

**GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM**



**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH**

**HOW FAR HAS THE VOTER CHANGED INTO CONSUMER? CRITICALLY  
EXAMINING VOTER BEHAVIOUR.**

**BY G.S NII AMPONSAH QUAINOO**

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**SUPERVISOR: DR. KOBBY MENSAH**

## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned solemnly declare that the study titled “**HOW FAR HAS THE VOTER CHANGED INTO A CONSUMER? CRITICALLY EXAMINING VOTER BEHAVIOUR,** is based on my personal work carried out during the course of study at the School of Graduate Studies and Research at the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ) under the able supervision of **Dr. Kobby Mensah.**

.....

G.S NII AMPONSAH QUAINOO

(STUDENT )

.....

DATE

## **CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this thesis was supervised in accordance with procedures laid down by the School of Graduate Studies and Research, Ghana Institute of Journalism.

Additionally, all materials used from other sources have gotten the needed acknowledgement in the text of the report and further mentions in the references.

.....

DR. KOBBY MENSAH

(SUPERVISOR )

.....

DATE

## **DEDICATION**

For the tremendous support, belief and encouragements given throughout the academic year; I would like to express my sincerest gratitude and appreciation to my mother Mercy Dontoh for her encouragement throughout the course, to my supportive wife Mrs Matilda Ama Bonkuwah Quainoo and understanding children Immanuel Nii Adufu Quainoo, Ishmael Nii Adom Quainoo and Ian Nii Amponsah Quainoo not forgetting my niece Patience Badu for their unreserved support throughout the journey.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Over the years, political scientist and recently political marketers have been preoccupied with the interest in comprehending citizens voting behavior – that is what influences their voting decision process. The notion over the years has been that voters make their voting decisions rationally. That said there is a plethora of studies in the literature which cast doubts about the ability of voters to make rational choices in their voting decisions considering the high standard required in rational decision making. This study is therefore by the lack of consensus on factors that influence voter choice. The study set out to examine the factors that influence voter choice behaviour in Ghana's election. The study adopted a quantitative approach, specifically cross sectional survey involving 300 respondents who were selected using convenience sampling technique. The study found that candidate's image, social imagery, policies and issues have significant on voter choice behaviour. The study also found that situational contingency does not have significant influence on the voting decisions of Ghanaian voters. The study concludes that personality traits such as honesty, trustworthy, compassionate, decisive and incorruptibility, as well as policies and issues are of significant importance to voters in making their voting decisions. The study recommends that political parties and candidates adopts the concept of branding to create and maintain good brand image

# Table of Contents

DECLARATION .....	ii
CERTIFICATION .....	iv
DEDICATION .....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	vi
LIST OF TABLES .....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES .....	v
ABBREVIATIONS .....	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
CHAPTER ONE .....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Problem Statement .....	6
1.3 Objectives of the Study .....	8
1.4 Research questions.....	8
1.5 Significance of the study.....	8
1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study .....	9
1.7 Organisation of the Study .....	10
CHAPTER TWO .....	12
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	12
2.0 Introduction.....	12
2.1 Theoretical Review .....	12
2.2 Theoretical Models of Voter Behaviour .....	12
2.2.1 Rational Choice Model .....	12
2.2.2 Sociological Model .....	16
2.2.3 Psychosocial Model .....	17
2.3 Consumer Behaviour .....	19
2.4 Voter Behaviour.....	22
2.5 Voter Behaviour in Ghana .....	26
2.6 The Voter-Consumer Analogy.....	28
2.7 Empirical Review.....	31
2.8 Hypothesis Development and Conceptual Framework.....	33
CHAPTER THREE .....	36

METHODOLOGY .....	36
3.0 Introduction.....	36
3.1 Research Purpose .....	36
3.2 Research Approach .....	36
3.3 Research Design.....	37
3.4 Population and Sampling .....	38
3.5 Sample size .....	38
3.6 Research Instrument.....	39
3.7 Data Collection Procedures.....	39
3.8 Data Analysis .....	40
3.9 Validity and Reliability.....	40
CHAPTER FOUR.....	41
PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION .....	41
4.0 Introduction.....	41
4.1 Profile of the Respondents .....	41
4.2 Assessment of Measurement Model .....	44
4.3 Relationship Between Candidate’s Image, Situational Contingency, Policies and .....	47
Issues, Social Imagery and Voting Decision .....	47
4.4 Discussion of the Findings.....	49
4.4.1 The Effect of Candidates’ Image on Voting Decision.....	49
4.4.2 The Effect of Social Imagery on Voting Decision.....	51
4.4.3 The Effect of Policies and Issues on Voting Decision.....	53
4.4.4 The Effect of Situational Contingency on Voting Decision .....	54
CHAPTER FIVE .....	57
SUMMAARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS.....	57
5.0 Introduction.....	57
5.1 Summary of Findings.....	57
5.1.1 The Effect of Candidates’ Image on Voting Decision.....	57
5.1.2 The Effect of Social Imagery on Voting Decision.....	58
5.1.3 The Effect of Policies and Issues on Voting Decision.....	58
5.1.4 The Effect Situational Contingency on Voting Decision.....	59
5.2 Conclusions.....	59
5.3 Recommendations.....	61
REFERENCES .....	63
APPENDIX.....	78

QUESTIONNAIRE ..... 78

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 4.1 Profile of the Respondents.....41 – 42

Table 4.2 KMO and Bartlett's Test.....44

Table 4.3 Principal Component Analysis and Cronbach Alpha.....44 – 45

Table 4.4 The Pearson's Moment Product Correlation.....47

Table 4.5 Standard Multiple Regression Analysis.....48

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Conceptual Framework.....	35
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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
KMO	Kaiser-Oklin Measure
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NPP	New Patriotic Party
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The last five decades has seen the emergence of a multi-disciplinary field (political marketing) as a “significant area of international research in contemporary marketing” (Harris & Lock, 2010, p.297) with various dimensions. One of such dimensions is the application of the theory of consumer behavior to voter behaviour (Benur & Newman, 2010; Newman, 1999; Newman, 2002; Newman & Sheth, 1985). Studies carried out in this field over the last few decades have confirmed the assertion that voters could be likened to commercial consumers as they now “question every aspect of elite provision and will no longer accept being told by the elite what is good for them” (Lees-Marshment, 2004, p. 1). As it with commerce where consumers are ever becoming sophisticated, so it is with political consumers whose behaviour is becoming complex and difficult to predict.

The concept of voters or citizens as consumers traces its roots to the research works on consumer behavior in the 1970s, which looked at voter demographics and its influence on US elections (Nakanishi, Cooper & Kassarian, 1974; Rothschild, 1978; Swinyard & Conney, 1978). The challenge with these pioneering efforts on voters as consumers emanated from the over reliance on “communication tools” and “electoral contexts” as this hindered the progress on the theoretical development. This weakness was addressed by the subsequent works of Newman (1981) and Newman and Sheth (1985) which significantly contributed to the development of the theory.

The frontiers of political marketing have expanded beyond the earlier focus on election campaigns tactics. The concept has been applied in various fields with emphasis on the utilisation of the marketing mix tools with studies such as Newman's "The marketing of the President" (1994) and Maggie Scammell's "Designer Politics" (1995) and many others which have broadened the discipline of political marketing. Indeed, the use of the concept now encompasses policy formulation, internal party management and the design of political communication messages as well as relations with stakeholders (Lilleker et al 2006).

According to Peng and Hackley (2009) it is apt to argue that in certain context citizens/voters are consumers after all the two do have a lot in common particularly with regards to their emotional, thought process and behavioural responses to marketing stimuli. "Which is perhaps unsurprising, since political parties and commercial entities do sometimes employ similar marketing techniques" (Peng & Hackley, 2009, p.172). Similarly, Lock and Harris (1996) stated that there is some degree of commonality in the roles of "voters" and "consumers" even though they conceded that there is significant difference between the contexts of elections and consumption in commerce requiring distinct attitudinal construction and decision making process.

The discourse in the literature regarding voters becoming consumers is being looked at from two angles, one point of view sees the voter becoming more assertive, critical and sometimes cynical and the other school of thought that believes that the voter now considers politics as a basic commodity. According to Lees-Marshment (2004, p. 7) there is an interplay between politics and consumerism at the design stage of what she calls "political product" and "whether it reflects the demands of those it is produced for". This suggest that in designing the political product the

preferences and tastes of the voters who are ready and willing to purchase and consume the product ought to be identified and incorporated into the final product.

The colonization prowess of the marketing discipline has led to the introduction to the political sphere concepts that hitherto were solely applied in the commercial arena (Baines et al., 2002; Butler & Collins, 2001; Negrine & Lilleker, 2003). Indeed, there are scholars who desire full integration of the two disciplines of marketing and politics and hence would like to see the full application of marketing concepts to all aspects of politics. For example, Lees-Marshment (2004) calls for the application of the market orientation to all aspects of politics. This call for a paradigm shift in promoting a “consumerist” view to permeate all facets of party or government’s activities essentially advocates for a political system that takes into account the needs and wants of the of the electorate being targeted and to then deliver so that this customer base remains satisfied with the product, what others refer to as the offering (party or candidate) (Henneberg, 2002).

Voters of today are shifting away from the view of politics as public service what Gamble (1981, p. 93) referred to as a morally sound society where “human beings... would choose not what satisfied their own interests, but what promoted the good of others.” This philosophy sought to discourage voters from adopting the idea of individualistic preferences being promoted in the field of commerce. This shift towards consumerism led Coleman (2005, p.5) to proclaim that “we are now living in a more selective culture in which people are reflexive about their identities as citizens and more consumerist in making choices.” This view is supported by the assumptions of rational choice theory which posits that human beings make purchase decisions based on their

own individual preferences which is largely influenced by cost-benefit analysis (Dean & Croft, 2009). By extension voters are equally rational, hence their voting decisions making process can be likened to a decision to buy a basic commodity or service (Dean & Croft, 2009).

The paradigm shift in voter behavior is not lost on political actors (political parties and candidates) as they have in recent years expended substantial amounts of resources on their political communication activities (Durante & Gutierrez, 2014). Political actors expend these resources with the hope and anticipation that they would be able to influence voter behavior in their favour. However, empirical studies conducted on political campaign expenditure have churned out mixed results, hence one cannot conclusively say that there is positive correlation between campaign expenses and voter choice (Durante & Gutierrez, 2014). Yet political actors tend to focus on mobilizing campaign resources to the neglect of equally important factors such as candidate personality (Parry-Giles, 2010; Ben-Ur & Newman, 2002), ease with registration (Anderson & Heath, 2003; Schulz, Zeh & Quiring, 2005) and social pressures (Anderson & Heath, 2003).

