25years	31years and above	Total
				Age Range	
UDS	f(%)	28(7.5%)	206(55.1%)	56(15.0%)	290(77.5%)
Wa Polytechnic	f(%)	4(1.1%)	13(3.5%)	9(2.4%)	26(7.0%)
Jahan College of Education	f(%)	6(1.6%)	44(11.8%)	2(0.5%)	52(13.9%)
Wa Nursing Training College	f(%)	1(0.3%)	5(1.3%)	0(0.0%)	6(1.6%)
Total	f(%)	39(10.4%)	268(71.7%)	67(17.9%)	374(100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 4.2 presents findings on the age of respondents. Soliciting information on the ages of respondents (students) was considered important due to the nature of this study. The researcher expected that exposure to social media would be high as most of the respondents are students. From the table, majority of the respondents are between age 21 and 25 years. Of this, 55.1% of them were in UDS while the least 1,3% were students of the Wa Nurses Training College. The data further revealed that from the Wa Nurses Training College, no respondent was found to be 31 years and above.

Although this can be attributed to the number of respondents expected from that school, the researcher was duly informed that none of the students per the study's focus fall within that range. The implication of these findings are that as most respondents fall within the youthful bracket, their exposure to mobile phone gadgets were other telecommunication appliances will be high.

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Hence, politicians will in any way possible forward campaign messages to them.

Also, the researcher decided to find the mean age of these students in order to confirm or otherwise earlier findings on the age of these respondents.

Table 4.2.1 Mean Age

Mean Age	Std Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
2.2540	.87084	1.00	4.00

Table 4.2.1 shows that respondents between the age bracket of 21-25 who dominated the study in the various schools have an average of 2.3.

Educational Level of Respondents

The table below shows the educational levels of the respondents.

Table 4.3: Educational Level of Respondents

		Level 200	Level 300	Level 400	Total
UDS	f(%)	151(40.1%)	62(16.4%)	76(20.2%)	291(77.2%)
Wa Polytechnic	f(%)	10(4.5%)	17(4.5%)	0(0.0%)	27(7.2%)
Jahan College of Education	f(%)	35(9.3%)	15(4.0%)	0(0.0%)	50(13.3%)
Wa Nursing Training College	f(%)	5(1.3%)	1(0.3%)	0(0.0%)	6(1.6%)
Total	f(%)	201(53.3%)	95(25.2%)	76(20.2%)	374(100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Results on the educational level of respondents are presented in table 4.3. From the table respondents from the University for Development Studies were found to be at the highest level (Level 400). This constitutes 76(20.2%)

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of the total number of respondents from UDS. This was followed by respondents from the Jahan College of Education (JCE) representing 3(0.8%). It must be noted that the Wa Polytechnic, JCE and the WNTC. Only the UDS runs a four year programme. This reflects in the data above where all respondents at that level belong to the UDS. For the third year group the findings show that 62(16.4%) of respondents belong to the UDS, 17% (4.5%) belong to the Wa Polytechnic, 15(4.0%) belong to the Jahan College of Education while only one (1) (0.3%) student was found to belong the Wa Nurses Training College (WNTC). However, results from the field show that majority of the respondents (53.3%) were in their second year.

The percentages of respondents' educational level in the four schools at the second year are shown in Table 4.3 above. They are as follows: 40.1% from UDS, 4.5% from the WA polytechnic, 9.3% from the Jahan College of Education, and 1.3% from the Wa Nurses Training College. The implication of this is that most of the respondents were in their second year at the time of the study and as such it was expected that they participated in the 2016 general elections in Ghana. The focus of this study is to look at the influence of social media on their voting behaviour, hence, their level of education reveals whether or not they understood and were influenced by social media during the elections.

Table 4.4: Voter Registration Status

Institutions		Voter Registration Status		
		Yes	**No**	**Total**
UDS	f(%)	288(77.6%)	0(0.0%)	288(77.6%)
Wa Polytechnic	f(%)	24(6.5%)	0(0.0%)	24(6.5%)
Jahan College of Education	f(%)	53(14.3%)	0(0.0%)	53(14.3%)
WNTC	f(%)	6(1.6%)	0(0.0%)	6(1.6%)
Total	f(%)	371(100.0%)	0(0.0%)	371(100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Research such as Richey (2008) and Owen (2008) emphasize the linkage between voter registration status and the influence of social media. Therefore, there was the need to ensure that respondents from the four (4) schools are registered voters and eligible to partake in parliamentary and presidential elections. Results from table 4.4 reveal that majority of the respondents from the four schools were registered voters (98.4%) while only 6(1.6%) are not registered voters. However, the study found that, for those who indicated that they were not eligible to vote were all from the UDS.

The researcher realised that they simply did not want to be associated with any political party although they were of the voting age. Six respondents failed to provide answers to this question. For those who were found to be eligible, further checks revealed that most of them were in level 200. This implies that, this group (those eligible for voting) were in a better position to provide adequate responses for this study.

4.3 Types of social media frequently used by tertiary students

This study sought to investigate the type of social media tertiary students frequently use. But first, the researcher considered access to the internet as a crucial indicator because without it is impossible to utilize any of the social media platforms like the WhatsApp, Facebook or Youtube.

The findings are presented in table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Whether respondent has access to internet

Institutions		Opinions		Total
		Yes	No	
UDS	f (%)	269(71.9%)	20(5.3%)	289(77.3%)
Wa Polytechnic	f (%)	26(7.0%)	0(0.0%)	26(7.0%)
Jahan College of Education	f (%)	44(11.8%)	9(2.4%)	53(14.2%)
WNTC	f (%)	5(1.3%)	1(0.3%)	6(1.6%)
Total	f (%)	344(92.0%)	30(8.0%)	374(100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 4.5 above shows that, 344(92%) of respondents in the four schools studied had access to the accounts with one social media platform or the other. The finding further revealed that 30(8.0%) of the respondents indicated that they did not have access to the internet. However, the researcher realised that, for those without internet access, used gadgets from their friends to access the internet.

This means that aside those who did not respond to the questions (three respondents) the rest of the students had access to the internet. Some of them

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explained that they used their mobile phones, laptops and other gadgets to access the internet. The implication of this is that majority of those who were interviewed might have received campaign messages on their social media platform, whether Facebook, Twitter, Youtube or WhatsApp. To validate the use of these platforms, the researcher proceeded to investigate the use of these social media platforms.

4.3.1 Social media used

The table below shows the social media respondents use.

Table 4.6: Social media that respondents' use

	Social media					
	Facebook	**Twitter**	**WhatsApp**	**YouTube**	**All**	**Total**
Institutions	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
UDS	77(20.5)	35(9.3)	126(33.5)	17(4.5)	36(9.6)	291(77.4)
Wa Polytechnic	6(1.6)	5(1.3)	12(3.2)	0(0.0)	4(1.1)	27(7.2)
Jahan College of Education	24(6.4)	14(3.7)	14(3.7)	0(0.0)	1(0.3)	53(14.1)
WNTC	2(0.5)	0(0.0)	3(0.8)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	5(1.3)
Total	109(29.0)	54(14.4)	155(41.2)	17(4.5)	41(10.9)	376(100.)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 4.6 presents findings on social media that respondents actually use. From the table it can be observed that majority of respondents representing 155(41.2%) use WhatsApp, 109(29%) use Facebook, 54(14.4%) use Twitter, 41(10.9%) use all platforms, while only 17(4.5%) use Youtube.

