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**EXPLORING THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF POLITICAL
COMMUNICATION THEORIES: A CASE STUDY OF THE NATIONAL
DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS (NDC) 2024 GENERAL ELECTION STRATEGY**

BY

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DECLARATION BY STUDENT – DISSERTATION

I hereby declare that this research is a result of my original research and that, no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or any other higher education institution. I further declare that all the sources I used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR

This project work has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of project work laid down by the Institute of Journalism, under the University of Media, Arts, and Communication (UniMAC-IJ)

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved parents, Mr. Boateng Eric Kwame and Mrs. Aidoo Victoria Boateng, whose love, sacrifice, and guidance have been the foundation for my life and education. Your unwavering faith in my potential has been my anchor that kept me grounded and the wings that allowed me to soar. Everything I have achieved reflects the values you instilled in me - hard work, humility, perseverance, and integrity.

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Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to the future of political communication in Ghana. It is my hope that this work will contribute to advancing responsible and ethical communication practices, combating misinformation, and fostering democratic engagement. May it serve as an inspiration to aspiring scholars and practitioners who believe in the power of words, ideas, and truth to shape a better future.

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the practical application of political communication theories, in the Ghanaian context of the 2024 general election, focusing on the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The research examines how theoretical frameworks such as agenda-setting and framing theory were operationalized in shaping voter perception, party image, and electoral outcomes. Employing a qualitative study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with Party Communication Offices, Political Marketing consultants, journalists, public relations practitioners as well as analysis from secondary data sources, as the study provides an empirical account of how the National Democratic Congress (NDC) integrated communication theories into practice. The findings demonstrated that the NDC's communications team adopted a hybrid model that effectively merged traditional media with digital communication platforms (social media) to target and engage a broad-based segment of the Ghanaian voter. Through agenda-setting and framing theory, the NDC amplified the narratives around governance shortcomings of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) administration while projecting its candidate as reform reform-oriented and people-centered alternative. Also, the use of social media platforms such as Twitter formerly X, Facebook, TikTok and WhatsApp in issue framing, voter segmentation and mobilization as well as real-time agenda-setting. Furthermore, the study identified how community engagement was effective as it enhanced the direct exchange of information and ideas to be shared among political actors and the citizens which reflects the key element of two-step flow communication. To contribute to the body of knowledge on political communication in Ghana, the study recommends that political parties and movements incorporate cultural and social grounded communication approaches to its communication, political parties ought to maintain effective communications even beyond election periods and finally recommend stronger collaboration between political actors, academia, and the media to advance the development of Ghana centered studies that explore the intersection between communication, politics and culture.

Keywords: Political Communication, National Democratic Congress, New Patriotic Party, Agenda-Setting theory, Framing theory, Symbolic Interactionism, Two-Step Flow Theory, 2024 General Election, Traditional Media, Social Media, Campaign Strategy, Voter Segmentation.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Political communication has become a crucial component of contemporary politics, shaping democratic participation and electoral outcomes. In recent times, political parties no longer rely solely on traditional campaign methods such as rallies and posters. Instead, they increasingly incorporate digital communication platforms, audience segmentation, and messaging to influence public opinion. This chapter presents a background to the research and outlines the problem that necessitated the research. It also states the research questions and the objectives that guide the study. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the significance and scope of the research, defines key operational terms and explains the organization of the entire work. The chapter concludes with a summary that reinforces the key points discussed.

1.1 Background

The 2024 general elections in Ghana marked a pivotal moment in the nation's political history. Amid persistent economic challenges, soaring inflation, rampant unemployment, perceptions of corruption, and growing public discontent with the governing New Patriotic Party (NPP), the National Democratic Congress (NDC) secured a decisive victory (Bonsu, 2025). The return of John Dramani Mahama to the presidency, defeating Vice President Dr Mahamudu Bawumia, represented not only a political comeback but also a case of strategic electoral success rooted in effective political communication (Ahovi, 2025).

Political communication, as defined by McNair (2017), is any deliberate exchange of information related to politics. It involves the communication efforts of politicians, government bodies, the media, interest groups, and ordinary citizens, all directed at shaping political

decisions and public understanding. Across the world, it has become an essential tool for connecting with the public, shaping opinions, and mobilizing support (McNair, 2017). Modern campaigns have grown more sophisticated, incorporating media engagement, digital platforms, targeted messaging, and strategic framing. Ghana has followed this global trend, with political actors investing heavily in communication, hiring media experts, and deploying digital technologies to influence public opinion.

The 2024 elections in Ghana underscored the decisive role of communication in determining electoral outcomes. Campaigning in the Ghanaian context is deeply rooted in social and cultural traditions. Candidates do more than host public rallies; they engage directly with communities through interpersonal outreach, paying respects to traditional authorities, meeting occupational groups such as market traders and fisherfolk, and participating in grassroots events (Bob-Miller & Paller, 2023). These symbolic and performative acts enhance political legitimacy and deepen voter engagement. The NDC's 2024 campaign adopted a multi-faceted communication strategy, delivering tailored messages on economic hardship, youth unemployment, anti-corruption measures, and governance reforms. The party effectively used social media, community outreach, and media influencers to deliver its agenda in a consistent, targeted manner that resonated with key voter segments.

Political communication is often analyzed through established theories that explain how messages are crafted, disseminated, and interpreted in a connected media environment. Agenda-setting theory holds that the media may not tell people what to think but can influence what they think about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Framing theory explains how the presentation of information can shape individuals' understanding and perspective on issues (Chong & Druckman, 2007). While widely applied in mature democracies, the relevance of these theories in developing democracies like Ghana remains underexplored.