According to Cwalina, Falkowski and Newman (2010) one of the key factors that influences voter behavior is the party or candidate image formed in the voters' mind. This process is however facilitated by other elements called cognitive domain espoused by Newman and Sheth (1985) in their model of voter behavior. This has led to the use of branding by parties and candidates to build good brand that seeks to reinforce the key attributes of the candidates or the ideology of the party (Needham, 2005). Besides Nofle and Shaver (2006) posit that a strong personality is required to build and maintain good relationships. Brand image moderates the

strength between perceived service quality and brand loyalty (Homer, 2008; Pollalis, 2005). Political actors therefore ought to pay special attention to brand image since it is seen as the moderator of brand personality (Parry-Giles, 2010). The extant literature is replete with studies that sought to examine the relationship brand image purchase intentions and found that there is positive correlation between brand image and consumers buying decisions (see Wu, Yeh & Hsiao, 2011; Gupta, Jain & Parmal 2014; Forsthe, 2013).

Whereas in the field of academia specialization is a key feature, in the arena of consumerism such distinctions rarely exist. A study by Crockett and Wallendorf (2004) suggest that normative political ideologies of consumers can provide explanations for behaviors in areas as diverse as shopping and food. Moreover, understanding the decision making process in voting may help us to uncover truths in other important fields where theory derived from the exchange process and where rationality has previously been forced to fit. These may include comparatively neglected areas such as gift giving (see, for example, Sojka, 1986) or more topical areas such as the take-up of recycling initiatives or charitable giving.

Ghana like most functioning democracies hold elections every four years where citizens/voters are called upon to make decisions by voting for candidates of their choice. It is imperative to note that Ghana's democratic has not been smooth sailing as the country after independence experience a number of military interventions until the fourth republic was ushered in 1992. Under the fourth republic the country has gone through seven (7) election cycles which has seen incumbent government lose elections and handed over peacefully in a sub-region where multi-party democracy is rare feature (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997; Smith, 2002). With such a

thriving democracy it is important that efforts made to understand voter behavior through empirical studies such as the current study. This study therefore sought to examine the extent to which the voter has become a consumer by focusing on Ghanaian voters.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Bratton (1999) cited in Gyekye-Gyandoh (2014, p. 185) argues that “while elections are not the be all and end all of a democracy, they provide a major blueprint for the existence of democracy.” In other words, a nations democracy can be described as a functioning one only when periodic elections are made an integral part of the democratic process. Indeed, Lindberg (2006, p. 2) in justifying the importance of elections in a democratic system insisted that elections “are an institutionalized attempt to actualize the essence of democracy: rule of the people and by the people.” Elections offer voters or citizens what the commercial markets offers consumers, a variety of competing offerings leaving consumers or voters to make buying decisions.

Over the years, political scientist and recently political marketers have been preoccupied with the interest in comprehending citizens voting behavior – that is what influences their voting decision process. The notion over the years has been that voters make their voting decisions rationally. That said there is a plethora of studies in the literature which cast doubts about the ability of voters to make rational choices in their voting decisions considering the high standard required in rational decision making (Dahlberg, 2009). It is in light of this that scholars like Kotler and Kotler (1999) contend that marketing concepts like branding could be help in the quest to understand voter behavior and their decision making process. This notwithstanding few

empirical studies have been conducted that focused voter-consumer analogy and voters' reaction to marketing stimuli (Peng & Hackley, 2009; Schofield & Reeves, 2015).

There is a school of thought that holds the view that the concept of consumer behaviour and its tools could be applied beyond the domain of commerce to other fields like politics (Shama, 1973). Contemporary research into consumer behaviour does not draw the line between consumer behavior in the context of commerce and not-for-profit sphere like voter behaviour (see Crosby & Taylor, 1983). This view that the same behavioural models could be applied to both buying and voting situations is widely agreed upon, however this assumption and analogy of voter as consumer are yet to be fully explored empirically (O'Cassa & Pecotich, 2005). Indeed, some of the few studies conducted on the voter as consumer analogy have presented mixed findings. For example, Peng & Hackley (2009) noted;

*“However, in this study these voters displayed certain responses that differentiated them strongly from consumers. This implies that the analogy between commercial and political marketing has its limitations. We conclude by suggesting that the voter-consumer analogy is highly plausible when viewed on a macro-level but, becomes weaker as research focuses in on a micro-level analysis of the individual within the voting context” (Peng & Hackley, 2009, p.172).*

This study is therefore instigated by these calls for further research into the application of consumer behavior to politics and particularly voter behaviour. Furthermore, the inconclusive nature of the findings of previous studies suggest that further studies are required in different geographical context, findings of which will bring difference dimensions to the discourse on voter as consumer analogy.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the factors that influence voter choice behaviour.

This objective would be pursued through the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the effect of candidates' image on the voting decision of the Ghanaian voter.
2. To assess the effect of social imagery on the voting decision of the Ghanaian voter.
3. To examine the effect of policies and issues on the voting decision of the Ghanaian voter.
4. To establish the effect of situational contingency on the voting decision of the Ghanaian voter.

### **1.4 Research questions**

1. What is the effect of candidates' image on the voting decision of the Ghanaian voter?
2. What is the effect of social imagery on the voting decision of the Ghanaian voter?
3. What is the effect of policies and issues on the voting decision of the Ghanaian voter?
4. What is the effect of situational contingency on the voting decision of the Ghanaian voter?

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

As demonstrated in the problem statement, the application of the theory of consumer behaviour from mainstream commerce to voter behaviour is an evolving field of research. The analogy of voter as consumer is an interesting field which has attracted the attention of many scholars yet there are still gaps in the current literature. It is expected that this study would make a modest yet significant contribution towards the broadening of the discourse on the voter as consumer analogy and voter behaviour on the whole. Aside contributing to theoretical development, the findings of this study presents the perspective of developing country to the current literature.

This study also makes a good case for future interdisciplinary study, it shows that it is possible to conduct a study that cut across different disciplines.

To the political actors – parties and candidates the findings of this study would be a useful reference. The findings of the study would provide candidates and parties valuable information in planning their campaign strategies. This will allow them deploy resources to areas where maximum benefits would be derived. Understanding voter behaviour means political actors are able to design campaign messages that addresses the preferences, needs and wants of voters who are to be treated as consumers. The pattern of election results in Ghana show that there are two entrenched stronghold regions, one each for the two leading parties therefore studies like this one would help candidates and parties to strategies for the rest of the swing regions.

The findings of this study would also significantly boost the work of state agencies and non-governmental organizations who engaged in voter education. Having a knowledge about what influences voters' voting decisions, might be factored into the design of the education manuals and how the education campaign is carried out.

## **1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This study sought to assess how far the voter has been transformed into a consumer and in the process tried to understand voter behaviour in general. This is a study situated in a one country context. It is also designed to look at a specific aspect of voter behaviour and not the entire phenomenon of voter behaviour. This study adopted four variables (candidate's image, political

issues, social imagery and contingency situation) from Newman (2002) model on voter as consumer. These variables were used to developed conceptual framework that was tested.

This study like any research work is not without limitations. First, the circumstance of the study did not allow for the entire model of Newman (2002) to be adopted. Second, though the sample is fairly adequate ideally the whole country should have been covered by the survey as this could have churned out more fascinating dimensions of the phenomenon. Third, this study is one country study and therefore may miss the different dimensions a multiple country voter would have added to the study.

## **1.7 Organisation of the Study**

This study is categorized into five chapters, encompassing the background of the study, literature review and conceptual framework, methodology of the research, data analysis, presentation and discussions and summary, conclusions and recommendations.

### **1.7.1 Chapter One - Introduction**

This is the first chapter of study and hence provides an introduction and background to the study. Also in this chapter are the problem statement, research objectives, research questions and significance of the study. The chapter ends with the scope and limitation of the study and the disposition of the study.

### **1.7.2 Chapter Two – Literature review**

In this chapter, an in-depth review of the mainstream voter behaviour is carried out. This review focused on the key concepts in the research topic which include voter as consumer and the Ghana's democratic system. The conceptual framework of the study is also presented in this chapter. An empirical review of related studies was also carried out to identify similarities and differences in their findings. Also to be presented in this chapter is theoretical review – rational choice theory and theory of planned behaviour.

### **1.7.3 Chapter Three - Methodology**

This chapter sheds light on the methodological approaches adopted by the study. This chapter provides information on the philosophical view point of the researcher. This chapter dealt with methodological issues like research approach, research design, sampling technique, data collection procedure and data analysis techniques.

### **1.7.4 Chapter Four – Data Analysis and Discussion**

This chapter presents the findings of the various tests run as part of the analysis using statistical analysis carried out using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 22). Also contained in this chapter are the interpretations and discussions of the findings.

### **1.7.5 Chapter Five – Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations**

This is the last chapter of this report and therefore provides summaries of the findings and conclusions drawn. The chapter also contains the recommendations offered by the researcher based on the findings

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

The previous chapter of this report provided the background to the study as well as the problem statement. While the study objectives and justification of the study had been discussed in the previous chapter, this chapter presents reviews of the theories that underpin the study. Also included in this chapter is the empirical review of related studies and concepts. The section dealing with hypothesis development and conceptual framework is also included herein.

#### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

A theory can be described as “a set of interrelated constructs, (variables) definitions, and propositions that presents a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables with the purpose of explaining natural phenomena” (Kirlinger 1979, p64). Any research work worth its sort ought to be anchored on theory else “the research project would be meaningless” (Theodoulou & O'Brien, 1999, p.2).

#### **2.2 Theoretical Models of Voter Behaviour**

In an attempt to conceptualize the phenomenon of voter behaviour, three schools of thought have emerged including the sociological, psychosocial and rationality schools of thought.

##### **2.2.1 Rational Choice Model**

Voter behaviour is a phenomenon that could be explained by multiple theories. One of such theories that have been used to explain voter behaviour is rational choice theory, which is

adopted by this study. According to Downs (1957) one of the pioneer scholars of rational choice theory, people will engage in politics, say by contesting or voting only when they perceive the benefits associated with such actions are greater than the cost. If we assume that individuals are economically rational, then they should seek to maximize their benefits from any activity while minimizing their costs (Pattie, Seyd & Whiteley, 2003). The basic essence of this model is explained by Downs (1957, p.295-296).

“Our main thesis is that parties in democratic politics are analogous to entrepreneurs in a profit-seeking economy. So 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.”

Krek (2005) argues that, individuals in their rationality avoid participating for common good, but rather take part in activities to enhance and satisfy their individualistic self-interested goals. Rational choice theory is an umbrella term for a variety of models explaining social phenomena as outcomes of individual action that can in some way be construed as rational. “Rational behavior” is behavior that is suitable for the realization of specific goals, given the limitations imposed by the situation. The key elements of all rational choice explanations are individual preferences, beliefs, and constraints (Chong, 2013). Preferences symbolizes the positive or negative evaluations individuals attach to the possible outcomes of their actions.