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Only one respondent from the Wa Nurses Training College did not answer this question.

However, in all 291(77.4%), 27(7.2%) and 53(14.1%) respondents from the University for Development Studies, Wa Polytechnic and the Jahan College of Education respectively answered this question. This confirms Dimitrova and Bystrom (2013) finding that the social media platforms used by students are Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Youtube. Having identified social media platforms used by students, the researcher decided to solicit their views on the platform that is mostly used. Table 4.7 presents the findings.

Table 4.7: Social Media Frequently utilized by respondent

Institutions		Facebook	Twitter	WhatsApp	Youtube	All	Total
				Utilization			
UDS	f(%)	61(16.4%)	41(11.0%)	162(43.4%)	11(2.9%)	13(3.5%)	288(77.2%)
Wa Polytechnic	f(%)	4(1.1%)	10(2.7%)	11(2.9%)	2(0.5%)	0(0.0%)	27(7.2%)
Jahan College of Education	f(%)	18(4.8%)	7(1.9%)	24(6.4%)	1(0.3%)	2(0.5%)	52(13.9%)
WNTC	f(%)	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)	4(1.1%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	6(1.6%)
Total	f(%)	84(22.5%)	59(15.8%)	201(53.9%)	14(3.8%)	15(4.0%)	373(100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 4.7 indicates that WhatsApp was the most used during the period under review. It was followed by Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. From the table it can be observed that majority of respondents representing 201(53.9%) use WhatsApp, 84(22.5%) use Facebook, and while 59(15.8%) use Twitter, 15(4.0%) use all platforms. All respondents from the four schools provided answers to this question.

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The use of WhatsApp as a leading social media platform confirms data from the committee members of the various political parties (New Patriotic Party and the National Democratic Congress). A member of the committee who belonged to the NPP asserted,

"As politicians we need to be strategic in sending our message across. As you can see most tertiary students have mobile phones and have internet access. That is why we send our messages mostly through whatsApp as most of them are on it".

This confirms Saune and Murdock (2013) assertion of WhatsApp as the leading social media platform in terms of usage.

4.4 Extent to which various political parties employed social media in convincing tertiary students to vote for these parties

To examine the extent to which various political parties employed social media in convincing tertiary students to vote, the researcher first investigated the membership status of respondents to any political party in Ghana. Table 4.8 presents findings on this.

4.4.1 Membership of political part

The table below show membership of respondents to political parties.

Table 4.8: Membership to any political party

Institutions		Yes	No	Total
		Membership		
UDS	f (%)	205(54.4%)	86(22.8%)	291(77.2%)
Wa Polytechnic	f (%)	19(5.0%)	8(2.1%)	27(7.2%)
Jahan College of Education	f (%)	37(9.8%)	16(4.2%)	53(14.1%)
WNTC	f (%)	4(1.1%)	2(0.5%)	6(1.6%)
Total	f (%)	265(70.3%)	112(29.7%)	377(100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Findings from Table 4.8 above reveal that majority of respondents representing 70.3% are affiliated to political parties be it NPP, NDC, PPP,or PNC amongst others. Of the total number of respondents, only 29.7% asserted that they did not possess membership cards of political parties and hence, cannot be described as members of existing parties. In the course of this study, the researcher asked respondents who belong to political parties to indicate their motive for joining these parties. Responding to this, most of them maintained that, they joined due to the hope of getting jobs after successful completion of their tertiary education.

4.4.2 Political party Affiliation

The table below shows the political party affiliation of the respondents.

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Table 4.9: Political Party Affiliation

Institutions		NPP	NDC	PPP	Total
		Affiliation			
UDS	f (%)	136(46.4%)	88(30.0%)	3(1.0%)	227(77.5%)
Wa Polytechnic	f (%)	10(3.4%)	11(3.8%)	0(0.0%)	21(7.2%)
Jahan College of Education	f (%)	21(7.2%)	20(6.8%)	0(0.0%)	41(14.0%)
WNTC	f (%)	4(1.4%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	4(1.45)
Total	f (%)	171(58.4%)	119(40.6)	3(1.0%)	293(100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 4.9 presents findings on political party (specific) affiliation of respondents from the four schools. About 58% of respondents indicated their affiliation to the New Patriotic Party (NPP), 41% to the National Democratic Congress (NDC), 1% to the Progressive Peoples Party (PPP). No respondent indicated their affiliation to either the Convention Peoples Party (CPP), or PNC, among others. Some respondents attributed their affiliations to unavailability of jobs, poverty at the household level, general dissatisfaction to the ruling party, change of government among others.

However, it was expected per the sampled respondents that respondents from the UDS who either belong to a political party or not will form the majority (77.5%). Further, respondent s who indicated their affiliation to the PPP were all from the University for Development Studies (UDS). One of them had this to say, *"we have tested both the NDC and the NPP, I think it is time to give another group a chance to see what they have to offer. All we want is a*

better Ghana and that is all". Another level 300 student also attributed her affiliation to the PPP to the exemplary life of its founder. The student maintained that the PPP aspirant is the only one (aspirant) who gave prompt messages of their party activities on social media, particularly WhatsApp and had established banks across the country for the unbanked to also have access to banking. The findings also reveal that even for those who previously indicated their non-affiliation to any political party, it was mainly due to the lack of opportunity to register and own a membership card and not any other reason.

4.4.3 Political party respondents for voted

The table below shows the political party respondents voted for during the 2016 general election.

Table 4.10: Political Party Respondent Voted for during 2016 Elections

Institutions		NPP	NDC	CPP	PPP	Other (s)	Total
				Responses			
UDS	f(%)	137(43.5%)	85(27.0%)	14(4.4%)	2(0.6%)	1(0.3%)	239(75.9%)
Wa Polytechnic	f(%)	9(2.9%)	15(4.8%)	1(0.3%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	25(7.9%)
Jahan College of Education	f(%)	25(7.9%)	20(6.3%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	2(0.6%)	47(14.9%)
WNTC	f(%)	4(1.3%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	4(1.3%)
Total	f(%)	175(55.6%)	120(38.1%)	15(4.8%)	2(0.6%)	3(1.0%)	315(100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 4.10 presents findings on political party respondent voted for. Responding to this, 55.6% reported that they voted for the NPP, 38.1% maintained that they voted for the NDC, 4.8% of respondents reported that they voted for the CPP, 0.6% said they voted for the PPP while 1% indicated that they voted for other parties other than the NPP, NDC, CPP and the PPP.

Sixty-two respondents did not answer this question. For those who voted for the NPP, they attributed their vote to innovative policies like the One-Village, One Dam Project, One million Dollar per constituency, National Identification card, restoration of trainee allowance for Teachers and Nurses to mention but a few. Those who voted for the NDC also attributed it to 'massive' infrastructural development and certain promises. Some respondents from the Jahan College of Education and the Wa Nurses Training College who voted for the NPP said they voted mainly because the NPP promised to restore their scrapped allowances. These findings may have impacted on the general election that took place in December 2016.

4.4.4 Main source of political campaign messages 2016

Thee table blow show the main source of political campaign messages during the 2016 general elections.