Ghana's political landscape presents both opportunities and challenges for testing these theories. Despite constitutional guarantees of press freedom, disparities in media access and the political alignment of many media houses complicate how messages are framed and disseminated. Electoral behavior in Ghana reflects a mix of rational policy considerations and factors such as ethnicity, historical loyalties, and symbolic communication. These dynamics may limit the direct applicability of Western developed political communication models and point to the need for more context-specific research.

This study addresses that gap by critically examining the communication strategies deployed by the NDC in the 2024 elections and assessing their theoretical relevance. It investigates the extent to which these strategies align with established political communication theories and how they contributed to the party's electoral success. By combining theoretical analysis with practical case evidence, the study deepens academic understanding while providing actionable insights for political practitioners and campaign strategists in developing democracies.

In doing so, the research responds to scholarly calls for more evidence-based, context-sensitive political communication studies in Africa (Amenyeawu, 2021). Rather than uncritically importing Western models, it examines how theories operate in Ghana's sociopolitical environment, contributing to indigenous theoretical development and advancing understanding of democratic engagement in sub-Saharan Africa.

The 2024 general elections were both a pivotal political event and a revealing case of strategic communication. The NDC's success stemmed from its ability to tap into public dissatisfaction and present viable solutions through targeted, well-crafted messages. This study offers a timely exploration of the intersection between communication theory and political practice, providing insights into the evolving trajectory of political engagement in Ghana's maturing democracy.

1.2 Problem Statement

Political communication now plays a pivotal role in modern democracies, shaping how politicians share information, mobilise support, and craft compelling electoral narratives. Ghana's 2024 general elections demonstrated this vividly. After consecutive defeats in 2016 and 2020, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) made a strong comeback, winning with a convincing margin. This victory, achieved at a time of widespread public frustration over economic challenges, suggests that the party reworked its communication strategy in ways that resonated with voters.

While scholars have emphasized the growing influence of digital media and agenda-setting in election campaigns, there is still limited research connecting these theories to concrete campaign outcomes in developing democracies like Ghana. Much of the existing literature focuses on broad themes such as media and democracy or the content of party manifestos, without examining how campaign strategies are directly informed by theory. As a result, little is known about how concepts like agenda-setting, framing, and political marketing were practically applied by the NDC in the 2024 elections, or how these strategies may have shaped voter behavior.

Equally, the underexplored question of whether Western political communication theories adequately explain Ghana's unique political and media environment. The country's political culture blends modern and traditional elements, including symbolic interactions with chiefs, strong ethno-political identities, and deeply rooted face-to-face grassroots mobilisation. These cultural dynamics make it necessary to assess whether theories developed in Western contexts can fully account for, or guide, political communication practices in Ghana.

This study seeks to address both scholarly and practical gaps by closely examining the NDC's communication strategies during the 2024 general elections. It will explore how these strategies align with established political communication theories and assess their effectiveness in the Ghanaian context. In doing so, the research will contribute to the development of theories better attuned to Ghana and the wider African political landscape, while also offering practical guidance for political strategists, communication experts, and academics working to strengthen democracy across the continent.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1.3.1 General Objective

The primary objective of this study is to critically examine the political communication strategies employed by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) during the 2024 general election and assess how effectively these strategies align with key political communication theories and frameworks within Ghana's socio-political context.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To explore the communication strategies the NDC used during the 2024 general election.
2. To assess how these communication strategies reflect or connect with well-known communication theories like agenda-setting and framing.
3. To examine how well these theories apply within Ghana's unique political, cultural and electoral context.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.4.1 Main Research Question

In what ways did the National Democratic Congress (NDC) communicate with the public during the 2024 general elections, and how well do these communication approaches reflect or relate to well-known political communication theories, considering Ghana's unique social and political landscape?

1.4.2 Sub-Questions

1. What were the main communication strategies employed by the NDC during the 2024 general elections?
2. How did these communication strategies reflect or differ from already established political communication theories such as the agenda-setting theory and framing theory?
3. How relevant and applicable are Western political communication theories in explaining the NDC's communication approach within Ghana's unique social-political context?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its effort to explore the political communication theory with election practice within Ghana's democratic framework. Although theories like agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), framing (Entman, 1993) have been thoroughly examined in Western contexts, there is a limited amount of study regarding the strategic application of these frameworks in African democracies. This paper addresses a significant gap between theoretical conceptions and their actual applications in Ghana's electoral campaigns by analyzing how the National Democratic Congress (NDC) implemented these theories during the 2024 general elections.

Secondly, the study sheds light on the always-shifting dynamics of political communication within the democratic setting of Ghana. The elections of 2024 marked a turning point in the adoption of strategies supported by communication theories, including the use of digital technology, influencer-driven campaigns, and strategic messaging. Political players, campaign strategists, and communication practitioners need to get an understanding of how the New Democratic Party (NDC) utilised these theories to engage people, build political narratives, and deflect the messages of opponents.

Furthermore, the study has policy importance since it highlights how political communication may be used as a tool for inclusive democratic participation. This is an important aspect of the study. Through the demonstration of the National Democratic Congress's (NDC) application of communication theories to mobilise citizens, the research highlights the importance that strategic messaging plays in creating political awareness, civic engagement, and accountability in government responsibilities. This topic is of utmost significance in Ghana, where there has been a changing number of people voting and trusting the democratic institutions.