The theory of rational choice views behaviour from the perspective of economics and the choices voters are called upon to make during elections can be likened to consumers making purchase decisions in a commercial market (Antunes, 2010). Furthermore, this economic view of the rational choice theory holds that rational voters are aware of the economic situation at the micro and macro level and responds to these situations by their voting decisions. Indeed, Bratton et al. (2012) assert that “elections are won or lost on the economy” (p.29). The economy becomes a “valence issue” during elections in the sense that most voters arguably prefer a better economy to a bad one (Fossati 2014, p.118). This theory perceives the voter as a rational being who analyses a number of factors before making a conscious choice during elections (Oppenheimer 2008).

The rational choice theory posits that the voter is faced with two critical decisions in every election cycle – the decision to vote or not and who to vote for if one is to vote. It is expected that a rational voter would take part in voting if the anticipated benefit for voting exceeds the benefit of abstaining (Farber 2009). The theory assumes that rationality is constrained and that voter decisions making process is influenced by the context and expected results (Conlisk, 1996; Gigerenzer & Goldstein, 1996; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998; Simon, 1995). Hence, “decision-making procedures will vary by the importance of the issue and the motivations, abilities, and predispositions of the individuals forming judgments” (Chong, 2013). According to Andersen and Heath (2000) voter behaviour is influenced by varied factors including political and economic factors and therefore voter choice is static it varies from one election cycle to the another.

Another dimension of rational choice theory is the voter being portrayed as selfish and self-centered in the voting decision making. It is argued that voting decisions are made based on personal reward expected and not that of the collective good (Krek, 2005). According to Edlin, Gelman and Kaplan (2007) voters today make their voting decision based on the expected benefit such decision would accrue to them. In other words, individuals voting decision is made taking into consideration individual welfare and to some extent that of a group or community. An individual may vote for a candidate or party based on the expectations they have for their performance on major issues such as economic growth and lack of corruption (McGann, 2016). Nevertheless, most of the advocates of this stance give credit to the numerous studies done on the role of inner biases in the voting behavior. Otherwise, they would need to extend the definition of rationality to the point of becoming meaningless if they were to assume that inner biases are rational or that their role is insignificant to the voting behavior.

Some critics the theory of rational choice contend that it would be far-fetched to suggest that voter choice is always influenced by rationality. The influence of inner biases on voting behaviour cannot be over emphasized (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998; Simon, 1995). Besides inner biases there are “a number of factors have been found to influence the decisions of voters including: demographics, involvement, issues and policies, social imagery, emotion, candidate image, current events, personal events, epistemic issues, identity and partisanship” (Schofield & Reeves, 2015, p.969). There is also the issue of voter loyalty which is deemed to greatly influence voting decisions (Hazarika, 2015; Heywood, 2002). The media which is a great source of information is found to be a significant predictor of voting behaviour (Ball & Peters 2005).

Besides the theory's over emphasis of rationality in voter decision making, there are other shortcomings of rational choice theory. For instance, the theory has failed to explain why voters switch the parties they vote for in different election cycles even if they witness socio-economic development. Also the theory does not offer any explanation why some voters would continue to vote on party lines or why incumbent parties would win elections despite poor economic performance or incumbent parties which performs economical well in government would still lose elections (Antunes, 2010). These shortcomings notwithstanding the theory of rational choice has significantly contributed to the broadening of the discourse and understanding of voter behaviour. In a number of empirical studies acknowledge rational choice theory as a predictor of voter behaviour (see Anebo 2001; Evans, 2004; Harding, 2013; Bossuroy, 2011).

### **2.2.2 Sociological Model**

The sociological school of thought which is usually referred to as the Columbia's school of thought as a result of the pioneering research work which was published in a book entitled "*The people's Choice*" authored by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1944) of the Applied Bureau of Social Research of Columbia University. The main object of this study was to look at the influence of exposure to media on the decision making process of voters. In carrying out this study Lazarsfeld et al. (1944) introduced the use of questionnaires as a data gathering tool (which was a novelty at the time) which was used to collect data on voter behaviour in the 1940 US presidential elections involving Franklin Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie (Barnes & Kaase, 1979). This was seven months' panel study involving 600 participants who were categorized into 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” (Antunes, 2010, p.146). Lazarsfeld et al. hypothesized 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 making was minimal and that the decisive influence was the social groups to which they belonged” (Antunes, 2010, p.147). The sociological view of voter behaviour was later supported by the works Lipset (1960) in his book “Political Man” and Lipset and Rokkan, (1967) in a book entitled “Party Systems and Voter Alignment: Cross National Perspectives.”

### **2.2.3 Psychosocial Model**

The psychosocial view of voter behaviour traces its roots to the works of the Survey Research Centre at the University of Michigan during the 1948 U.S. presidential elections, the findings of which were compiled by Campbell and Kahn (1952) in “*The People Elect a President;*” the elections of 1952 compiled by Campbell, Gurin and Miller (1954) in “*The Voter Decides*” and elections in 1956, where results, combined with those obtained in previous investigations, led to the publication of the book entitled “*The American Voter,*” written by Campbell, Converse Miller and Stokes (1960). According to Antunes (2010) the key assumption of this model 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.” This model emphasis party identification, that is to say people would vote for a particular party because a group the voter aspires to join is seen to support or vote for that party.

It is important to stress that though this model promotes partisanship it does not necessarily mean that a voter would develop a long term relationship with a political party and continue to vote it in every electoral cycle. This aptly explained by Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes (1960, p. 121):

*In characterizing the relation of individual to party as a psychological identification we invoke a concept that has played an important if somewhat varied role in psychological theories of the relation of individual to individual or of individual to group. We use the concept here to characterize the individual's affective orientation to an important group-object in his environment. Both reference group theory and small-group studies of influence have converged upon the attracting or repelling quality of the group as the generalized dimension most critical in defining the individual-group relationship, and it is this dimension that we will call identification.*

The idea of partisanship being advocated by this model is not without limitations, one of which is the inability of the model to be applied to elections that are largely not bi-partisan as you would find in most Western European nations (Budge, Crewe & Farlie, 1976) particularly the assertion that there is a progressive weakening of the connection of individuals to political parties in the U.S. (Stanley & Niemi, 2000). This model perceives conceives the relationship between psychosocial factors and partisanship is challenged by researchers who believe that the Michigan model overestimates the role of long-term partisan loyalties (Dalton, Flanagan, & Beck, 1984; Dalton, 2000; Franklin, Mackie & Valen, 1992). Antunes (2010, p.158) sums up these criticisms by suggesting that the “changes in voting choices of voters should be sought not through the use of a psychosocial variable but by considering factors related to information

processing and the rationality of voters and the political and electoral system. In the following section we present the theoretical model that led to these approaches.”

### **2.3 Consumer Behaviour**

The concept of consumer behaviour which the American Marketing Association (AMA) defines as “the dynamic interaction of cognition, behaviour & environmental events by which human beings conduct the exchange aspect of their lives with various social and psychological variables at play.” Barmola and Srivastava (2010, p.269) on their part considers consumer behaviour as an “...interdisciplinary; that it is based on concepts and theories about people that have been developed by scientists, philosophers & researchers in such diverse disciplines as psychology, sociology, social psychology, cultural anthropology, and economic.” What is common among these two definitions of consumer behaviour is that the concept is a difficult one which cannot be easily conceptualized. In this study consumer behaviour is described as the psychological and sociological process consumers go through regarding the purchase and consumption of goods and services.

According to Barmola and Srivastava (2010) the theory of consumer behaviour has soared over the years probably as a result of its significance to the practice of marketing as a profession and its ability to help professionals to predict the purchase behaviour of consumers. Consumer behaviour is a branch of the general discipline of consumer science which deals with “the humane aspect of decision-making and purchasing is of major importance as opposed to buyer behavior - the domain of the marketing and business professionals who wish to understand buyer behavior” (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000, p.5). It is imperative to acknowledge the growing

sophistication of consumer needs and demands, hence the importance of seeking to understand the consumers behaviour and their buying decision making process.

Schiffman and Kanuk (2009) delineated consumer behaviour into four typologies – the economic view, passive view, cognitive view and emotional view. The economic model views the consumer as rational being who makes rational decisions. The purchase decision is arrived at after going through the buying decision making process which involves information search on available alternatives (Solomon, 2009). Critics of this view of the consumer contends that the assumption of the consumer having all the required information to a rational decision is far-fetched and that possibility of information asymmetry could exist, hence not all purchase decisions are rational (Mihart, 2012).

The passive view of the consumer is premised on the assumption that the consumer is an object of marketing manipulation. In other words, the consumer is daily bombarded with marketing stimuli which is designed to influence the buying behaviour, hence consumers are not able to make independent purchase decisions (Olshavsky & Grandbois, 1979). Marketing professionals exploit this to their advantage as they use marketing communication tools to influence the decision making process of the consumers. “The cognitive view is closer to the real consumer behaviour, depicting the consumer as a receptive and active person, who is involved in information searching and attempts to make satisfactory decisions” (Mihart, 2012, p.123). This view depicts the consumer as engaging in mental exercise any time a purchase decision is to be made. The emotional view of consumer behaviour deals with the sentimental emotions and feelings that characterizes the buying decision making process of the consumer (Mihart, 2012;

Schiffman & Kanuk, 2009). The emotional view contends that the consumer is not always rational as the economic view suggests and that consumers sometimes engages in impulse buying.

Siwach and Dahiya (2009) posit that the buying decision making consumers engage is a complex one largely due to the impact of the external stimuli consumers are exposed to when the need to resolve a problem arises. Besides the external stimuli (marketing mix) orchestrated by marketing professionals, other factors such “cultural factors, social factors, personal and psychological factors” (Mashao & Sukdeo, 2018, p.1668) have significant influence on consumer buying decision process. This couple with the multitude of brand choices with varied prices offered to the consumer further makes the consumer buying decision making more complex (Gizaw & Nguyen 2014). “Consumers’ culture refers to a set of basic values, wants and behavior learned by a member of society from the family and other important institutions” (Mashao & Sukdeo, 2018, p.1669). It is the sub-cultures such as nationalities, regions, racial groups and geographic regions that significantly impact consumer decision making.

Furthermore, social elements such as family, roles and status, and age and lifecycle stage do influence consumer buying decision making process. In making purchase decisions consumers look up to family and friends for support and sometimes to validate and reinforcement of their choices. “Marketers are interested in the roles and influences of the wife, husband and children” (Mashao & Sukdeo, 2018, p.1669). Age and life cycle stage affects buyers’ behavior because peoples’ purchasing style changes with times (Furaiji, Łatuszyńska & Wawrzyniak, 2012). It is

therefore the goal of the marketing department to study and understand the consumer and particularly who makes the purchase decision (Thangasamy & Pakitar, 2014).