Table 4.11: Main Source of Political Campaign Message in the run-up to the 2016 Elections

Institutions		Political Parties	House to house campaigns	Mass media	Social media	Family and Friends	Other	Total
				Responses				
UDS	f (%)	54(14.9%)	47(13.0%)	77(21.3%)	69(19.1%)	31(8.6%)	4(1.1%)	282(77.9%)
Wa Polytechnic	f (%)	6(1.7%)	5(1.4%)	6(1.7%)	9(2.5%)	1(0.3%)	0(0.0%)	27(7.5%)
Jahan College of Education	f (%)	14(3.9%)	10(2.8%)	6(1.7%)	13(3.6%)	4(1.1%)	2(0.6%)	49(13.5%)
WNTC	f (%)	1(0.3%)	0(0.0%)	1(0.3%)	2(0.6%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	4(1.1%)
Total	f (%)	75(20.7%)	62(17.1%)	90(24.9%)	93(25.7%)	36(9.9%)	6(1.7%)	362(100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The study also sought to assess the main sources from which political party campaign message came from. The sources are political parties, house to house campaigns, mass media, social media, family and friends and others. However, the findings from the four schools revealed that, 93(25.7%), 90(24.9%), 75(20.7%), 62(17.1%) and 36(9.9%) of respondents identified social media, mass media, political parties, house to house campaigns and 36(9.9%). From this finding, it can be deduced that social media is the main source of political party campaign messages to tertiary students.

4.4.5 Extent to which political parties employed Social Media in Convincing Tertiary Students.

The table below shows the extent to which political parties employed Social Media in convincing tertiary students during 2016.

Table 4.12: Extent to which Political Parties employed SM in convincing Tertiary Students

Institutions		Not at all	Little	Extensively	Very extensively	Total
UDS	f (%)	27(7.6%)	61(17.1%)	103(28.9%)	80(22.5%)	1(0.3%)
Wa Polytechnic	f (%)	2(0.6%)	7(2.0%)	13(3.7%)	5(1.4%)	0(0.0%)
Jahan College of Education	f (%)	3(0.8%)	6(1.7%)	22(6.2%)	20(5.6%)	1(0.3%)
WNTC	f (%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	3(0.8%)	2(0.6%)	0(0.0%)
Total	f (%)	32(9.0%)	74(20.8%)	141(39.6%)	107(30.1%)	2(0.6%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 4.12 presents findings on the extent to which political parties employed social media in convincing Tertiary students to vote. It was found that 141(39.6%) of respondents reported that political parties extensively use social media to convince tertiary students to vote for their parties. Also, 107(30.1%) of respondents from the four schools (UDS, Wa Polytechnic, Jahan College of Education and the Wa Nursing Training College) reported that political parties employ social media very extensively. Furthermore, 74(20.8%) of respondents maintained that political parties employ social media in convincing electorates little while only 32(9%) respondents asserted that they have no idea and that parties did utilize social media at all. They also maintained that their votes were not in any way informed by messages from social media platforms.

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4.5. Messages which political parties communicated on Social Media platform for the benefit of tertiary students

The table below show the Messages which political parties communicated on Social Media platform for the benefit of tertiary students during the 2016 general election.

Table 4.13: Whether respondent received social media message from any Political Party during 2016 elections

Institutions		Responses		
		Yes	No	Total
UDS	f (%)	205(55.3%)	81(21.8%)	286(77.1%)
Wa Polytechnic	f (%)	16(4.3%)	11(3.0%)	27(7.3%)
Jahan College of Education	f (%)	38(10.2%)	14(3.8%)	52(14.0%)
WNTC	f (%)	4(1.1%)	2(0.5%)	6(1.6%)
Total	f (%)	263(70.9%)	108(29.1%)	371(100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 4.13 illustrate findings on whether or not respondents actually received social media messages from any political party during the 2016 elections. It was considered necessary to solicit information concerning social media messages that respondents received because as indicated by Owen (2008) social media messages received have the tendency of convincing recipients, hence, will enable the author to establish its effects on voting behaviour. The study found that majority of the respondents representing 70.0% reported they received social media messages from political parties

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during the 2016 general elections. About 29% indicated that they did not receive message from any social media platform during the 2016 elections.

4.5.1 The Political Party from which respondent received social media message

The table below shows the Political Party from which respondent received social media message during the 2016 general elections.

Table 4.14: Political Party from which respondent received social media message

Institutions		Responses NPP	NDC	CPP	PPP	PNC	Other	Total
UDS	f(%)	151(54.9%)	49(17.8%)	3(1.1%)	2(0.7%)	2(0.7%)	9(3.3%)	216(78.5%)
Wa Polytechnic	f(%)	9(3.3%)	4(1.5%)	0(0.0%)	1(0.4%)	1(0.4%)	0(0.0%)	15(5.5%)
Jahan College of Education	f(%)	26(9.5%)	11(4.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	3(1.1%)	40(14.5%)
WNTC	f(%)	4(1.5%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	4(1.5%)
Total	f(%)	190(69.1%)	64(23.3%)	3(1.1%)	3(1.1%)	3(1.1%)	12(4.4%)	275(100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

From table 4.14, the study found that most of the social media messages were received from the New Patriotic Party (NPP). This represents 69% of the entire views from total respondents. Following this is the NDC representing 23.3% while other political parties other than the NPP, NDC, CPP, PPP and the PNC. However, the least political parties from which campaign messages were received are the CPP, PPP and the PNC.

A respondent from the UDS had this to say;

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"*Since I belong to the NPP, I received most of the messages relating to the elections on WhatsApp. Sometimes I receive those messages on Twitter. The campaign messages were all sent through that platform*". Another respondent from the Wa Polytechnic indicated that, "*Although there are at times network challenges; I receive all social media updates from WhatsApp*"(FGD,2017).

From the Wa Nurses Training College (WNTC) a respondent indicated that she always read messages sent on Twitter although she did not visit those messages frequently.

4.5.2 Social Media Platform from which respondent received messages

The table below shows the Social Media Platform from which respondent received messages during the 2016 general election.

Table 4.15: Social Media Platform from which respondent received messages

Institutions	Opinions						Total
	Facebook	**Twitter**	**WhatsApp**	**Youtube**	**All**	**None**	**Total**
UDS	55(17.0%)	11(3.4%)	138(42.6%)	2(0.6%)	21(6.5%)	29(9.0%)	256(79.0%)
Wa Polytechnic	4(1.2%)	1(0.3%)	10(3.1%)	2(0.6%)	2(0.6%)	1(0.3%)	20(6.2%)
Jahan College of Education	13(4.0%)	4(1.2%)	18(5.6%)	2(0.6%)	0(0.0%)	6(1.9%)	43(13.3%)
WNTC	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)	2(0.6%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(0.3%)	5(1.5%)
Total	73(22.5%)	17(5.2%)	168(51.9%)	6(1.9%)	23(7.1%)	37(11.4%)	324(100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Findings from Table 4.15 indicate that majority of the respondents from the four schools representing 168(51.9%) received messages on WhatsApp, 73(22.5%) Facebook, 37(11.4%) through none of these platforms, 23(7.1%) receive the message through all these platforms while 17(5.2%) receive the message through Twitter. 53 respondents from the four schools (UDS, WP, JCE and the WNTC) did not provide answers to this question.