Finally, the findings of this research will serve as a resource for future political communication strategies, not just for the New Democratic Party (NDC), but also for other political parties, as well as academia, civil society organizations (CSOs) and politicians. The research expands both the range of knowledge in African political communication and the ways political parties in emerging democracies put theory into practice, contributing to comparative studies along these lines. By situating political communication theories within the framework of Ghana's sociopolitical climate, this objective can be successfully fulfilled.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to the exploration of the practical application of political communication theories in the 2024 general elections in Ghana, with a focus on the methods that were used by the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The focus of the study is justified due to the role that the National Democratic Congress (NDC) played in operationalizing communication frameworks such as agenda-setting and framing theory to mobilise voter support, influence public discourse and oppose the narratives of its opponents. For a considerable amount of time, scholars have acknowledged these conceptual frameworks as essential to understanding political communication (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Entman, 1993). This focus is a response to scholarly calls for the contextualization of global communication theories in African democracies. This is because political and media systems in African democracies frequently work under conditions that are distinct from those in other worlds (Voldtmer, 2013; Waisbord, 2019).

The study focuses on Ghana's political landscape, limiting its analysis to the country's elections. While comparative analyses from other democracies may shed light on broader theoretical implications, the primary emphasis remains on Ghana. In terms of time frame, the analysis focuses on the 2024 general elections, which represent a crucial moment in Ghana's democratic development due to the increasing influence of digital communication platforms, influencer-driven political messaging, and deliberate media framing.

The study adopts a qualitative approach which employs media content analysis, documentary review, and secondary data drawn from academic literature, media reportage, and official party communications. This approach aligns with Creswell's (2014) argument that qualitative methods are most appropriate for exploring meanings, interpretations, and processes within social and political contexts. Although quantitative surveys of voter attitudes could have

provided additional insights, they were excluded in favour of a focused, in-depth exploration of the NDC's application of communication theories.

1.7 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

1. **Political Communication:** Refers to the exchange of political messages between parties, candidates, the media, and the public, to shape opinions, mobilise voters, and influence perceptions.
2. **Agenda-Setting:** The process of determining which issues are highlighted and made most important to the public. During the 2024 election, the NDC emphasized themes like economic hardship, unemployment, and corruption to set the tone for voter discussions.
3. **Framing:** The way in which political issues and events are presented to influence interpretation. The framing of the political message captures how the NDC portrayed itself as a solution to national challenges while framing the ruling party as responsible for Ghana's economic difficulties.
4. **Digital Political Communication:** The use of online platforms such as social media, websites, and messaging applications to share political messages. During the 2024 general elections, the NDC relied on Facebook, Twitter (X), TikTok, and WhatsApp to connect with voters.
5. **Influencer-Driven Messaging:** The practice of engaging public figures, celebrities or social media influencers to promote campaign messages. During the 2024 general election, the NDC used trusted personalities to boost its reach among younger voters.
6. **Voter Mobilization:** The strategies used to encourage citizens to participate in elections. Traditionally, this type of activity includes the NDC's door-to-door campaigns, rallies, digital calls to action, and get-out-the-vote messages in 2024.

7. **Electoral Context:** The political, social, and economic environment in which an election takes place. The Ghanaian 2024 general elections were shaped by economic hardship, unemployment, and public demand for change.
8. **Media Agenda:** The set of issues emphasized by traditional and online media outlets. Here, it looks at how the NDC's campaign narratives aligned with or challenged dominant media coverage.
9. **Campaign Messaging:** The core themes and slogans communicated to voters. It includes the NDC's emphasis on restoring the economy, creating jobs, and tackling corruption.
10. **Campaign Strategy:** The organized plan used by political actors to win elections. It refers to the NDC's use of media framing, digital platforms, grassroots mobilization, and coalition building.
11. **Media Framing:** The selection and emphasis of specific aspects of political issues by the media. It includes ways in which different outlets amplified or countered the NDC's 2024 campaign messages.
12. **Political Engagement:** The ways citizens interact with politics beyond voting. Operationally, it includes social media debates, attendance at rallies, and participation in NDC-led community forums.

1.8 Organization of Chapters

The study is organized into five chapters to ensure a logical flow of ideas and clarity in addressing the research problem. Chapter One introduces the study by presenting the background, problem statement, research objectives and questions, significance, scope, operational definitions, and organization of the work. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature on political communication theories and their applications in global, African, and Ghanaian

settings and research gaps that the study seeks to address. The third chapter outlines the methodology, detailing the research design, population, sampling techniques, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents and analyses the data, thematically examining the NDC's communication strategies during the 2024 elections in line with the research objectives. Finally, Chapter Five provides a summary of the study, discusses key findings, draws conclusions, and offers recommendations for academic scholarship, political practice, and future research.

1.9 Chapter Summary

Chapter One provides a foundational overview of the practical application of political communication theory in Ghana's 2024 general election, using the NBC as a case study. The chapter outlines the study background and rationale for exploring the practical application of political communication theories in the context of the NDC's 2024 general election campaign. The problem statement highlighted the need to understand how communication theories, particularly agenda-setting and framing, were operationalized in shaping electoral narratives and influencing voter perceptions. The objectives and research questions were outlined, focusing on the communication strategies employed by the NDC, assessing the effectiveness of these strategies and how applicable Western communication theories are to the Ghanaian socio-political landscape, while the significance of the study emphasized its contributions to political communication scholarship and practical insights for political actors in Ghana. Additionally, the scope was clearly defined to situate the research within Ghana's political landscape, with a focus on the 2024 elections. Key operational definitions were provided to ensure conceptual clarity, and the structure of the study was described to illustrate its logical progression.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In the current age of digital technology where it is easy to share information, political communication is an important topic of research for understanding how modern democracies work. Political communication fundamentally encompasses the strategic initiatives undertaken by political entities to include citizens, reform election mechanisms, mobilise voters, influence political discourse, and also share public opinion (Asante, 2020; Amenyewu, 2021). For decades, scholars have studied the many different aspects of political communication. This has led to a large body of work that changes with new technologies and social trends. The chapter offers a theoretical and conceptual framework for the research by examining pertinent literature in the domain of political communication. The chapter examines empirical research on the idea of Political communication, investigating political communication strategies within the Ghanaian, African and global context, while incorporating the growing use of digital media in electoral campaigns. The study will utilize the agenda-setting theory and framing theory. The theories help us understand how politicians and the media affect what people think is important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Entman, 1993). The literature review will place the study in the context of earlier studies to better comprehend what is known in the field of communication in Ghana and its current importance. The research will employ a theoretical framework and empirical evidence to analyse the communication strategies utilised by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in the 2024 general election.