The multi-disciplinary nature of consumer behaviour theory makes it possible to be applied in spheres besides commerce. Shama (1973) argued that the principles and underpinnings of consumer behavior were also relevant beyond the commercial domain. In many ways, researchers no longer draw significant distinctions between consumer behavior and, for example, voting behavior (see Crosby and Taylor, 1983). This coupled with the contention of Dean and Croft (2009, p.131) “that, in politics at least, there is no one model, particularly one as simple as the exchange process, that can explain why people make their electoral decisions.” Following these observations, the theory of consumer behaviour has since been applied in studies of voter behaviour.

## **2.4 Voter Behaviour**

Voter behaviour is a phenomenon that has engaged the attention of political actors and political researchers over the years. As a result, several attempts has been made to define the concept. According to Bratton (2013) voter behaviour could be defined as a ‘set of related personal and electoral actions, which may include participation in electoral campaigns, voter turnout, and choosing for whom to vote.’ In other words, voter behaviour describes the disposition of citizens or voters towards the electoral process as well as the decision to take part in electoral process or to abstain from the process (Rule 2014). Election is a key element of a democratic process, hence the behaviour of the key players in the electoral process (political actors and voters) need to be studied. Moreover, understanding the decision making process in voting may help us to uncover

truths in other important fields where theory derived from the exchange process and where rationality has previously been forced to fit.

According to Schofield and Reeves (2015, p.968) “A number of factors have been found to influence the decisions of voters including: demographics, involvement, issues and policies, social imagery, emotion, candidate image, current events, personal events, epistemic issues, identity and partisanship.” Besides these factors the media is identified to be a significant influence on voter behaviour (Ball & Peters 2005). It is however important to note that the media does not always exert positive influence on the voter decision making as the production and circulation of false news (Gunther, Beck & Nisbet 2018; Kurtzleben 2017).

The extant literature on voter behaviour is replete with studies that supports that various schools of thought on how voting decisions are made by voters during elections. While some support the view that voters are rational and that voters make rational choices in choosing who to vote for a particular party or candidate (Chong, 2013). Others support the psychosocial model promoted by University of Michigan, which suggest that voting decisions are largely influenced by partisanship. Also there is the sociological school of thought which argues that voting decisions are influenced by social groups. These three models will be discussed in detail in the next section under theoretical models of voter behaviour.

Over the years, researchers have conducted numerous studies aimed at predicting voter behaviour. For instance, Newman and Sheth (1985) after their study reported a voter choice accuracy rate of over 90 percent using measurement variables that included; “issues and policies,

social imagery, emotional feelings, candidate image, current events, personal events in the voter's life, and epistemic issues. Interestingly, their model exceeds predictions which were made on the basis of either demographics or involvement" (Schofield & Reeves, 2015, p.968). Along the line, these variables were reviewed and reduced to five voting predictive variables including political issues, social imagery, candidate personality, situational contingency and epistemic value (Newman & Sheth, 1987). This model has been tested in different studies carried out in multiple contexts (Benur & Newman, 2010; Newman, 1999; Newman, 2002). The cardinal assumption of this model is that voters are just like consumers being offered political products by candidates or parties and "the results consistently demonstrate the impressive predictive utility of the model" (Schofield & Reeves, 2015, p.969).

Arthur (2009, p46) observed that "for many established and institutionalized democracies, especially in the Western world, the issue of electoral choices according to various writers has centered on the ideologies, philosophies, and policies advanced by the major political parties." They may vote for the person or party based on the expectations they have for their performance on major issues such as economic growth and lack of corruption (McGann, 2016). It is worthy of that voting decisions based on ideology in itself is not rational since one ideology or cause may not be expedient to deal with all policies dear to the voter (Winter, 2015). A more recent view holds that rationality and inner biases ought to be seen as competing with one another in the political arena. In a competitive mood sentiments and implicit biases become key influencers of voting decisions and this makes the job of the voter a lot easier as the voter need not be an expert of politics to make the choice (Durham, 2016). Though sometimes voters may have the

impression that they are in total control of their voting choices but the reality is that these decisions are influenced by both explicit and inner biases (Carpenter, 2009).

In some countries, rationality plays no role in voting decision making as voters would rather exchange their electoral support for favours and benefits such as policies meant to provide social goods particularly in developing countries where infrastructure is such as roads, hospitals, and social welfare among others are lacking (Bartle & Griffiths 2002). This is why many studies have expressed doubts about the rationality of voters' choices, given that the requirements for making a rational choice are beyond the interests and capabilities of the citizens (Dahlberg, 2009). According to Lupia and McCubbins (1998) some may argue that the divergence between the necessity of (representation) and citizens' incapability of reasoned (and informed) choices constitutes a democratic dilemma as it threatens to reduce the idea of representative democracy to an illusion.

Gyimah-Boadi (2007) concurs with the assertion that voter choice is not always rational as he posits that elections in Africa is not on issues and policy superiority but elements such as ethnicity and sometimes the personality of the candidates. The role of ethnicity in African elections cannot be overemphasized particularly in elections where candidates lack good policies on which to hinge their campaign. African elections and particularly Ghanaian elections are usually characterized by the application of semiotics, that is sounds, signs and symbols instead of focusing on key issues like economic policies which affect the livelihoods of people (Mensah, 2009). Voters during election campaigns in Ghana are interested in party symbols and

paraphernalia as well as party songs and jingles and not micro economic indicators (Mensah, 2009).

## **2.5 Voter Behaviour in Ghana**

Ghana has been a politically active nation since the era of her struggle for political emancipation (Ninsin, 2006). The enthusiasm in multi-party democracy has surged in the last twenty-eight years. Studying the Ghanaian voter behaviour since the return to multi-party politics in 1992, practitioners, political commentators and academics have shared the view that the two major parties – New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC) draw their support from two social classes – the upper class for NPP and the lower class for the NDC (Mensah, 2009). Studies on Ghana's electoral campaigns have suggested that ethnicity and regionalism are two key influencers of voter choice among Ghanaian electorates (see Mensah, 2009; Ninsin, 2006; Youde, 2005; Gyimah-Boadi, 2001; Nugent, 2001). This view however was somehow contested by the findings of Tweneboah-Koduah et al (2010) study which suggested a gradual shift from class voting.

Harding (2013) carried out a study where elections results from 2004 to 2008 were analyzed, the findings of the study suggested that the Ghanaian electorate would vote for the party or candidate who would demonstrates the ability to provide them with social goods such as good roads, hospitals and schools particularly among rural voters. These findings reinforce the findings of earlier studies carried out by Bossuroy (2011) and Dendere (2013) which reported that the rural voter's appreciation of democracy is different from that urban voters and therefore factors that influences rural voter behaviour is different from that of urban voters. Whereas the urban voter is

sophisticated in their demand in exchange for their electoral support the rural voter is simply interested in the provision of basic social amenities.

Ethnic voting is a pervasive phenomenon among Ghanaian voters. Ethnic voting describes a situation where members of particular of ethnic ancestry decides to disproportionately support and vote for a particular party or candidate during elections (Wolfinger, 1965 as cited in Bratton, Bhavnani & Chen, 2012). In other words, ethnic voting is the act of “voting for the party identified with the voters’ own ethnic group, no matter who the individual candidates happen to be” (Keulder 2000, p.267). The basic premise of the phenomenon of ethnic voting is that people are more likely to behave in conformity with the ethnic group the voter belongs. Hence, the electorate will vote for a candidate from their social group if they deem the candidate to be the best protector of their interests (Adjei 2013).

Reflecting on these definitions one could argue that ethnic voting does occur during elections in Ghana. For example, since 1992 elections to the last one in 2016, voters in Ashanti and Volta regions have displayed unflinching support for the leadings parties NPP and NDC respectively. These two regions over the years to vote in a bloc and the manifestation of such identity-based voting has rendered the elections in these regions a mere expression of ethnic support (Bratton, Bhavnani & Chen. 2012). It is fair to suggest that voter choice in these regions is not rational but rather sometimes could be considered as mere ethnic census. Empirical studies by Fridy (2007), Gyimah-Boadi (2007) and Erdmann (2007) support the view that ethnicity is a key determinant of voter choice in Ghanaian elections and that issues and party ideology have limited influence on the voting decisions of the Ghanaian voter.

Furthermore, clientelism is yet another phenomenon associated with voter behaviour in Ghana. According to Weitz-Shapiro (2012) clientelism describes a situation where material goods such as food and other items are distributed to voters during elections with the intent to win the support of these voters or as vote-buying scheme. There is a pervasive belief among the Ghanaian populace that recruitment into the public sector is largely influenced by one's political affiliation, ethnicity, region of origin and 'old boyism' (Asante & Gyimah-Boadi, 2004). In other words, favouritism and ethnic patronage becomes the criteria of employing people into public sector instead of meritocracy. In turn, this fosters ethno-regional voting patterns that raises the prospect of ethnicity being employed as an instrument of ethnic mobilization for competition in elections and public service (Useh, 2011).

## **2.6 The Voter-Consumer Analogy**

The frontiers of political marketing have expanded beyond the earlier focus on election campaigns tactics. The concept has been applied in various fields with emphasis on the utilisation of the marketing mix tools with studies such as Newman's "The marketing of the President" (1994) and Maggie Scammell's "Designer Politics" (1995) and many others which have broadened the discipline of political marketing. Indeed, the use of the concept now encompasses policy formulation, internal party management and the design of political communication messages as well as relations with stakeholders (Lilleker et al., 2006).

Following the admonition of Kotler and Levy (1969) that practitioners and academics in the field of marketing should develop special interest in political contest, extensive studies have since been conducted by researchers in both the fields of marketing and political science. These studies

have churned out findings that suggest beneficial relationship between the two disciplines (Wring, 2002). Scholars in the field of political science such as Kavanagh (1995) and Norris et al. (1999) assert that just as it is done in commerce, political actors also utilize marketing communication tools in promoting their ideas and policies. In commerce, marketing communication is often used in promoting products, services and ideas to consumers in different forms, that is to create awareness, persuasion of consumers to try products or services and emphasize the brand uniqueness in the market place with the aim of achieving competitive edge (Kotler et al., 2005). On the other hand, political communication is designed with the intent of projecting candidates, parties, ideas and policies which aims at voters in order to persuade and influence the voter decision in their favour (Holbrook, 1996).