The use of WhatsApp as a leading social media platform confirms data from a committee member from the National Democratic Congress (NDC) who maintained that:

> *"WhatsApp has been the norm when it comes to relaying of information from the party to electorates including students". Another committee member reiterated that since most students are using mobile phones it is very easy to use the most accessible platform. That is why we send our messages mostly through whatsApp".*

This agrees with Saune and Murdock (2013) position on the utilization of WhatsApp during election periods.

4.5.3 Messages Delivered through Social Media

The table below shows the messages delivered through social media to the benefits of tertiary students during the 2016 general election.

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Table 4.16: Messages Delivered through Social Media

Political Party	Social media use	Message Delivered
NPP	Facebook	Vote Nana for change; NPP's transformation plan; National ID for every Ghanaian
	Twitter	One district, one factory; Goods Education
	WhatsApp	For Jobs; Free SHS; one village, one dam; restoration of allowances; One million dollar per constituency; Better NHIS; Better salaries
	Youtube	Video on campaign, songs
NDC	Facebook	Pictures of infrastructural development, video uploads and songs of Shata Wale-musician.
	Twitter	Vote for continuity, Infrastructural development
	Whatsapp	Change is happening already; infrastructural development
	Youtube	Video against the opposition-NPP (Akuffo Addo)
CPP	Facebook	The time for change is now
	Twitter	-
	WhatsApp	Vote CPP for transformation.
	Youtube	
PPP	Facebook	Vote Nduom for jobs
	Twitter	-
	WhatsApp	Progressive free education
	Youtube	Video on entrepreneurial projects

PNC	Facebook	-
	Twitter	-
	WhatsApp	Vote PNC for transformation and change
	Youtube	-
Other (s)	Facebook	-
	Twitter	No response
	WhatsApp	Do not waste your vote
	Youtube	-

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The study also solicited views on the actual messages which political parties communicated on social media platforms. These messages were received by respondents on Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and YouTube. Some messages received from the NPP as reported by respondents were; "vote Nana for change; NPP's transformation plan; National ID for every Ghanaian; One district; one factory, Good Education; For Jobs, Free SHS, one village; one dam, restoration of allowances, One million dollar per constituency, Better NHIS, Better salaries. The researcher believes that these messages vis-à-vis the reality of economic conditions and living standards may have worked for the New Patriotic Party (NPP) due to the wide access to these media platforms. This was confirmed by the head of the social media committee of the NPP.

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On the part of the NDC, respondents indicated having received the following messages: Pictures of infrastructural development; video uploads and songs of Shata Wale- a musician; Vote for continuity; Infrastructural development; and video against the opposition-NPP (Akuffo Addo). Most of the respondents from the four institutions reported that these messages were not "real" and adequate enough to convince them to vote for the NDC during the 2016 elections. One respondent from the Wa Polytechnic indicated that, "I am a member of the NDC but I did not vote for the party due to current challenges in the country. My elder brother finished school over two years ago and is still unemployed. Although I voted for the NPP, I am yet to join them officially". Others, also believe that the NDC lost because they failed to tackle corruption in the country. Some also held the view that the government was simply insensitive to the plight of Ghanaians and hence, there were not in any way convinced by the messages that they shared on Youtube, Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. Although some party faithful who were students denied these claims during a Focus Group Discussion, the researcher concluded that these views really impacted on the outcome of the Presidential and Parliamentary elections.

For the CPP these messages were recorded; "the time for change is now; vote CPP for transformation. For the PPP, messages such as "vote Nduom for jobs"; and "Progressive free education". For the PNC, messages such as "vote PNC for transformation and change while for other parties it was

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about not wasting your vote. Like the NPP supporters, these respondents were found supporting the same course of "CHANGE" in government due to economic woes. These findings imply that respondents who voted for these parties were in one way or the other influenced by the messages that they received on social media.

The study also found that about 43% of respondents from the four schools maintained that they received social media messages very often on their phones and other gadgets. Only 11.5% of respondents indicated that they did not receive the messages very often. Upon investigation, some of the respondents told the researcher that their friends at certain times forwarded these messages to them through similar platforms. For instance, a message received on WhatsApp would be forwarded to another person through a group chat/platform. Findings on this are presented in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17: How often Campaign message was received

Institutions	Opinions					
	Very often	**Quite often**	**Often**	**Not Often**	**Not at all often**	**Total**
UDS	120(33.5%)	59(16.5%)	39(10.9%)	27(7.5%)	31(8.7%)	276(77.1%)
Wa Polytechni	9(2.5%)	4(1.1%)	6(1.7%)	2(0.6%)	6(1.7%)	27(7.5%)
Jahan College Education	21(5.9%)	9(2.5%)	8(2.2%)	8(2.2%)	4(1.1%)	50(14.0%)
WNTC	3(0.8%)	1(0.3%)	0(0.0%)	1(0.3%)	0(0.0%)	5(1.4%)
Total	153(42.7%)	73(20.4%)	53(14.8%)	38(10.6%)	41(11.5%)	358(100%)

Source: Field S

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Although noted that social media offer participatory democracy at its best, the technologies through this study also promote transparency and greater accuracy in the political process They also facilitate speedy release of election results, among others. Undoubtedly, the mass media in Ghana has come of age and the use of internet technology in electioneering campaign has further widened political participation among Ghanaian youths, particularly students.

4.6 Challenges that political parties encounter in using Social Media for Campaign Communication

The study also sought to explore the challenges that political parties encounter in using social media for communicating campaign messages. Research such as Ghiuţă (2014) and Heran (2004) emphasized certain critical challenges that political parties face using social media. Against this backdrop, the researcher decided to explore these challenges in order to establish whether or not efforts at reaching the electorates by politicians are hindered by certain factors. Table 18 shows whether or not respondents encountered certain challenges.

Table 4.18: Whether respondents faced challenges in accessing SM information from any political party

Institutions		Yes	No	Total
UDS	f (%)	43(11.9%)	235(65.0%)	278(76.8%)
Wa Polytechnic	f (%)	4(1.1%)	23(6.4%)	27(7.5%)
Jahan College of Education	f (%)	11(3.0%)	41(11.3%)	52(14.4%)
WNTC	f (%)	2(0.6%)	3(0.8%)	5(1.4%)
Total	f (%)	60(16.6%)	302(83.4%)	362(100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

About 83% of the respondents asserted that they did not encounter any challenge when receiving messages from political parties. Albeit, only 16.6% of the total respondents reported that they faced certain challenges accessing these messages.

The findings from Figure 4.1 indicates that 55% believe social media were used to attack opponents during the 2016 electioneering, 20% said the technology was used to spread hate and inciting messages and 17% believe they were used to spread false information. Also, 3% said the platforms were used to manipulate images, messages and videos while 10% did not answer the question. The study also found that majority of the respondents from the UDS, Wa Poly, Wa Nurses Training College and the Jahan College of Education agree that using social media is not without of challenges but it all depends on the motive for using the platforms.