2.1 Review of Related Concepts

The chapter delves into the interconnected issues and concepts surrounding the strategic application of political communication theories by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in Ghana. Political communication plays a fundamental role in shaping society through the dissemination, persuasion, and symbolic meaning, political communication connects individuals, media, and political players, and is crucial in determining political results. Through the use of political communication theories, scholars can gain insight into the ways in which political communications are created, disseminated and perceived in certain sociopolitical circumstances. The growing professionalization of campaigns in Ghana and the incorporation of the internet platforms have made it possible to study the practical application of theoretical concepts. As political parties strive to strategically apply modern campaign communication concepts, it encounters a myriad of challenges and opportunities that shapes the effectiveness of its political communication efforts. By exploring crucial themes such as the concept of political communication, political communication within the global context, political communication within the African context, and lastly, political communication within the Ghanaian context.

Theoretical perspectives such as agenda-setting and framing theory are particularly relevant in analyzing how political actors and the media influence cognition and behavior. McCombs and Shaw (1972) first established that while the media may not dictate what individuals think about, by selecting issues that dominate public discourse. In the Ghanaian context, this theory is instrumental in understanding how the National Democratic Congress (NDC) structured its communication agenda during the 2024 general elections to foreground themes of economic hardship, governance accountability, and social welfare as dominant national concerns.

Political communication theories have been incorporated into campaign tactics more than in scholarly discussions, especially through discourse analysis and media framing. According to Mintah et al., (2024), Ghanaian newspapers use functional discourse to covertly promote for political causes. According to their research, language signals and framing patterns subtly promote political narratives that asserts their objectivity. This is consistent with the agenda-setting theory idea (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) which holds that the media sources shape people thoughts rather than dictating them. Similar to this, the National Democratic Congress (NDC's) 2024 communication plan used strategic issue framing and positive media coverage to establish campaign priorities, particularly in the areas of governance reform and economic recovery.

Additionally, applying political communication ideas to social media has become crucial. According to Tawiah (2025), Ghanaian presidential contenders successfully used the two-step flow theory and framing through online platforms to influence political discourse and encourage voter participation in the 2024 election. The study demonstrated how the National Democratic Congress (NDC'S) digital team maintained online presence, bolstered candidate credibility, and promptly addressed opposing narratives through the use of emotional appeals and tailored communications. Through visual storytelling, hashtags, and emotional charged message, the NDC framed its campaign as a “a rescue mission” focused on national revival, contrasting itself within the party’s governance record. This illustrates how new media theories and framing shapes not only attitudes but also emotional and evaluative responses of audience. This also complement the stress of participatory, decentralized character of internet communication in influencing political outcomes therefore becoming increasingly significant.

Nonetheless, there are certain difficulties in putting political communication ideas into practice in Ghana. While the Ghanaian media frequently serve as platforms for establishing political agendas, Minter et al. (2025) point out that occasionally they turn partisan, undermining

objective and skewing public interests. The optimum conditions for political communication theories to function are complicated by this media bias. Furthermore, the NDC's 2024 campaign was hindered by issues like audience fragmentation, algorithmic manipulation, and disinformation, which diminished the efficacy of framing and weakened the consistency of the message and audience fact-checking capacity often to distort political messages, undermining the clarity and ethical integrity of campaign communication (Tawia, 2025). Although agenda-setting and framing theories provides crucial lens for examining political communication in Ghana, these difficulties show that their practical implementation must take into account contextual realities such as media polarization, literacy levels, and technological differences.

To enhance the effectiveness of political communication in Ghana, several recommendations emerged from the literatures. First, strengthening media literacy education to enhance ethical and fact-based communication methods, they also support better corporation between scholars, media professionals, and political actors. These suggestions are at the heart of the current study, which aims to investigate how agenda-setting and framing theories were used by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in the 2024 general election as well as how these applications may be improved to enhance democratic communication in Ghana.

2.1.1 The Concept of Political Communication

Political communication has become a fundamental element of modern political life, functioning not only as a means of conveying messages but also as a catalyst for the process itself. Windeck (2013) argues that communication goes beyond the strategic utility of political actors; It is essentially “politics in action”. It serves as the engine for decision-making and public participation, shaping political discourse at all levels and influencing both the substance and style of governance. This perspective moves beyond the conventional view of campaign

communication, highlighting the continuous and pervasive influence of communication in shaping police car reality.

McNair (2016) builds on this idea, defining political communication as any deliberate communication about politics. This includes messages from political actors pursuing specific goals, responses, and contributions from citizens and media-generated content that critiques or amplifies political activities. McNair (2016) conceptualizes political communication as a dynamic interaction between three key actors; the political elite, the media, and the public. Each plays a role in creating and disseminating political meaning, influencing public opinion, vote behavior and policy outcomes. This framework emphasizes both the symbolic and performative aspects of political discourse.

Graber (1981) further expands the boundary of political communication by arguing that it encompasses more than verbal discourse. She includes non-verbal cues such as body language, as well as symbolic acts like protests and boycotts. These forms of expression are vital for understanding the broader communicative context in which politics operates particularly in settings where non-verbal signals and public demonstrations carry as much, if not more, weight than spoken words.