One the theories of marketing that has become prominent in recent years as a result of its application to the discipline of politics is consumer behaviour, which is used to study voter behaviour (Benur & Newman, 2010; Newman, 1999; Newman, 2002; Newman & Sheth, 1985). In an effort to understand voter behaviour “a number of factors have been found to influence the decisions of voters including: demographics, involvement, issues and policies, social imagery, emotion, candidate image, current events, personal events, epistemic issues, identity and partisanship” (Schofield & Reeves, 2015, p.968). The voter-consumer analogy started gaining roots in the consumer literature somewhere in 1970s as demographic variables featured prominently in American elections (Nakanishi, Cooper & Kassarian, 1974; Rothschild, 1978; Swinyard & Conney, 1978). A limitation of this early research is that it uses a variety of variables, communication tools and electoral contexts which limits its theoretical and empirical

utility. However, this was followed by a major theoretical advancement in voter behaviour prediction (Newman and Sheth, 1985).

Needham (2006) suggests that political actors could adopt the current paradigm of marketing being practiced in commerce, that is a shift away from one off transactional exchange to fostering long term relationships that would result in attaining the lifetime value of customers. This is particularly important in this era of voter switching as a result of their changing and sophisticated needs (Needham, 2006; Schofield & Reeves, 2015). Similarly, Butler and Collins (1994) also raised concerns about voters becoming less loyal as voters sometimes engage in disruptive voting that is voting for a candidate or party which was not the preferred choice but intended to foil the winning of a disliked candidate.

Branding which has been widely utilized in commerce to market good and services to consumers has also been proven useful in politics as candidates and parties have in the past successfully branded themselves. Branding among other things reinforces quality and originality which consumers/ voters can associate with (Feldwick, 2002; Hackley, 2005; Peng & Hackley, 2009). Applying branding to politics comes with a number of benefits. Needham (2005) posits that a successfully branded party or candidate would enjoy brand loyalty during elections and off-election seasons. There are some who even argue that voter loyalty is more enduring than consumer loyalty to brands in commerce. That said, some individuals exhibit sustained loyalty towards brands than they would do to political parties and candidates. For instance, there are mobile phone customers who would not use any phone brand apart from iPhone yet it is possible for such a person to vote different parties or candidates in different election cycles.

Last but not least, scholars from the political field, like Maarek (1995), and the marketing field, such as Kotler et al. (2005), have tried to use a communication process model to understand how messages can be received and interpreted by voters and consumers. For them, the difference between voters and consumers is largely based on the contextual level rather than on procedures. They assume that voters and consumers (notwithstanding that the two are not different individuals but the same individual engaged with a different kind of message) process messages in essentially the same way.

## **2.7 Empirical Review**

This section presents a critical review of empirical studies conducted in the past that are related to the subject of the current study. The object of this review is to tease out key findings in the reviewed studies and also point out the weaknesses inherent in these studies. Koppensteiner and Stephen (2014) carried out a study which sought to examine the correlation between voters first impression and the likelihood to choose a candidate who possess a personality trait that resembles that of the voter. This study involved 80 respondents taken from the University of Vienna who were made to watch short videos of unidentified politicians giving speeches and were asked to assess themselves and politicians in the videos and rate the likelihood of them voting for the these unidentified they evaluated. The findings revealed that majority of participants chose the politicians who were perceived to possess similar personality traits to that of the participants. The study findings also revealed that first impression could sway voters in favour of candidates. The authors concluded that voters would choose candidates deemed to possess personality traits that are similar to those of the voters.

Similarly, the study of Hayes (2010) looked at the impact of candidate's personality traits on voter choice in the US elections. In this study the variables that measured that personality traits included "leadership qualities, morality, compassion, and care for people." This study was conducted during the 2006 mid-term elections in the US where a survey was conducted involving 500 respondents from 30 states. The findings of the study revealed that voter choice is influenced by candidate's personal traits. These findings are in consonance with that of Caprara, Schwartz, Capanna, Vecchione and Barbaranelli (2006) conducted in Italy and Verhulst, Hatemi and Martin (2010) in Australia, which all found that candidates' personal traits have impact on voter choice.

In the African context, Nwanganga, Nwachukwu, and Mirian (2017), conducted a study in which they examined the influence of candidate's personality traits on the decision making process of voters in the 2015 Nigerian elections. The study involved 400 respondents from "6 geo-political zones" in Nigeria. A survey was conducted using a research instrument that focused personality traits and branding. The results revealed that personality traits such as competence, credibility/sincerity have an impact on voters' choice of a candidate to vote for. Despite the geographical limitation of this study the findings consolidate the findings of studies from other regions around the world (see Koppensteiner & Stephen, 2014; Hayes, 2010, Caprara, Schwartz, Capanna, Vecchione & Barbaranelli, 2006; Verhulst, Hatemi & Martin, 2010).

In the Ghanaian context, Antwi (2018) conducted a study which he sought to examine the determinants of voter behaviour in Ghana. The study adopted mixed methodological approach i.e. qualitative and quantitative approaches. A survey was conducted involving 300 respondents who were drawn from two swing regions (Greater Accra and Central) and two stronghold

regions (Ashanti and Volta). The results of the logistic regression test indicate that personal traits of candidates and good campaign promises are the factors that influences voter choice of Ghanaian voters during elections. The findings also revealed that ethnicity and economic indicators have minimal influence on voter decision making during elections in Ghana. This finding is at variance with the findings of previous (see Mensah, 2009; Ninsin, 2006; Youde, 2005; Gyimah-Boadi, 2001; Nugent, 2001).

## **2.8 Hypothesis Development and Conceptual Framework**

In electoral contest “the candidate or political party image formed in voters’ minds is an important factor determining voter behavior” (Cwalina, Falkowski & Newman, 2010, p.352). A candidate’s image in this context refers to the personal traits such as leadership qualities, morality, compassion, and care for people among others. “Candidate Personality refers to the emotional feelings such as hope, anger, patriotism, and pessimism aroused by the candidate’s personality” (Newman and Sheth, 1987, p. 34) It is established view in the literature that brand image is a significant factor that influences voter behavior. In other words, the mental picture a voter forms about a candidate or party in mind could influence such a voter to vote for a particular candidate or party. Voters tend to associate with candidates and parties whose personality traits are similar to theirs and depending on the strength of the emotional connection it could lead to the voter choosing the candidate in elections.it is for this reason that candidates beyond expending resources to propagate their policies and ideas (Newman, 1994) they also engage in the manufacture of good image (Newman, 2001, 2002). Once a candidate succeeds in creating a good image of himself in the minds of voters his chances of being voted for is increased. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that;

***H1: Candidate's image has a positive influence on voting decision.***

Social imagery describes the cognitive process of voters assessing candidates based on the social grouping associated with the candidate. "Social Imagery refers to a candidate's image based on his association with specific demographic (age, sex), socioeconomic (income, occupation), cultural-ethnic (Education, race), or political-ideological (conservative, moderate, liberal) segments of the society" (Newman and Sheth, 1987, p. 33). This suggest that the stereotyping of candidate's affiliation to demographic segments of society can influence voter behaviour. How a candidate is perceived to be socially aligned can influence voter choice in elections. A youthful candidate for instance, is likely to connect with young voters. Same arguments can be made for a candidate from a particular ethnic group who is likely to enjoy the support of the ethnic he hails from. Based on this it is hypothesized that;

***H2: Social imagery has a positive influence on voting decision.***

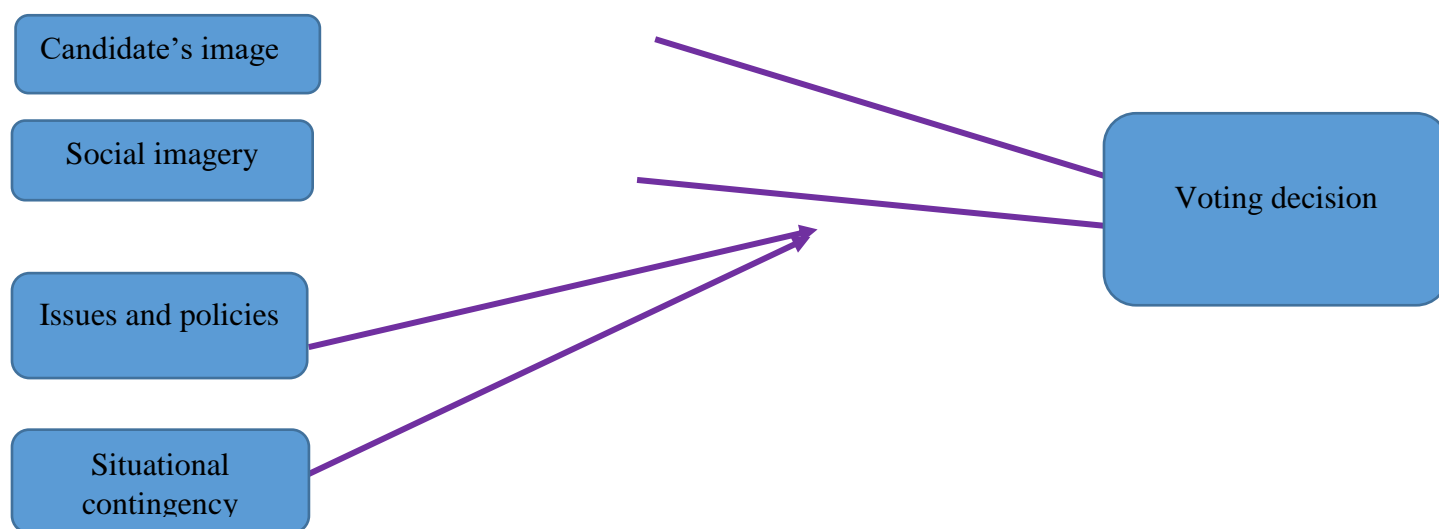
It could be argued that ideally the key determinant of voter choice should be policies and issues that affect the livelihoods of voters. However, empirical evidence suggests that factors that influence voter choice is as varied as possible. According to Newman and Sheth (1987, p. 31) "political issues refers to the personal beliefs of the voter about the candidate's stand on economic, social, and foreign policy issues, which represents the rationale for the candidate's platform." In competitive elections candidates put forward alternative policies ranging from economy, security, education, health to foreign policy. Empirical studies have found issues and policies to be a significant influence on voter decision making process. It is based on this is that this study hypothesizes that:

***H3: Issues and policies has a positive influence on voting decision.***

Situational contingency describes the cognitive segment of the thought process of the voter that makes the voter susceptible to believe in the occurrence of hypothetical events based on which voting decisions are made. In other words, “situational contingency refers to a set of international, domestic, and/or personal events (contingencies) that might cause the voter to switch his vote to another candidate” (Newman & Sheth, 1987, p. 35). During election campaigns there are accidental occurrence that could cause voters to change their about their choice in the elections. These unplanned events could be could be self-inflicted in the event of miscommunication from a candidate. In some instances, global events could have a bearing on the voter choice in national elections as voters would assess the proposed response of candidates to such events. Based on this it is hypothesized that:

***H4: Situational contingency has significant effect on voting decision.***

**Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework**



Source: Author's construct

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This is the methodology chapter. In this chapter the methodology adopted for the study is described in detail. The research purpose, research design, the targeted population, the sampling technique used in sampling respondents for the study are explained in this chapter. Data collection and analysis techniques are also described in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a description of the measures adopted to deal with ethical issues.