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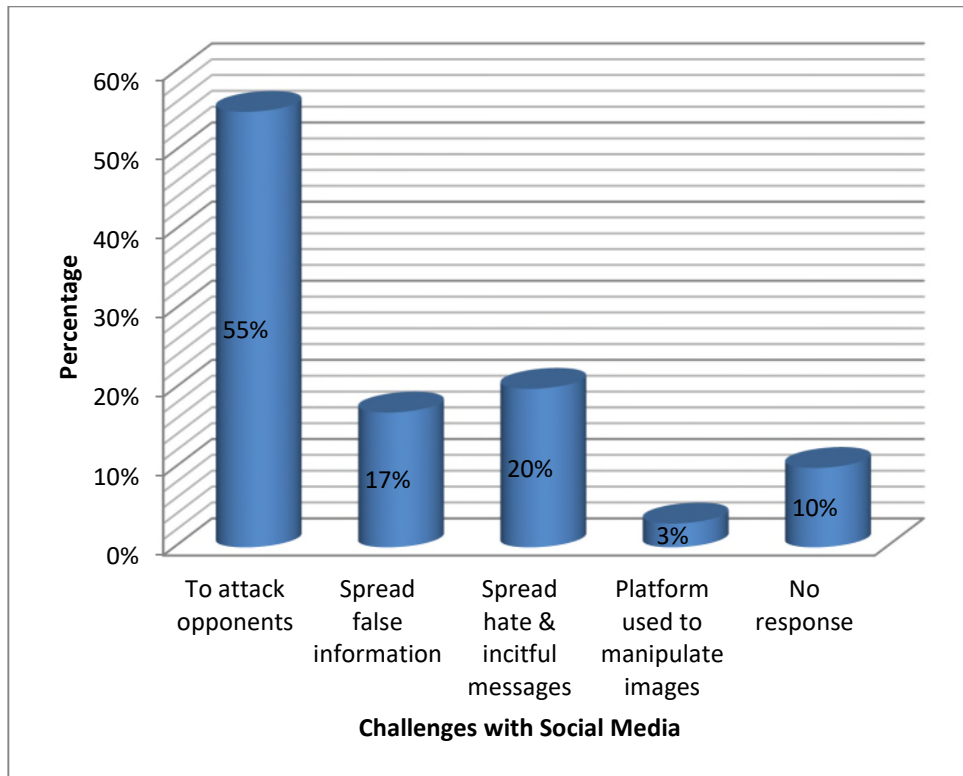
Figure 4.1 Ranking of Challenges
Source: Field Survey, 2017

To sum up, whereas many used the technology wisely to campaign for their various candidates, interact with candidates and electorates one-on-one, report happenings in their areas/polling centres during the elections and electioneering period, share personal views and gauge public opinions on the various candidates; others used it to attack opponents; spread false rumours, hate and inciting messages, and digitally manipulate images, messages and videos. Others also revealed hacking into people's accounts to commit all manner of fraud and launch spam and virus attacks on opponents' information, and make users fall prey to online scams that seemed genuine, resulting in several data and identity thefts.

4.7 Extent to which Tertiary students based their voting patterns on messages from Social Media

The last objective of the study was to examine the extent to which tertiary students based their voting patterns on messages from social media. Table 4.19 presents findings on the extent to which campaign messages influenced respondent's voting behaviour.

4.7.1 Extent to which campaign messages influenced respondent's voting behaviour

The table below shows the extent to which campaign messages influenced respondent's voting behaviour during the 2016 general elections.

Table 4.19: Extent to which campaign messages influenced respondent's voting behaviour

Institutions		No influence	Low Influence	Moderate	High influence	Very high influence	Total
				Responses			
UDS	f (%)	82(23.3%)	44(12.5%)	86(24.4%)	23(6.5%)	35(9.9%)	270(76.7%)
Wa Polytechnic	f (%)	6(1.7%)	7(2.0%)	14(4.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	27(7.7%)
Jahan College of Education	f (%)	16(4.5%)	11(3.1%)	18(5.1%)	3(0.9%)	2(0.6%)	50(14.2%)
WNTC	f (%)	1(0.3%)	0(0.0%)	2(0.6%)	2(0.6%)	0(0.0%)	5(1.4%)
Total	f (%)	105(29.8%)	62(17.6%)	120(34.1%)	28(8.0%)	37(10.0%)	352(100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

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Table 4.19 presents findings on the extent to which campaign messages influenced respondents voting behaviour. It was found that 120(34.1%) of the respondents reported that the influence was very moderate. Also, 105(29.8%) of respondents from the four schools (UDS, Wa Polytechnic, Jahan College of Education and the WNTC) reported that there was no influence that social media messages had on their voting behaviour. Furthermore, 62(17.6%) of respondents maintained that the influence from social media was low.

However, 37(10%) of the respondents asserted that the influence of social media on them was very high. They also maintained that their votes were influenced solely by messages from social media platforms. Those who maintained this stance were students from the UDS (9.9) and the Jahan College of Education (0.6%). No student from the Wa Polytechnic and the Wa Nurses Training College reported that social media messages influenced their voting behaviour significantly.

Importantly, the researcher concludes that social media messages influence voting behaviour of electorates one way or the other. In the light of this, the researcher asked respondents to rank political parties based on social media messages. The order was NPP, NDC, CPP, PPP, PNC and the other political parties.

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4.7.2 Ranking: NPP Use of Social Media

The table below ranking of NPP use of social media during the 2016 general elections.

Table 4.20: Ra   Use of SM

Institutions			Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Total
					Responses			
UDS	ƒ (	%)	7(1.9%)	14(3.9%)	30(8.3%)	74(20.4%)	151(41.7%)	282(77.9%)
Wa Polytechnic	ƒ (	%)	0(0.0%)	1(0.3%)	3(0.8%)	6(1.7%)	14(3.9%)	24(6.6%)
Jahan College of Education	ƒ (	%)	6(1.7%)	2(0.6%)	10(2.8%)	8(2.2%)	25(6.9%)	51(14.1%)
WNTC	ƒ (	%)	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)	0(0.0%)	1(0.3%)	2(0.6%)	5(1.4%)
Total	ƒ (%)	6(1.7%)	14(3.9%)	18(5.05)	43(11.9%)	89(24.6%)	192(53.0%)	362(100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Ranking for the NPPs (with Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo Addo as aspirant and flag bearer) use of social media is presented in Table 4.20. The findings reveal that majority of respondents representing 53% ranked the NPP very high for using social media to relay their campaign message. About 25% ranked them high, 12% ranked them moderate, 5% ranked them low while about 2% did not rank them at all with the explanation that they did not see any message that was posted by the NPP. In all, 362(100%) of respondents from the four schools (UDS, Wa Polytechnic, Jahan College of Education and the WNTC) answered this question.