In Africa, the relationship between the political and media systems is especially significant. Windeck (2013) note that a country's political framework profoundly shapes its media environment. In Sub-Saharan Africa, characterized by political pluralism, authoritarian legacies, and hybrid regime media systems vary widely in terms of independence, freedom of expression, and editorial autonomy. These differences affect not only the context of communication but also its style and reach. In relatively open systems such as Ghana, diverse state-owned, and private media outlets provide space for competing political narratives. In

more restrictive environments, however, political messages are often tightly controlled by those in power, constrained by censorship and suppressed by fear.

Historically, political communication followed a top-down model with political parties crafting messages that were disseminated by the media to largely passive citizens. Windeck (2013) describes this as a “communication triangle” with political parties, media organizations, and citizens occupying the three corners. In this system, the media served as intermediaries, amplifying, questioning, or criticizing political messages while citizens had limited opportunities for direct participation or feedback.

The rise of the internet and social media has transformed this landscape. Once largely one-directional, political communication is now multidirectional and instantaneous. Technological advances, particularly the rapid adoption of mobile phones and internet platforms in Africa, have made political discourse more interactive and immediate. Citizens are no longer passive recipients; they are actively tweeting, sharing, liking, debating, fact-checking, and even setting their own agendas. Windeck (2013) highlight how this shift has made communication more inclusive and participatory, enabling a broader range of voices in the political conversation.

This transformation has had profound consequences. McNair (2013) observes that social media and digital tools have eroded the long-standing dominance of political elites and traditional media over the flow of information. Ordinary citizens, especially young people, activist and civil society groups now play a pivotal role in shaping political debates, exposing misinformation, and holding leaders accountable. This digital empowerment is particularly evident in Ghana, where an active online political culture influences both campaign and policy debates.

Graber (1981) also defines the importance of symbolic communication in African politics. Party colors, traditional attire, catchy slogans, and religious imagery often resonate with voters on a deeper emotional level than policy speeches. Such symbols communicate, cultural identity, foster collective pride, and frequently serve as rallying points for political mobilization.

Understanding political communication is essential in democratic societies like Ghana because it clarifies how political actors, including political parties like the National Democratic Congress (NDC), communicate policies, manifestos, and ideological stances to voters and how these messages affect their choices. The idea of political communication derives as the analytical framework for the study, which focuses on the NDC's communication tactics during the general elections of 2024. It examines how the party uses agenda-setting and issues framing to influence voter attitudes, perceptions, and turnout.

2.1.2 Political Communication in Global Contexts

Political communication has become one of the most vibrant field in political science and media studies, both academically and practically. it is concerned with the flow of power, ideology, and information inside societies, influencing the political landscape through the interaction between citizens, the media and, public institutions. Three theoretical pillars thus agenda-setting, framing, and priming describes how information flows and meanings are created to sway public opinion and behavior have played a major role in how political communication has developed globally (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Entman, 1993; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). These ideas have had a significant impact on the understanding of political players and media systems interact to influence the course and result of political processes worldwide, from election campaigns to governance communication.

Globally, the agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) has demonstrated that the mass media are crucial in influencing which topics the public finds important. In democratic democracies, this idea serves as the foundation for almost all contemporary campaign tactics. In the United States, for example, political players rely significantly on the media's ability to set the agenda in order to draw attention to important issues that appeal to voters, like immigration, national security, and the economy. It has been significantly demonstrated by Iyengar and Kinder (1987) that regular media coverage of particular topics increases the electorates perception of their significance, which in turn influences policy discussions and electoral outcomes. The theoretical framework has since been useful all over the world as media institutions, public relations firms and the political elites develop narrative to influence public opinion on political priorities before the public forms its opinion issues.

Entman (1993) developed the framing theory which add to the idea by emphasizing the presentation of issues rather than just the topic of discussing. Entman claims that frames use particular interpretive clues incorporated into communication to characterize issues, pinpoint causes, and suggest solutions. Framing has become a prominent political persuasion tool in developed democracies like the United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (USA) and Germany. Politicians and media organizations use rhetorical devices, imagery, and strategic languages to influence how people think about policies and events (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Global policy discussion on issues like immigration, economic inequalities, and climate change, for instance, are frequently structured along ideological lines, which affect how people assign blame and evaluate government performance. As a result, the framing theory has emerged as a key idea in political communication studies around the world, demonstrating how the formation of meaning in media discourse may either support or contradict political authority.

Furthermore, the structure and methods of political communication have changed globally during the last three decades due to globalization of media and communication technology. Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) refers to this shift as the “third age” of political communication, a time when politics, media, and marketing all come together. Today public relations experts, pollsters and media consultants are used to maintain image and message consistency in campaigns that are created using the logic of commercial advertising. According to Strömbäck (2008), this professionalization of politics has resulted into what is referred to as the “mediatization of politics” in which political players modify their conduct and policy choices to accommodate the demands of the media. This global pattern highlights how democratic legitimacy is increasingly reliant on communication management, therefore turning political leadership into a continually developing narrative.

The rise of social media and the internet has brought forth new ways of interacting, drastically changing established structures of communication. This evolution is conceptualized by Chadwick (2017) using the “hybrid media system” which combines the logic of new and old media. Newspaper articles, social media posts, user-generated contents, and televised debates all coexist and have an impact on one another in the complex media ecosystem in which political actors currently operate. Politicians are able to interact directly with citizens, circumvent the gatekeepers of traditional media, and influence discussions in real times. This new hybrid media system has brought about its own narrative such as polarization, algorithmic manipulation, and disinformation, which academics like Vaccari and Valeriani (2021) points out as a major danger to deliberative democracy in the digital age.