#### **3.1 Research Purpose**

According to Robson (2002) the primary aim of carrying out any research work is either to explore, describe or explain a particular phenomenon (Robson, 2002). Hence this study is descriptive in nature, specifically a cross sectional survey. This study is described as descriptive because it sought to deepen the understanding of the concept of voter as customer and how this analogy influences behaviour. A study is considered descriptive if its objective is to expand the frontiers of an existing phenomenon or describe certain predetermined variables to identify relationships among the various variables and in the process answer the pertinent questions about the subject matter (Cooper & Schindler, 2006).

#### **3.2 Research Approach**

According to the extant literature there are basic approaches to any research, these are qualitative, quantitative and mixed method. Whereas the qualitative research approach uses words or text to describe events, situations and phenomenon, the quantitative on the other hand

uses numbers, figures, tables or charts to explain the phenomenon under study. The mixed method is a combination of both quantitative and qualitative techniques in carrying out a research work. Yin (1994) advises that in selecting a research methodological approach a careful consideration should be given to the research objectives as well as the questions the study seeks to answer. This is important because all the three approaches have their strengths and weaknesses vis-à-vis data collection and analysis. Before starting this study, the researcher examined thoroughly all the three research approaches vis-a-vis the research objectives and questions. The quantitative research approach was deemed suitable for this study.

### **3.3 Research Design**

A Research design could be likened to an architectural design of a building, which provides in detail all dimensions of the structure. Research design is a blue print that delineates all the activities associated with the research including planning, data collection and reporting of findings (Burns & Grove 2001; De Vos 1998). Similarly, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007) describe a research design as using scientific processes in carrying out a research project. Hence this study adopts a cross sectional survey as a design, where data was collected through the use of questionnaires.

For any useful conclusions to be drawn from a research work, the scientific methodological approach for data gathering ought to be apt and germane. This study will adopt quantitative approach, precisely a cross sectional survey. This design was chosen having regard for the objectives and questions the study seeks to answer. According to Malhotra (2007) when the

objective of a research work is to provide findings that aid decision making then a quantitative approach is the best option.

### **3.4 Population and Sampling**

The targeted population of the study was all registered voters in the Greater Accra region. Burns and Grove (2003) assert that population of a study ought to comprise all research elements that are aligned with the requirements of the particular study and ought to be included in the study. Respondents for the study was selected using convenience sampling technique. Convenience sampling as the name suggests is a technique that is less complex and requires relative little cost and time to carry out (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Convenience sampling was deemed to be appropriate for this study since it would have been extremely difficult to have all the respondents of the study congregate at one venue at the same time.

Sampling is choosing reasonably few characters of a large group to study with the expectation that information gained from the selected characters would be enough to allow for value judgment to be made about the larger group (Shiu, Hair, Bush & Ortinau, 2009). In a survey, there is always a risk that some questionnaires will not be filled up properly. Thus, the researcher decided to guide respondents to answer the questionnaires so as to minimize errors.

### **3.5 Sample size**

The sample size of the study will be 500 respondents. According to Kant (2007) a minimum sample size of 100 is needed for any kind of quantitative analysis. Therefore, sample size of 300 respondents was deemed adequate for inferences to be drawn from the findings of the study.

### **3.6 Research Instrument**

The research instrument (questionnaire) was divided into three sections, section A comprised of questions on the demographic features of the respondents. The second section dealt with the independent variables (candidates' image, social imagery, social contingency and political issues) the study sought to measure and the last section contained statements on the dependent variable (voting decision). The measurement of these statements were done using a seven point likert scale from '1= not at all' to '5=very large extent' with '3= moderate'.

There is a concurrence view among scholars that the main instrument to be used in a survey research is questionnaire, which could be self-administered or researcher assisting respondents to answer the questionnaire or a combination of the two described methods described above (see Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2000; Cooper & Schindler, 2006; Malhotra & Birks, 2007). There is also an agreement that questionnaires can be applicable to all types of research approaches, whether descriptive or explanatory, what is required is for the questionnaire to be designed with a nice format which is easier for respondents to navigate and avoid nebulous questions or questions that offend the sensibilities of respondents. The questions should also be arranged logically and also endowed with the ability to illicit the right responses from the respondents.

### **3.7 Data Collection Procedures**

The data collection procedure started with getting instrument of data collection ready. The researcher then selected four constituencies within the Greater Accra region to conduct the survey. The data collection was spanned a period of 8 weeks. Respondents were approached and

the aim of the study was explained to them and they were asked to spend averagely 5 minutes to answer the questionnaire.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

The data collected was recorded and coded into Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 22. First the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments was performed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). This was followed by the selection of principal component factors from the varimax rotation in the exploratory factor analysis to represent the independent variables. Finally, a regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

### **3.9 Validity and Reliability**

Validity in research describes the extent to which the results of a research work mirrors the constructs being measured by the study. Eriksson and Wiedersheim-Paul (1997) on their part defined research validity as ‘The ability of a scale or measuring instrument to measure what is intended to be measured’ (p. 38). In other words, validity is about the level of fitness between the expected outcome of a research work and the actual results churned out by the study. According to Hardy & Byrman (2004) various techniques are available in the extant literature that could be used to assess the validity of a piece of research work. With this study the researcher used EFA and CFA as a technique in determining the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments. These two tests allowed the researcher to examine the robustness of the measurement instruments.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Introduction

This study sought to examine the voter as consumer analogy in the Ghanaian context. In furtherance of the goal, a quantitative approach, specifically cross sectional survey was adopted in collecting data from the sampled respondents. This chapter presents the test results of various analysis carried out including EFA, CPA, Pearson's product moment correlation and regression as well as the discussion on them.

#### 4.1 Profile of the Respondents

This section presents the findings on the demographic characteristics of the respondents. These characteristics of the respondents include gender, age, level of education and the number of times respondents have voted in national elections. After checking the 350 questionnaires retrieved from the respondents for completeness and accuracy, 300 of them were deemed usable.

**Table 4.1 Profile of the Respondents**

Detail	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	185	61.2
Female	115	38.3
Age		
18-25 years	55	18.3
26-33 years	85	28.3

34-42 years	65	21.6
43-49 years	60	20
Above 50 years	35	16.6
<b>Level of Education</b>		
JHS	12	4
SHS	28	9.3
Diploma	35	11.6
Degree	132	44
Postgraduate	93	31
<b>Number of times voted in national elections</b>		
1 election cycle	9	3
2 election cycles	26	8.6
3 election cycles	35	11.6
4 election cycles	46	15.3
5 election cycles	58	19.3
6 election cycles	78	26
7 election cycles	48	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Survey data, August 2020

The findings on the respondents' characteristics revealed that 185 representing 61.2 percent of the sampled respondents were males while 115 of the respondents representing 38.3 percent were females. With respect to age the findings show that majority of the respondents 85 representing

28.3 percent of the sample were in the age cohort of 26-33 and they were followed by respondents in the age cohort of 34-42 with 65 respondents representing 21.6 percent. Whereas respondents in the age cohort of 43-49 were 60 representing 20 percent of the sample, the respondents in the age cohort of 18-25 were made up 55 respondents representing 18.3 percent and those who were in the age cohort of 50 years and above were 35 representing 16.6 percent of the sample. The findings on the age characteristics of the respondents paints an interesting picture. The finding suggests that the Ghanaian population across all age categories take active interest in competitive politics.

With regards to how many times respondents have voted in national elections, the findings revealed that majority of the respondents 78 representing 26 percent of the sample have voted in 6 national elections. Whereas 58 of the respondents representing 19.3 percent of the sample have voted in 5 national elections, 48 respondents representing 16 percent of the sample voted in 7 national elections, 46 respondents representing 15.3 percent of the sample voted in 4 national elections. While 35 respondents representing 11.6 percent of the sample have voted in 3 national elections, 26 respondents representing 8.6 percent of the sample voted twice in national elections. Lastly 9 respondents representing 3 percent of the sample voted once in national elections. These results demonstrate the passion with which Ghanaians approach multi party politics. These results validate the high voter turnout during national elections particularly the presidential and parliamentary elections. The details of these findings are illustrated in Table 4.1.

## 4.2 Assessment of Measurement Model

Before the correlation and regression tests, it was imperative to assess the measurement instruments, hence exploratory factor analysis was conducted, the results are displayed Table 4.2 and 4.3 the Bartlett test of Sphericity (Approx.: Chi-square = 2475.487, df. 120, sig. 0.000) and the KMO measure of sampling adequacy (value of 0.910) demonstrated that a strong relationship exists among the constructs and that formed the basis for performing factor analysis. Factors that got selected were those with eigenvalues of greater than or equal to 1 (Malhotra and Birks, 2006). Furthermore, only factor loadings with a minimum threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 1998) and also a minimum reliability threshold of 0.6 (Nunnally, 1978) were included in the analysis.

**Table 4.2 KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.910
	Approx. Chi-Square	2475.487
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	120
	Sig.	.000

**Source:** Survey data, August, 2020

**Table 4.3 Principal Component Analysis and Cronbach Alpha**

Measured Variable	Candidate's image	Situational contingency	Political Issues	Social Imagery
<i>Candidate's image</i>				
I will choose the candidate that is honest	0.758			
I will choose the candidate that is trustworthy	0.611			

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I will choose the candidate that is compassionate	0.621
I will choose the candidate that is charismatic	0.589
I will choose the candidate that is incorruptible	0.817
I will choose the candidate that is decisive	0.742
<i>Situation contingency</i>	
I will choose the candidate who will bring down the prices of goods and services	0.609 0.560
I will choose the candidate who will stop the spread of the virus	
<i>Policies and issues</i>	
The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to create jobs	0.845
The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to provide social amenities	0.656
The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to reduce poverty	0.723
The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to fight corruption	0.775
My candidate will be the best person to stabilize the exchange rate	0.626
The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to boost the image of the country internationally	0.562
The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to	0.486

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provide quality leadership by strengthening the country  
morally and ethically

*Social imagery*

The candidate I will choose is the best person to lead this country and will likely be supported by the youth 0.567

The candidate I will choose is the best person to lead this country and will likely be supported by the working class 0.582

The candidate I will choose is the best person to help and will likely be supported by minority ethnic groups 0.571

The candidate I will choose is the best person to lead this country and will likely be supported by academics 0.509

The candidate I will choose is the best person to lead this country and will likely be supported by business men and women 0.482

The candidate I will choose is the best person to lead this country and will likely be supported by my ethnic group 0.675

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% explained variance	19.219	35.632	52.067	65.810
Eigenvalues	8.23	4.34	2.056	2.081
Mean	4.204	3.264	4.306	2.687
Cronbach alpha	0.892	0.852	0.773	0.787

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**Source:** survey data, August 2020

### 4.3 Relationship Between Candidate’s Image, Situational Contingency, Policies and Issues, Social Imagery and Voting Decision

Before conducting the regression test it was important to examine the relationship between the independent variables (candidate’s image, situational contingency, policies and issues and social imagery) and the dependent variable (voter choice). To do this assessment the Pearson’s product moment correlation test was conducted. This correlation test also examined the inter-correlation among the independent variables.