They also maintained that informants in the form of party agents regularly came around before the elections to reiterate messages already posted through social media. Some respondents reported that the NPP used WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook to inform their supporters on activities of the party. Furthermore, one respondent from the Wa Polytechnic in a Focus Group Discussion emphasized that;

> *"The NPP did well, they always inform us of programmes and changes with regards to youth and party agent role in the elections and aftermath of the elections. I often share the information that I receive with my roommates to bring them to speed on party programmes since some of them are not using WhatsApp. I must say the NPP did very well for informing students on party issues (FGD, 2017)".*

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4.7.3 Ranking: NDC of use of social media

The table be   e ranking of NDC use of social media during the 2016 general elections

Table 4.21: Ra   Use of SM

Institutions	No	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Total
UDS	5(1.4%)	6(1.7%)	23(6.4%)	52(14.5%)	69(19.2%)	122(34.0%)	277(77.2%)
Wa Polytechni	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	4(1.1%)	2(0.6%)	7(1.9%)	13(3.6%)	26(7.2%)
Jahan College of Education	1(0.3%)	6(1.7%)	5(1.4%)	3(0.8%)	14(3.9%)	22(6.1%)	51(14.2%)
WNTC	0(0.0%)	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)	5(1.4%)
Total	6(1.7%)	13(3.6%)	33(9.2%)	58(16.2%)	91(25.3%)	158(44.0%)	359(100%))

(Responses)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

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Rankings for the NDC are also presented in Table 4.21. The findings show that 44% ranked the NDC very high, 25% ranked them high, 16% ranked them moderate while only 9.2% ranked them low in using social media. Since the National Democratic Congress (NDC) was the ruling government before the elections, it was imperative to compare these rankings with the main opposition party which was the New Patriotic Party (NPP) before the elections.

As indicated earlier, the NPP had 53%. However, comparing these findings with the NDC means that some followers of the NDC (with President John Dramani Mahama as aspirant) including virtual communities on social media platforms were not in full support of the party. This may have resulted in the main ruling party going back into opposition.

4.7.4 Ranking: CPP use of social media.

The table below shows the ranking of CPP use of social media during the 2016 general elections

Table 4.22: Ranking: CPP Use of SM

Inst		No	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Total
								Ranking: CPP Use of SM
UDS		29(8.2%)	50(14.2%)	68(19.3%)	91(25.8%)	32(9.1%)	4(1.1%)	274(77.6%)
Wa Poly		3(0.8%)	3(0.8%)	7(2.0%)	5(1.4%)	5(1.4%)	0(0.0%)	23(6.5%)
Jaha Coll Edu		8(2.3%)	8(2.3%)	14(4.0%)	10(2.8%)	7(2.0%)	4(1.1%)	51(14.4%)
WN		0(0.0%)	1(0.3%)	2(0.6%)	2(0.6%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	5(1.4%)
Tota		40(11.3%)	62(17.6%)	91(25.8%)	108(30.6%)	44(12.5%)	8(2.3%)	353(100%)

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Source: 2017

esents findings on ranking of the CPP as a political party employing social media in convincing tertiary students to vote. Compared to the NPP and the NDC, it was found that only 8(2.3%) of respondents ranked the CPP very high for using social media. Also, 62(17.6%) of respondents from the four schools (UDS, Wa Polytechnic, Jahan College of Education and the WNTC) ranked the CPP very low in using social media. Notwithstanding the nationwide tour that the flag bearer of the party

Dr. Ivor Greenstreet, undertook, supporters and the virtual community on social media indicated that they did not receive messages from the party.

The study also found that some of these respondents (those belonging to CPPs WhatsApp platforms) were from the NDC and the NPP. One respondent from the UDS said that; "*I am a member of the CPP but I do not think our party people send us any serious messages on social media. In fact it was difficult for me to believe we could win the election*". Another respondent who was in level 400 from the UDS reported that; "*I was added to about three political parties platform on WhatsApp but I don't think CPP sent any message. It was all about their tour and nothing serious was heard. For me I recommend they merge with other parties like the NPP or the PPP*". These imply that the CPP did not do well in sending social media messages to party followers and virtual communities.

4.7.4 Ranking: PPP use of social media.
The table below shows the ranking of NPP use of social media during the 2016 general elections.

Table 4.23: Ranking: PPP Use of SM

Institu		No	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Total
		Ranking: PPP Use of SM						
UDS		39(11.5%)	47(13.8%)	72(21.2%)	68(20.0%)	28(8.2%)	7(2.4%)	262(77.1%)
Wa Polytec		3(0.9%)	3(0.9%)	6(1.8%)	9(2.6%)	2(0.6%)	1(0.3%)	24(7.1%)
Jahan College Educati		8(2.4%)	4(1.2%)	10(2.9%)	17(5.0%)	5(1.5%)	4(1.2%)	48(14.1%)
WNTC		0(0.0%)	2(0.65)	0(0.0%)	1(0.3%)	3(0.9%)	0(0.0%)	6(1.8%)
Total		50(14.7%)	56(16.5%)	88(25.9%)	95(27.9%)	38(11.2%)	13(3.95)	340(100%)

Source: , 2017

esi Nduom's Progressive Peoples' Party (PPP) was also ranked very high with only 3.95%. 95(27.2%) of respon nked the party, 88(25.9%) ranked them low. Although the Progressive Peoples' Party (PPP) came out third in the Presidential elections, it can be concluded that messages on social media may have played a crucial role in this. As 50(14.7%) of respondents maintained that the party deserved no rank at all.

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4.7.5 Ranking: PNC use of social media.

The table below shows the ranking of PNC use of social media during the 2016 general elections

Table 4.24: Ra ... **Use of SM**

Institutions	Ranking: PNC Use of SM					
	No	**Very Low**	**Low**	**Moderate**	**High**	**Very High**
UDS	65(19.0%)	112(32.7%)	53(15.5%)	25(7.3%)	6(1.8%)	2(0.6%)
Wa Polytechni	7(2.0%)	3(0.9%)	10(2.9%)	3(0.9%)	1(0.3%)	0(0.0%)
Jahan College Education	13(3.8%)	21(6.1%)	9(2.6%)	3(0.9%)	3(0.9%)	0(0.0%)
WNTC	1(0.3%)	3(0.9%)	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)
Total	86(25.1%)	139(40.6%)	73(21.3%)	32(9.4%)	10(2.9%)	2(0.6%)

Source: Field S

On the part of Dr. Edward Mahama's Peoples National Convention, only 2(0.6%) of respondents ranked the party's use of social media very high. Findings from the four schools (UDS, Wa Polytechnic, Jahan College of Education and the WNTC) also revealed that as

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many as 139(40.6%) of the respondents ranked the PNC very low in terms of social media coverage. This may have impacted negatively on the outcome for the party the 2016 general elections

4.7.6 Ranking: Other(s) Political Parties

The table below shows the ranking of other(s) political parties use of social media during the 2016 general elections

Table 4.25: Ranking: Other(s) Political Parties

Institutions		No	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
UDS	f (%)	46(27.4%)	33(19.6%)	20(11.9%)	20(11.9%)	1(0.6%)	4(2.4%)
Wa Polytechnic	f (%)	2(1.2%)	0(0.0%)	5(3.0%)	1(0.6%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)
Jahan College of Education	f (%)	8(4.8%)	17(10.1%)	4(2.4%)	2(1.2%)	1(0.6%)	0(0.0%)
WNTC	f (%)	1(0.6%)	3(1.8%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)
Total	f (%)	57(33.9%)	53(31.5%)	29(17.3%)	23(13.7%)	2(1.2%)	4(2.4%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Prior to the 2016 elections, the Electoral Commission (EC) suspended certain parties like the NDP, APC and the GCPP. Therefore, it was expected that the electorates could make the right choice. Against this backdrop, only one independent party sailed through. This was Jacob Osei Yeboah's Independent candidate.

Findings from Table 4.25 show that 52(31.5%) of respondents from the four schools ranked the independent candidate as very low in terms of social

media usage. Only, 4(2.4%) of respondents ranked the party's used of social media very high. The implication of this is that, the probability of voting for the NPP or the NDC will be high.