Bennet and Livingston (2021) contributes to the growing concerns of misinformation and the ethics of political communication. The emergence of “disinformation ecosystem” has eroded public confidence in both political players and media organizations. They further argue that

digital platforms and transactional actors have enabled the globalization of disinformation, turning political communication into a battlefield for legitimacy and truth as well as means of persuasion. According to Bennet and Livingstone (2021) this has led academics and decision makers around the globe to investigate legal frameworks that protect free speech while reducing dishonest and manipulative behavior.

The literatures on political communication in the global context offers a number of perspectives that are of great importance to this current study. Firstly, communication is a vital tool through which political actors exercise, contest, and preserve political power rather than it been viewed by political actors as a secondary element in global politics. Also, the global literatures points to the fact that effective communication requires tactics that fits with audience expectations and dominant media logics determine how effective political actors can be.

Moreover, the significance of agenda-setting and framing theories as analytical instruments for understanding how contemporary campaigns create salience and meaning in political discourse is in the global literature. In the Ghanaian context, where global communication patterns and theories are tailored to local socio-political conditions remain crucial in determining political legitimacy, policy influence and electoral success. The review of the global literature establishes that theories like agenda-setting and framing are universally applicable yet contextually adaptable, providing a coherent basis for examining how communication strategies shaped the 2024 electoral process of the National Democratic Congress (NDC).

2.1.3 Political Communication in the African Context

Political communication in Africa has developed into distinct paths that combine traditional and contemporary media, influenced by sociopolitical institutions, historical legacies, the quickly changing digital environments. Although the fundamentals of political communication

such as mediatization, framing, and agenda-setting are western developed, their use in the Africa shows unique adaptations that take into consideration regional contexts, restricted press freedom, and disparities in digital literacy (Olukotun & Omotoso, 2017). To analyze how Ghanaian political parties such as the National Democratic Congress (NDC), create and distribute messages in hybrid communication environment, it is essential to have a comparative understanding of similar dynamics in nations such as Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, and Uganda.

In Nigeria, the interaction of political partisanship, mass media ownership, and the expanding significance of digital platforms has had a significant impact on political communication in Nigeria. According to Ajaegbu & Ajaegbu (2024), social media has completely changed how people mobilize and participate in politics, especially young voters who participate in political debate outside of established party institutions. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressive Congress (APC) successfully shaped political agendas and electoral narrative through WhatsApp, Facebook and X (formerly known as Twitter) during the general elections in Nigeria in 2015 and 2019 (Okorie & Salawu, 2016; Cheeseman et al., 2020). Nworzor et al. (2022) reported that opponents were frequently framed negatively, through hate speech and ethnoreligious stereotypes. Such commentary intensified emotional polarization and shaped public discourse beyond the reach of traditional campaign advertising. These campaigns are prime examples of social media's ability to shape agendas since platforms like X have boosted conversations on issues like youth unemployment, corruption, and governance, which in turn affected public opinion and mainstream media coverage. Also, in Nigeria Saka & Ojo (2024) through a comparative study on #EndSARS campaign in Nigeria serves as an example of how online activism developed into a large-scale protest. In a comprehensive examination of 13,000 tweets, Saka & Ojo (2024) showed how internet activism sparked a national conversation about

police violence. However, they noted that online enthusiasm often outpaces institutional reforms, as state mechanisms change to stifle or co-opt internet criticism.

Nonetheless, the way issues were framed frequently mirrored division along ethnic and religious lines, highlighting the limitations of agenda setting theory in context where identity politics are prominent. The Nigerian experience is comparable to Ghana's scenario in 2024, where the National Democratic Congress (NDC) portrayed economic hardship and governance failure had to navigate similarity complex terrain of ethnic and partisan allegiances.

Another striking illustration of how political communication functions in the hybrid media systems, where conventional and digital channels interact dynamically, is Kenya. Mutsvairo (2028) contends that the Kenyan elections in 2013 and 2017 demonstrated how political elite shapes voter opinion and define campaign objectives using vernacular radio and social media. Radio, especially community-based stations, are still an effective means of establishing agendas because they can deliver customized political messages to semiliterate and rural audiences. Wasserman (2020) points out that the advent of digital platforms like WhatsApp and x (formerly known as Twitter) has made message management more difficult and given citizens the ability to question or reinterpret elite narratives. Muindi (2025) notes that commentary threads, memes, and influencer-led discussions created feedback loops where mainstream media picked up trending topics initiated by citizens online. This intermedia agenda-setting effect repositioned political commentary as a powerful force in the electoral information ecosystem, challenging elite gatekeeping and shifting political debates towards corruption scandals and governance concerns. Hashtags such as #UhuruForPresident, #RailaForChange, and #KOT (Kenyans on Twitter), played a decisive role during the elections as they served as rival framing tools during the 2017 elections which redefined electoral discourse beyond party manifestos. These dual channel framing techniques are important to

Ghana's situation because they demonstrate how political group like the National Democratic Congress (NDC) may reach variety of people by combining traditional and digital communication.

In South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) and its changing relationship with the media have long been central to political communication. Press freedom was first praised in the post-apartheid media environment, but disputes between the government and journalists eventually came to define it. According to Wasserman (2019), the media in South Africa frequently faces conflicting demands, juggling their roles as watchdogs with their financial reliance on government advertising and political connections. The African National Congress (ANC) attempt to rebrand itself in the wake of corruption revelations during the 2019 elections was clear example of framing theory in action. The party deliberately emphasized themes of unity and renewal while focusing on agenda-setting efforts of narrative of socio-economic progress. In contrast, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) successfully diverted attention from mainstream narratives by using populist framing on social media to raise problems of land reform and inequality. Both the use of agenda-setting and framing theory are applicable in South Africa, where political actors must constantly re-establish legitimacy through mediated discourse. This process is similar to how the National Democratic Congress (NDC) handled image repair communication during Ghana's 2024 general election.