**Table 4.4 The Pearson’s Moment Product Correlation**

	<b>VC</b>	<b>CI</b>	<b>SC</b>	<b>PI</b>	<b>SI</b>
Voter choice (VC)	1.00				
Candidate’s image (CI)	0.71	1.00			
Situational contingency (SC)	0.47	0.32	1.00		
Policies and issues (PI)	0.76	0.59	0.62	1.00	
Social imagery (SI)	0.53	0.56	0.58	0.48	1.00

Source: Survey data, August 2020

The correlation results as displayed in Table 4.4 indicate that all the four variables that influences voting decision have positive correlation with voter choice. this correlation ranges from strong to moderate correlation with the dependent variable. These are manifested in the correlation coefficients which ranges from a high of 0.76 (policies and issues) to a low of 0.47 (situational contingency). This implies that all the variables (candidate’s image, situational contingency, policies and issues and social imagery) have influence on voter choice. The results also revealed strong inter-correlation among the four variables predicting voting decision. The correlation co-

efficient range from a low of 0.32 to a high of 0.62. Though these results demonstrate strong to moderate prediction of voter choice it was not enough to satisfy the objectives of the study, which is to assess the effect of candidate’s image, situational contingency, policies and issues and social imagery on the Ghanaian voter choice. Hence a regression test was conducted and the results are illustrated in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5 Standard Multiple Regression Analysis**

<i>Details</i>	<i>Regression Statistics</i>			
Multiple R	0.57			
R Square	0.33			
Adjusted R Square	0.33			
Standard Error	0.99			
Observations	300			

<i>Details</i>	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Intercept	0.46	0.22	2.06	0.04
Candidate’s image	0.23	0.08	2.05	0.04
Situational contingency	0.14	0.07	1.46	0.14
Policies and issues	0.58	0.10	5.15	0.00
Social imagery	0.20	0.06	3.13	0.03

Source: Survey data, 2020

The regression test output as displayed in Table 4.5 indicate that the four variables – candidate’s image, situational contingency, policies and issues and social imagery have significant influence

on voter choice. That said, the degree of the prediction of the four variables are at varying degrees and the coefficients of all the four constructs are significant at 0.05. The results further indicate that among the four constructs, policies and issues with standard coefficient of 0.58 significantly influence voter choice more than the other three constructs. Candidate's image (standard coefficient 0.23) comes in second as the variable with significant influence on voter choice and was followed by social imagery with standard coefficient 0.20. It is important to note, however, that the results show that situational contingency (standard coefficient 0.14) has minimal influence on the electorates voting decision. A probable explanation of these results could be that, the electorates puts premium value on the personal traits of candidates as well as the socio-economic issues that confronts them daily in making voting decision.

#### **4.4 Discussion of the Findings**

This section is devoted to the discussion of findings which is done in relation to the extant literature. As part of the discussion the findings of this study will be compared with the findings of previous studies. The discussion herein is presented according to the objectives of the study.

##### **4.4.1 The Effect of Candidates' Image on Voting Decision**

The idea that voters just like consumers in commerce would vote based on rational decision making (Dean & Croft, 2009) is still very contestable in the extant literature. Hence studies like current one are still being commissioned to interrogate voter behaviour by ferreting out factors that could influence voter behaviour. Previous studies have shown that a number of factors do influence the voting decision of many people. One of such factors reported in the literature is the

candidate's image (Cwalina, Falkowski & Newman, 2010). This study therefore set out to validate or disprove this view in the literature.

The findings of the study revealed that candidate's image does have influence on the voter decision of electorates particularly Ghanaian electorates. The results of the Pearson moment product correlation test show that candidate's image is significantly correlated with voting decision. It could be seen in Table 4.4 that the correlation coefficient showing the relationship between candidate's image and voting decision is 0.71. This result demonstrates that candidate image has significant influence on the voting decision of the Ghanaian electorate. Also the regression test results indicate that candidate's image is a good predictor of voting choice with a standard coefficient of 0.23.

This finding supports the findings of previous studies which found candidate's image to be a predictor of voting decision. For instance, Cwalina, Falkowski and Newman (2010) in their study found that candidate's image is one key influencing factor of voting decision. Similarly, Koppensteiner and Stephen (2014) in a study of candidate's personal traits and voter choice, that majority of participants chose the politicians who were perceived to possess similar personality traits to that of the participants. The study findings also revealed that first impression could sway voters in favour of candidates. The authors concluded that voters would choose candidates deemed to possess personality traits that are similar to those of the voters. This finding also reinforces the findings of Antwi (2018) in which he examined voter behaviour using two swing regions (Greater Accra and Central) and two stronghold regions (Ashanti and Volta) and found that personality trait was one of the factors that influence voter choice in Ghana. These findings are

also in consonance with that of Caprara, Schwartz, Capanna, Vecchione and Barbaranelli (2006) conducted in Italy and Verhulst, Hatemi and Martin (2010) in Australia, which all found that candidates' personal traits have impact on voter choice.

The practical implication of this finding is that voters are concerned with the caliber of person they entrust with the responsibility of leadership. The findings indicate that a candidate's credibility ranks high on the criteria for choosing who to vote for. This finding show that voters will choose a candidate who they perceive to be honest, trustworthy, compassionate, charismatic and above all incorruptible. Political actors (political parties and candidates) therefore ought to pay special attention to their brand image since it is seen as the moderator of brand personality (Parry-Giles, 2010). Hence political parties and candidates ought to prioritize the building of good brand image which will aim at reinforcing the key attributes of the candidate or the ideology of the party (Needham, 2006).

#### **4.4.2 The Effect of Social Imagery on Voting Decision**

Social imagery describes the cognitive process of voters assessing candidates based on the social grouping associated with the candidate. In other words, a candidate is likely to be voted for because of his perceived affiliation to particular demographic group(s) in society. For instance, some argue that a youthful candidate is likely to enjoy support from the young voters. Others may vote for a candidate because of ethnic affiliation. It was to verify these claims that this objective was formulated.

The findings of the study validate the view that social imagery has influence on voter choice. The Pearson product moment correlation results as displayed in table 4.4 show that there is significant relationship between social imagery (correlation coefficient 0.53) and voter choice. This is confirmed by the regression result which shows a standard coefficient of 0.20. This implies that demographic segment affiliation of candidates influences the voting decisions of Ghanaian voters. While this finding may be at variance with the basic assumptions of the rational choice theory it does confirm the findings of previous studies. This finding is in consonance with studies by Fridy (2007), Gyimah-Boadi (2007) and Erdmann (2007) which support the view that ethnicity is a key determinant of voter choice in Ghanaian elections and that issues and party ideology have limited influence on the voting decisions of the Ghanaian voter. This finding however, is at variance with that of Antwi (2018) who found that ethnicity has minimal influence on the voting decision of Ghanaian voters.

The implication of this finding is that group affiliation has influence on voter choice, therefore, political parties and candidates ought to design strategies and craft campaign messages that will emphasize the candidate's core competences and personal traits especially if he is perceived to be affiliated to minority groups. In addition, political parties and candidates ought to ensure that their policies appeal to the various identifiable groupings in the electoral area. These policies should be crafted and designed to reflect the needs and aspirations of the various groups. The basic premise of the phenomenon of ethnic voting is that people are more likely to behave in conformity with the ethnic group the voter belongs. Hence, the electorate will vote for a candidate from their social group if they deem the candidate to be the best protector of their

interests (Adjei 2013). This explains why some politicians would whip up ethnic sentiments during electioneering campaign of proffering policy alternatives.

#### **4.4.3 The Effect of Policies and Issues on Voting Decision**

Policies and issues in this context refer to the socio-economic issues dominate discussion leading to every election cycle. It could be argued that ideally the key determinant of voter choice in every election cycle should be policies and issues that affect the livelihoods of voters. However, empirical evidence suggests that factors that influence voter choice is as varied as possible. It is expected candidates in election will put forward their policy propositions on the economy, security, education, health and foreign policy, which allows the voter to evaluate these options and then make a choice. This objective was therefore formulated with the intent of finding out if Ghanaians make their voting decision based on policies and issues.

The findings indicate that policies and issues have significant influence voter choice. Indeed, the Pearson product moment correlation results in Table 4.4, indicate that among the four variables policies and issues has the strongest correlation with voter choice with a correlation coefficient of 0.76. The regression results also show that policies and issues is a good predictor of voter choice with a standard coefficient of 0.53, the highest among the four variables used to measure voter choice. This means Ghanaian voters' decision making process regarding which candidate which candidate to vote for is largely influenced by the policies and issues. In the words, Ghanaian voters are concerned about jobs, poverty reduction, inflation, health care and security and would vote for a candidate who offers the best ideas in dealing with all these issues.

This finding is consistent with that of Antwi (2018) whose study on the voter behaviour of four regions (two swing and two strongholds) found that voters in those four regions are likely to vote based on his policies. The study finding also reinforces that of Newman and Sheth (1985), and Newman (2002) who found that policies and issues have significant influence on voter choice. This finding contradicts studies which concluded that voters would make their voting decision based other considerations like ethnicity (see Erdmann 2007; Friday, 2007; Gyimah-Boadi, 2007) instead of making a rational decision.

The implication of this finding is that the Ghanaian voter is gradually shifting away from the class or ethnic based voting to issue based voting. Political parties and candidates ought to realize that with good policies propositions that offer solutions to the basic needs of voters would the voters look beyond their ethnic or class to vote for the party or candidate they perceive offer the best solution to their needs. It could be argued that this an indication of gradual departure from electioneering campaign dominated by semiotics (Mensah, 2009) to issues based electoral campaigns. This finding show that, indeed, the voter could become a consumer as they make voting decisions based policies that satisfy their needs just as products do in commerce.

#### **4.4.4 The Effect of Situational Contingency on Voting Decision**

Situational contingency describes the cognitive segment of the thought process of the voter that makes the voter susceptible to believe in the occurrence of hypothetical events based on which voting decisions are made. In other words, voters would assess candidates' capacity to deal with unforeseen occurrences, a typical example is the current outbreak of 'corona virus'. It is a view held in the literature that situational contingency is one of the factors that influences voter

choice. This objective was aimed at finding out whether the Ghanaian voters consider situational contingency in making their voting decisions.