4.7.7 Social Media was very influential in Voting Decisions

The table below shows how social media was very influential in Voting Decisions of tertiary students during the 2016 general election.

Table 4.26: SM was very influential in Voting Decisions

Institutions		Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Somewhat agreed	Disagreed	Completely Disagreed	Total
		Opinions					
UDS	Freq.	100(27.5%)	65(17.9%)	35(9.6%)	49(13.5%)	29(8.0%)	278(76.6%)
Wa Polytechnic	Freq.	8(2.2%)	11(3.0%)	4(1.1%)	4(1.1%)	0(0.0%)	27(7.4%)
Jahan College of Education	Freq.	24(6.6%)	16(4.4%)	7(1.9%)	5(1.4%)	0(0.0%)	52(14.3%)
WNTC	Freq.	2(0.6%)	3(0.8%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(0.3%)	6(1.7%)
Total	Freq.	134(36.9%)	95(26.2%)	46(12.7%)	58(16.0%)	30(8.3%)	363(100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 4.26 presents findings on respondents' opinion as to whether social media was very influential in voting decisions. It was found that 134(36.9%) of respondents strongly agree social media was very influential in their voting decisions. Also, 95(26.2%) of respondents from the four schools (UDS, Wa Polytechnic, Jahan College of Education and the WNTC) reported that they agree social media was very influential in their voting decisions.

Furthermore, 46(12.7%) of respondents maintained that they somewhat agree while only 58(16%) of respondents asserted that they disagreed with the

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assertion. However, 30(8.3%) of respondents from the schools completely disagree that social media was very influential in their voting decisions. The implication of these findings from Table 4.26 is that regardless of the type or kind of social media platform, they influence voter behaviour.

4.8 Summary of Findings

This chapter focused on the results and discussion from data collected from the field. The analysis revealed that messages shared from social media indeed impacted on the outcome of the 2016 elections. Although the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) are considered major political parties in Ghana, the findings reveal that the NPP benefited most drawing from the kind of information shared.

However, there are some challenges like using social media to attack opponents, spreading false information, and platform used to manipulate images among others as discussed above. A summary of the findings, conclusion and recommendations have been presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the influence of social media on the voting behaviour of tertiary students in the Wa Municipality of Ghana was dealt with. This chapter presents a summary of the major findings, conclusions and recommendations. It also suggests areas of further research on the study carried out to evaluate the critical influence of social media on voting behaviour.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study examined the influence of social media on the voting behaviour of tertiary students in the Wa Municipality of Ghana. Having reviewed related literature, the methodology was linked to the theoretical framework which is hinged on the influence of social media on voting behaviour. Respondents were selected through a purposive and random sampling procedure. Analysis was done through an exploratory sequential approach with the aid of transcriptions and interpretations in relation to qualitative data. Analysed data were presented in tables and figures, with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v. 21). The main findings are summarized as follows:

5.2.1 Types of social media frequently used by tertiary students

Some of them explained that they use their mobile phones, laptops and other gadgets to access the internet. The implication of this is that majority of those who were interviewed might have received campaign messages on their social media platform, that is Facebook, Twitter, Youtube or WhatsApp. WhatsApp was identified as the most frequently used social media tool.

5.2.2 Extent to which various political parties employed social media in convincing tertiary students to vote for these parties

It was found that 141(39.6%) of respondents reported that political parties extensively use social media to convince tertiary students to vote for their party. Also, 107(30.1%) of respondents from the four schools (UDS, Wa Polytechnic, Jahan College of Education and the WNTC) reported that political parties employ social media very extensively. Furthermore, 74(20.8%) of respondents maintained that political parties employ social media in convincing electorates little while only 32(9%) respondents asserted that they have no idea and that parties did utilize social media at all. They also maintained that their votes were not in any way informed by messages from social media platforms.

5.2.3 Messages which political parties communicated on Social Media platform for the benefit of tertiary students

Some messages received from the NPP as reported by respondents were; "vote Nana for change; NPP's transformation plan; National ID for every

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Ghanaian; One district, one factory; Good Education; For Jobs; Free SHS; one village, one dam; restoration of allowances; One million dollar per constituency; Better NHIS; and Better salaries. The researcher believes that these messages vis-à-vis the reality of economic conditions and living standards may have worked for the New Patriotic Party (NPP) due to the wide access to these media platforms. This was confirmed by the head of the social media committee of the NPP.

On the part of the NDC, respondents indicated the following messages: Pictures of infrastructural development; video uploads and songs of Shata Wale- a musician; Vote for continuity and Infrastructural development; video against the opposition-NPP (Akuffo Addo).

5.2.4 Challenges that political parties' encounter in using Social Media for Campaign Communication

Respondents revealed that some used social media to attack opponents, spread false rumours, hate and inciting messages, and digitally manipulate images, messages and videos. Others also revealed hacking into people's accounts to commit all manner of fraud and launch spam and virus attacks on opponents' information, and make users fall prey to online scams that seemed genuine, resulting in several data and identity thefts.

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5.2.5 Extent to which Tertiary students based their voting patterns on messages from Social Media

On the extent to which tertiary students based their voting patterns on messages from social media, it was found that 120(34.1%) of respondents reported that the influence was very moderate. Also, 105(29.8%) of respondents from the four schools (UDS, Wa Polytechnic, Jahan College of Education and the WNTC) reported that social media had no influence on their voting behaviour. Furthermore, 62(17.6%) of respondents maintained that the influence from social media was low.

However, 37(10%) of respondents asserted that the influence of social media on them was very high. They also maintained that their votes were influenced solely by messages from social media platforms. Importantly, the researcher concludes that social media messages influence voting behaviour of electorates one way or the other. In light of this, the researcher asked respondents to rank political parties based on social media messages.

5.3 Conclusion

The study set out to examine the influence of social media on the voting behaviour of tertiary students in the Wa Municipality of Ghana. Literature and theories were reviewed to better appreciate the concept, and sound methodological approaches were adopted for the study.

This study has shown that social media was used for political participation in Ghana during the 2016 general elections. It however shows that, whereas many used the technology wisely to campaign for their various candidates, interact with candidates and electorates one-on-one, report happenings in their areas/polling centres during the elections and electioneering period, share personal views and gauge public opinions on the various candidates; others used them to attack opponents, spread false rumours, hate and inciting messages, digitally manipulate images, messages and videos, hack into people's accounts to commit all manner of fraud and launch spam and virus attacks on opponents' information, and make users fall prey to online scams that seemed genuine, resulting in several data and identity thefts. The study however shows that vital lessons could be learnt from the social media use during the 2016 general elections in Ghana.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations have been made:

Periodic public enlightenment on the use of social media platforms for political purpose especially among the youths is necessary. The government should be at the vanguard of this campaign, using such instruments like the Ministry of Information, and the mass media, among others.

Politicians and political parties, as well as their supporters should be cautioned on using social media to post/twit dysfunctional messages. Government may consider enacting laws that make such acts a punishable offence.

Institutions such as the National Communication Authority (NCA), the Ghana Independent Broadcaster Association (GIBA) should become more proactive in the restriction of the political campaigns of politicians.