In Uganda, the political communication environment highlights the difficulties associated with state control and communicative repression. In order to limit opposition communication, the Ugandan government under president Yoweri Museveni has implemented widespread media restriction, digital surveillance, and internet shutdowns, as Tayeebwa (2022) points out. The potential and limitation of internet mobilization under authoritarian restrictions were demonstrated during the 2021 elections, which included opposition leader Bobi Wine. Social

media emerged as a crucial medium for presenting stories of youth resistance, responsibility, and generational transformation in spite of state meddling. This illustrates how citizens and opposition political actors create alternative meanings that contradict prevailing state frames, providing that framing theory works even in constrained regimes. The case of Uganda emphasizes the significance of examining both the strategic and opposing views used in communication in the context of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in Ghana, despite operating in a more open system, nonetheless have to balance the conflicts between message control and participatory discourse.

In the context of the 2024 elections in Ghana, these patterns provide a comparative basis to understand the unique communication dynamics. By referencing these African models, the research requires theoretical and empirical validity, placing the National Democratic Congress's (NDC) campaign messaging in a continental conversation that aims to balance contemporary political theory within the sociocultural technological peculiarities of Africa.

2.1.4 Political Communication in Ghana

Political communication has changed significantly since the country's return to constitutional rule in 1992, when a multiparty system was established and media was liberalized. A thriving media ecosystem that is vital in influencing public opinion, political behavior, and electoral discourse was created by this shift. Though it forced political actors to carefully interact with the media in order to preserve their legitimacy and presence in public discourse, the liberal media environment allowed citizens to access a variety of political messages. Traditional media, internet platforms, and interpersonal communication all coexist and have an impact on election results in the intricate communication process that has grown over time (Afful, 2017; Mensah et al., 2023).

One of the defining features of political communication in Ghana's modern political environment is the hybridization of media systems. Ghana's election landscape over the years have exemplified Chadwick's (2017) idea of a hybrid media system, in which digital platforms and legacy media interact. Social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter) and TikTok have become an essential to campaign tactics, especially when it comes to agenda-setting, framing, and mobilization. Studies shows that political parties are now using digital platforms into their communication systems, which complements traditional radio and television channels and allows for direct voter participation (Pimpong, 2024). Through this hybridization, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) is able to bridge the gap between traditional and digital communication by reaching both urban youth and rural areas. (Bennette & Livingston, 2020) but it also brings with problem political polarization and disinformation.

Agenda-setting and framing theories shed light on the theoretical foundations of political communication in Ghana. Ghana's political landscape has been observed to reflect the agenda-setting theory of McCombs & Shaw (1972), which holds that the media shapes the problems that the public considers significant. Afful (2017), for example, discovered that Ghanaian media frequently highlight "horse-race" elements of elections. Voters priorities and opinions of the party's competence are influenced by this framing. Similarly, Mensah et al. (2023) used framing analysis to examine President Nana Addo Dankwah Akuffo Addo inaugural speech, demonstrating how the structure of the message can influence how the public understands political objectives. These observations underline the need and importance of message design and issues focus for the National Democratic Congress's (NDC) campaign, which is aimed to draw attention to governance accountability and economic suffering as major electoral issues. Furthermore, Scheufele and Tewsbury's (2007) theory is extremely important to understand the production of narratives by Ghanaian political parties. Both the major political parties in Ghana

(National Democratic Congress and New Patriotic Party) use opposing frames in political communication in an effort to persuade or manipulate public opinion by presenting issues in a particular way. For instance, in an effort to reshape the public discourse regarding national issues, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) centered its campaign of themes of social justice and economic mismanagement. This strategic framing is consistent with several studies around the world that demonstrate how the presentation of political information affects “not only what people think about, but also how they think about it” (Entman, 1993). Although the Ghanaian media framing is still a significant predictor of political beliefs, Asiamah et al. (2022) pointed out that there is a lack of research linking framing techniques to digital campaigning which this study fills.

Radio still remains dominates Ghana’s media landscape and is the main source of political news, particularly in rural areas. Osei-Appiah (2020) noted how Ghanaian private radio stations sometimes conflate political communication with economic goals, making it difficult to distinguish between political influence and news reasoning. Citizens interpretations of political contents are influenced by the consistent interplay between politics and journalism. These exchanges have become more intense as digital spaces have grown, giving rise to the phenomenon known as “citizen broadcasting” in which regular people and social media influences use criticism and the spread of political content to influence election narratives. Social media not only increases political participation but also personalizes, according to Amenyewu (2021), who found out that people actively frame their political experiences within partisan discourses. This finding is supported by Langer’s (2011) research on the personalization of politics in mediated environments.

Notwithstanding these developments, there are still a number of unanswered questions regarding political communication in Ghana. Although agenda-setting and framing effects in traditional media have been the subject of previous studies, little empirical evaluations have

been done on how these theories function in integrated media ecosystems, particularly in political campaigns that incorporate digital platforms, mainstream outlets, and interpersonal mobilization. One of the most effective digital campaigns in Ghana's electoral history, the 2024 National Democratic Congress (NDC) campaign offers a useful case study for this investigation. Through an examination of the campaign's actual implementation of agenda-setting and framing theories, this study fills the theoretical and empirical gaps noted by previous researches (Asiamah et al., 2022; Pimpong, 2024).