The findings of the study revealed that situational contingency has minimal influence on voter choice in Ghana. The Pearson product moment correlation results show that situational contingency has minimal influence on the voter choice of Ghanaians with correlation coefficient of 0.47 being the least among the four variables tested. Again the regression test results also indicate that situational contingency is not a strong predictor of voter choice, as the result in Table 4.5 show a standard coefficient of 0.14. This means that the Ghanaian voter does not prioritize situational contingency in making voting decision. This finding contradicts the findings of previous studies such as Cwalina, Falkowski and Newman (2010); Newman and Sheth (1985) and Newman (2002).

The implication of this finding for political parties and candidates is that voters do not bother themselves about hypothetical issues or events in making their voting decision. What this means is that political parties and candidates could concentrate on designing communication messages that incorporates the other factors that influence voter choice. For instance, instead of using scarce resources to design campaign messages that project the candidates' competence and capability in effectively dealing with unforeseen eventualities. Political actors could adopt concepts like branding which according to Peng and Hackley (2009) could be used to reinforces quality and originality which consumers/ voters can associate with. Needham (2006) posits that a successfully branded party of candidate would enjoy brand loyalty during elections and off-

election seasons. There are some who even argue that voter loyalty is more enduring than consumer loyalty to brands in commerce.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMAARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

The primary purpose of this study was examine factors that influence voter choice in Ghana. Pursuant to this a quantitative approach was adopted with a descriptive design. A survey was carried out involving 300 respondents in the Greater Accra region of Ghana. The results of the analyzed data and the discussion of same is presented in Chapter four. This chapter presents the summary of the findings, the conclusions drawn based on the findings and recommendations.

#### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

The main objective of this study was to examine the factors that influence voter choice behaviour. To pursue this, four objectives were carved out of the main objective. To achieve these objectives, two test were conducted – the Pearson product moment correlation and regression tests. The tests result as presented in Chapter four indicate that three out of the four constructs tested have significant influence on voter choice. The summarized in this section according to the objectives of the study.

##### **5.1.1 The Effect of Candidates' Image on Voting Decision**

The findings of the study revealed that candidate's image does have influence on the voter decision of electorates particularly Ghanaian electorates. The results of the Pearson moment product correlation test show that candidate's image is significantly correlated with voting decision. it could be seen in Table 4.4 that the correlation coefficient showing the relationship between candidate's image and voting decision is 0.71. This result demonstrate that candidate

image has significant influence on the voting decision of the Ghanaian electorate. Also the regression test results indicate that candidate's image is a good predictor of voting choice with a standard coefficient of 0.23.

### **5.1.2 The Effect of Social Imagery on Voting Decision**

The findings of the study validate the view that social imagery has influence on voter choice. The Pearson product moment correlation results as displayed in table 4.4 show that there is significant relationship between social imagery (correlation coefficient 0.53) and voter choice. This is confirmed by the regression result which shows a standard coefficient of 0.20. This implies that demographic segment affiliation of candidates influences the voting decisions of Ghanaian voters. While this finding may be at variance with the basic assumptions of the rational choice theory it does confirm the findings of previous studies.

### **5.1.3 The Effect of Policies and Issues on Voting Decision**

The findings indicate that policies and issues have significant influence voter choice. Indeed, the Pearson product moment correlation results in Table 4.4, indicate that among the four variables policies and issues has the strongest correlation with voter choice with a correlation coefficient of 0.76. The regression results also show that policies and issues is a good predictor of voter choice with a standard coefficient of 0.53, the highest among the four variables used to measure voter choice. This means Ghanaian voters' decision making process regarding which candidate which candidate to vote for is largely influenced by the policies and issues. In the words, Ghanaian voters are concerned about jobs, poverty reduction, inflation, health care and security and would vote for a candidate who offers the best ideas in dealing with all these issues.

#### **5.1.4 The Effect Situational Contingency on Voting Decision**

The findings of the study revealed that situational contingency has minimal influence on voter choice in Ghana. The Pearson product moment correlation results show that situational contingency has minimal influence on the voter choice of Ghanaians with correlation coefficient of 0.47 being the least among the four variables tested. Again the regression test results also indicate that situational contingency is not a strong predictor of voter choice, as the result in Table 4.5 show a standard coefficient of 0.14. This means that the Ghanaian voter does not prioritize situational contingency in making voting decision.

#### **5.2 Conclusions**

The study sought to achieve four objectives, one of them was to examine the effects of candidate's image on voting decision of the Ghanaian voter. The study found that candidate's image has significant influence on the voting decision of the Ghanaian voter. This study concludes that candidate's image is a good predictor of voter choice. It is therefore imperative that political parties and candidates strategize to build and maintain good brand image that resonate with the electorates. The concept of branding could be used in reinforcing the key personality traits of the candidate (Needham, 2006). Besides, brand image moderates the strength between perceived service quality and brand loyalty (Homer, 2008). The ultimate goal of political actors is to achieve voter loyalty.

The second objective of the study was to examine the effect of social imagery on voting decision of the Ghanaian voter. Social imagery refers to the perceived demographic alignment of a candidate. The study found that social imagery has a significant effect on the voting decision of Ghanaian voters. The study therefore, concludes that social imagery is a good predictor of voter

choice in Ghana. After 28 years of multi-party democracy and seven election cycles, social groupings such as class and ethnicity still influence the voters' choice of candidates in Ghana's elections.

The third objective of the study was to assess the effect of policies and issues on the voting decision of the Ghanaian voter. The findings of the study indicate that policies and issues have a significant effect on the voting decision of Ghanaian voters. This finding is refreshing because the extant literature is replete with studies that suggest that many African elections are mostly influenced by ethnicity. Some African elections are considered as mere ethnic census. Voter choice ought to be influenced by issues and policies that reflect the needs and aspirations of the electorate instead of relying on social group affiliations. Just as firms in commerce would gather market intelligence and use it to design an offering, political actors can use polls to gather information about voters' needs and then formulate policies (political product) (Lees-Marshment, 2004) to satisfy these needs.

The fourth objective of the study was to examine the effect of situational contingency on the voting decision of the Ghanaian voter. Situational contingency refers to the cognitive segment of the thought process of the voter that makes the voter susceptible to believe in the occurrence of hypothetical events based on which voting decisions are made. The study found that situational contingency has minimal influence on the voting decision of Ghanaian voters. Based on this finding, it could be concluded that situational contingency is not a good predictor of voter choice in Ghanaian elections. The probable explanation for this finding may be that the Ghanaian voter is

much concern about the ‘bread and butter’ issues, thus issues that directly affect the quality of their lives, that they have no time imagine hypothetical events.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

In light of the findings of the study, the following suggestions are recommended for the consideration of political actors. First, following the finding that candidate’s image influences voting decision, it is suggested that political parties and candidates should take branding serious. Campaign messages should be crafted to reinforce personal traits such as honesty, compassionate, trustworthy, decisive and more importantly incorruptibility. Based on the findings these traits are significant influencers of voter choice. In addition, political parties should equally brand themselves to reflect the aspirations of the electorates.

Second, based on the findings, it is suggested that political parties and candidates should realize that the voting behaviour of the Ghanaian voter is changing and that just like consumers, the Ghanaian voter today is looking for political product that satisfy their requirements. Hence political parties and candidates should design policies that meets the needs of the voter. This should be done by first, understanding the socio-economic needs of the people and then crafting and proposing policies to deal with them.

Third, the findings of the study provide evidence that ethnicity still influences voter choice in Ghanaian elections. To deal with this phenomenon it is suggested that public education on the dangers of ethnic voting should be intensified. This could be orchestrated by the state agencies or

political parties and candidates. This public education could be done through a variety of mediums, it could be done through the mass media channels such as TV and radio. This education should be extended include political officers and candidates about the negative effects of ethnic politics. It would appear that politicians who often fan the flames of ethnic politics are ignorant of the catastrophic effects of the practice and they need to be educated.

Fourth, since the findings of the study revealed that ethnicity influences voter choice and that situational contingency has minimal effect on voter choice, it is suggested that further studies be conducted to interrogate the two constructs further. It would be useful to find out why ethnicity continue still influence voter choice in Ghana.

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## APPENDIX

### QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a student of Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ) undertaking a research work on the topic: **“How far has the voter changed into consumer? critically examining voter behaviour.”** This questionnaire is designed to solicit for information on the above topic. I would be grateful if you could spend few minutes of your time to complete this questionnaire to help us obtain data for the study.

#### **SECTION A: Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents**

1. Gender of respondent

- a. Male [ ]                      b. Female [ ]

2. Age range of respondent

- a. 18- 25 yrs [ ]                      b. 26 - 33 yrs [ ]                      c. 34 - 42yrs [ ]                      d. 43 - 49 yrs [ ]
- e. Above 50yrs [ ]

3. What is your highest level of education?

- a. JHS    b. SHS [ ]    c. Diploma [ ]    d. Degree [ ]    e. Postgraduate [ ]

4. How many national elections have you vote in?

- 1 [ ]    2 [ ]    3 [ ]    4 [ ]    5 [ ]    6 [ ]    7 [ ]

## Section B

### Candidate's Image

On a likert scale of 1-5, please indicate by ticking the likelihood of you associating with the following statements. 1. Least likely 2. Unlikely 3. Neutral 4. likely 5. Most likely.

Q/N	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
5	I will choose the candidate that is honest					
6	I will choose the candidate that is trustworthy					
7	I will choose the candidate that is compassionate					
8	I will choose the candidate that is charismatic					
9	I will choose the candidate that is incorruptible					
10	I will choose the candidate that is decisive					
	<b>Situational contingency</b>					
11	I will choose the candidate who will bring down the prices of goods and services					
12	I will choose the candidate who will stop the spread of the virus					

### Policies and Issues

On a likert scale of 1-5, please indicate by ticking the degree to which you agree with the following statements. 1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree.

Q/N	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
13	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to create jobs					
14	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to provide social amenities					
15	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to reduce poverty					
16	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to fight corruption					
17	My candidate will be the best person to stabilize the exchange rate					
18	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to boost the image of the country internationally					
19	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to provide quality leadership by strengthening the country					

morally and ethically					
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### Social Imagery

On a likert scale of 1-5, please indicate by ticking the likelihood of you associating with the following statements. 1. Least likely 2. Unlikely 3. Neutral 4. likely 5. Most likely.

Q/N	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
20	The candidate I will choose is the best person to lead this country and will likely be supported by the youth					
21	The candidate I will choose is the best person to lead this country and will likely be supported by the working class					
22	The candidate I will choose is the best person to help and will likely be supported by minority ethnic groups					
23	The candidate I will choose is the best person to lead this country and will likely be supported by academics					
24	The candidate I will choose is the best person to lead this country and will likely be supported by business men and women					
25	The candidate I will choose is the best person to lead this country and will likely be supported by my ethnic group					