Efforts should be made by the Ministry of Communication towards monitoring, moderating or regulating the various social media platforms in order to minimize the observed weaknesses and maximize the intrinsic values of the technology in the electoral process. To achieve the above, it is imperative that the various media laws are urgently reviewed to address the technicalities involved in the new media technologies; this we believe would go a long way in making the technology more useful in the electoral process and more beneficial to the society at large.

Additionally, the leadership of the political parties should ensure that there is internal party discipline that will curb the excesses of party members that sponsor hate campaigns.

5.5 Areas for Further Studies

The author conducted the study in four schools in the Wa Municipality namely UDS, Wa Polytechnic, Jahan College of Education and the Wa Nursing Training College. It is suggested that a similar study be carried out in other secondary and tertiary schools in the country so that a comprehensive research document highlighting the overall impact of social media on voting behaviour for purposes of planning by political parties in the country. Further research into how

social media could be used as an avenue for educating tertiary students also demands attention.

Finally, although the findings of this study confirm the influence of social media on voting patterns through predetermined indicators, its impact on the final outcomes of such indicators such as academic performance are less definite and inconclusive. Thus, further research is needed to be able to ascertain if social media impacts any of such final outcomes and especially its influence on electoral behaviour over a period of time.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE VOTING BEHAVIOUR OF TERTIARY STUDENTS IN THE WA MUNICIPALITY: GHANA'S 2016 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN PERSPECTIVE

This research instrument is designed to solicit empirical data for the conduct of an academic exercise on the above mentioned topic for the award of the MPhil degree in Development Studies, UDS. Your support and cooperation is very much anticipated as information given will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Date:……/………/……….

A. Demographic Characteristics

1. Gender: a. Male [ ] b. Female [ ]

2. Age Range: a. 18- 20 years [ ] b. 21- 25years [ ] c. 26 - 30years [ ] d. 31 and above [ ]

3. Educational Status (Level): a. 200 [ ] b. 300 [ ] c. 400 [ ] d. Other(s)………..

4. Are you a registered voter? a. Yes [ ] b. No [ ]

5. Do you have access to internet? a. Yes [ ] b. No [ ]

6. Institution of study? a.UDS [ ] b. Wa Poly technique [ ] c Jahan college of Education [ ] Wa Nursing Training College [ ]

7. Program of study?

    ....

8. Home town?

    ....

B. Types of social media frequently used by tertiary students

9. Which social media platform(s) do you use or have an account with?

Facebook [ ]   Twitter   [ ] WhatsApp [ ] YouTube [ ] all [ ] None [ ]

Other   (s)   (please   Specify):

……………………...

10. Which social media do you most frequently use? (Select only one)

Facebook   [ ] Twitter [ ] WhatsApp [ ] YouTube [ ] all [ ]

11. Why do you frequently use the above mentioned social media?

....

C. Extent to which various political parties employed social media in convincing tertiary students to vote for them

12. Are you a member of any political party? a. Yes [ ]   b. No [ ]

13. If Yes, which political party? a. NPP [ ]   b. NDC [ ] c. CPP [ ] d. PPP [ ] e. PNC   [ ]   f. Other [ ]   (Please

specify)………………………………………………….

14. Which political party did you vote for at the 2016 elections?   a. NPP [ ] b. NDC [ ] c. CPP [ ] d. PPP [ ] e. PNC   [ ]   f. Other [ ] (Please

specify)…………………………..

15. What was your main source of political campaign message(s) in the run-up to the 2016 elections? a. Political rallies   [ ]   b. House to house campaigns [ ]   c. Mass media [ ]   d. Social media [ ]   e. Family and friends [ ]   f. Other [ ] please specify...........................

16. At the 2016 elections did you receive any social media message(s) from any political party? a. Yes [ ]   b. No [ ]

17. If yes, which political party? a. NPP [ ]   b. NDC [ ] c. CPP [ ] d. PPP [ ]
e. PNC [ ]   f. Other [ ] (Please specify)…………

18. Please on which social media platform did you receive the message(s)? a.
Facebook   [ ]   b. Twitter [ ] c. WhatsApp [ ] d. YouTube [ ] e. All [ ] f.
None [ ]   Other (s)   (please
Specify)...

19. Briefly indicate the contents of message(s) received from political parties.

Political Party	Social media use	Message Delivered
NPP	Facebook	
	Twitter	
	WhatsApp	
	Youtube	
NDC	Facebook	
	Twitter	
	WhatsApp	
	Youtube	
CPP	Facebook	
	Twitter	
	WhatsApp	
	Youtube	
PPP	Facebook	

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	Twitter	
	WhatsApp	
	Youtube	
PNC	Facebook	
	Twitter	
	WhatsApp	
	Youtube	
Other (s)	Facebook	
	Twitter	
	WhatsApp	
	Youtube	

20. In the run-up to the 2016 elections, how often did you receive campaign messages on social media from political parties? a. very often [ ] b. Quite often [ ] c. often [ ] e. Not often [ ] f. Not at all often [ ]

21. To what extent did social media campaign messages influence your voting behaviour at the 2016 elections? a. no influence [ ] b. Low influence [ ] c. Moderate [ ] d. High influence [ ] f. Very high influence [ ]

22. In your opinion kindly rank the following political parties use of social media at the last elections. Score: 0-No, 1- very low, 2-low, 3-moderate, 4- high and 5- very high

Political Parties	RANKING					
	0	1	2	3	4	5

NPP

NDC

CPP

PPP

PNC

Other (s)

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D. Extent to which tertiary students based their voting patterns on messages from social media

23. To what extent do you think the various political parties employ social media in convincing tertiary students to vote? a. Not at all [ ] b. Little [ ]   c. Extensively [ ] d. Very extensively [ ]

24. Social media was very influential in your voting decisions? a. strongly agree [ ]   b. Agree [ ] c. somewhat agree [ ] d. Disagree [ ] e. Completely disagree [ ]

25. Assign reasons for your answer
....

26. Did you face any challenge(s) in accessing social media information from any political party? a. Yes [ ] b. No [ ]

27. If yes, what challenge(s) did you face?
....

28. In your view, how can challenges to social media usage for political campaigns be over come?
…………………………………………………………………………………

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

1. Types of social media frequently used by tertiary students.

2. Extent to which various political parties employed social media in convincing tertiary students to vote.

3. Messages which political parties communicated using social media

4. Challenges that political parties encountered in using social media for campaign communication.

5. Suggestions on how political parties can enhance social media usage for their campaign.

6. Extent to which social media influenced the voting decisions of tertiary students at the 2016 elections.

7. Other channels of communications employed by political parties in canvassing votes at the 2016 elections

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APPEMDIX C

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE VOTING BEHAVIOUR OF TERTIARY STUDENTS IN THE WA MUNICIPALITY: GHANA'S 2016 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN PERSPECTIVE

Date:……/………/……….

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1. Types of social media frequently used by tertiary students.

2. Extent to which various political parties employed social media in convincing tertiary students to vote.

3. Messages which political parties communicated using social media

4. Challenges that political parties encountered in using social media for campaign communication.

5. Suggestions on how political parties can enhance social media usage for their campaign.

6. Extent to which social media influenced the voting decisions of tertiary students at the 2016 elections.

7. Other channels of communication employed by political parties in canvassing votes at the 2016 elections

8. Questions

9. Final Remarks

10. Closure of Meeting