This conceptual framework is relevant to the current study because it clarifies the relationship between theory and strategic political activity. The National Democratic Congress's (NDC) 2024 campaign serves as an example of how agenda-setting and framing ideas can be operationalized in Ghana's socio-political context, which is marked by partisan polarization, hybrid media use, and the growing internet involvement. A more thorough assessment of how political parties communicate theories both describe and direct the actions of political actors is made possible by understanding of these processes. Therefore, by placing Ghana's experience within the larger context of political communication studies, the studies advance the theoretical conversations and validates Ghana's developing functioning as a testing ground for the improvement of established communication models in developed democracies.

2.2 Empirical Review

Empirical review provides the foundation to understanding for understanding how political communication function in real-world context. The impact of media systems, campaign tactics, and communication technologies on political communication behavior and election results is examined through data-driven studies in empirical research, as opposed to theoretical discourse. In Ghana and throughout Africa, several academics have studied the dynamics of

framing strategies, social media usage, political messaging, and the blend of digital and traditional media. The review emphasizes the approaches taken, significant discoveries identified, and contextual significance of each study to the ongoing examination of political communication practices especially in Ghana's democratic setting.

Globally, empirical research on political communication shows how changing media landscapes, especially hybrid systems that have combine digital and conventional media, alter public discourse and campaign tactics. Chadwick (2017) investigated how political campaigns use hybrid media logics to influence narratives and manage visibility using a comparative qualitative methodology across western countries. His research showed that in order to gain control over agenda-setting, political actors coordinate their media efforts across offline and online channels. This reflects the communication tactics used by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) of Ghana in the general elections of 2024, when internet platforms supplemented traditional media channels to shape voter opinion and support campaign themes.

Political communication has usually employed series of strategies through the use of big digital corporations such as such as Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat and X (formally known as Twitter). Kreiss and McGregor (2019) investigated how these big digital corporations influenced political communication during the 2016 presidential election in the United States of America (USA) using a mixed method study that included content analysis and interviews with campaign personnel. According to their findings, these platforms are crucial for audience targeting, data analytics and message optimization in political campaigns. The empirical data emphasizes the increasing impact of digital technologies or infrastructure on election results by demonstrating how platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), and TikTok were crucial for message amplification and targeted voter outreach in the context of the National Democratic Congress (NDC).

Similarly, Vaccari and Valeriani (2021) investigated the byte impact of social media use on political engagement using extensive quantitative surveys conducted in Western democracies. According to their findings, digital media promote and intensify ideological polarization while also fostering deliberative interaction. This is pertinent in Ghana where the National Democratic Congress (NDC) digital strategy used social media to encourage youth involvement and sensitize ideological position of the party while dealing with partisan echo chambers and disinformation, demonstrating the nature so social media's political role.

In testing the practical application of political communication theories in Ghana, Bennett & Livingston (2020) used an institutional communication analysis to investigate how disinformation undermines democratic institutions, and their empirical findings demonstrated that the spread of false information erodes political trust and weakens electoral integrity.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the evaluation of social media has changed political engagement in Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa. Ajaegbu & Ajaegbu (2024) used a mixed method approach of survey and content analysis. Their findings showed that social media democratizes political communication but it also amplifies elite manipulation and false information. This can be situated to the National Democratic Congress digital participation contributed to the expansion of participatory politics while also exposing the campaign to attacks by opponents using disinformation.

Wasserman (2020) investigated the mediatization of populist politics through the contending of Africa, using discourse and content analysis. Wasserman (2020) discovered that political leaders create populist identities through the media by making emotional and sensational appeals. The relevance of strategic use of emotional and sensational appeal (framing) is directly applied to the National Democratic Congress's (NDC) 2024 campaign, where the party's

communication team used populist issue framing to emotionally connect with the electorates, particularly around issues of corruption, bad economic and youth unemployment.

Furthermore, understanding the National Democratic Congress (NDC) utilized political communication to influence the Ghanaian media coverage during the 2024 electioneering season. Afful (2017) utilized a quantitative content analysis to examine Ghanaian media's coverage of election campaign, comparing issue based and horse-race framing. The findings showed that the Ghanaian journalists primarily used horse-race frames, focusing on competition rather than substantive policy issues.

Bob & Miller (2023) also examined the social embeddedness of elections in Ghana using the 2016 and 2024 general elections. The study utilized a car study and a qualitative approach in examining how Ghanaian electoral campaigns remain rooted in local social networks. Using interviews from ethnographic observations, Bob & Miller (2023) concludes that community visits, rallies and meetings with chiefs and occupational groups are central to mobilization. This reinforces how interpersonal campaigns continue to determine voter activation in Ghana's democratic context.

Moreover, the significant influence of political communication in policies dissemination and voter engagement and how political communicators influences people's behavior. Glate, Ameh and Onojaefe (2024) conducted a Ghanaian based empirical study to investigate how exposure to and searches for campaign messages online influence voter behavior. The survey and behavioral data analysis revealed that digital exposure enhances political knowledge, engagement and likelihood of participation. These findings align with the effectiveness of social and online messaging as campaign instrument in Ghana.

Recent studies demonstrated that social media is now a component of political campaigns in Ghana. Odoom et al., (2023) used a descriptive analysis approach to examine how political

parties engage citizens through social media in urban Ghana, sampling 384 actual voters from the local social media community in the Tema metropolis. Their findings indicate that the Ghanaian political parties have a strong presence on social media, actively engaging the electorate by disseminating and creating compelling content about their campaign policies and achievements.

The role of influencers has also become critical in shaping political discourse. According to the Centre for Media and Digital Literacy (CMDiL, 2024), a mixed-method study comprising both qualitative observation of influencer strategies and secondary data or content analysis identified social media influencers as significantly contributing to the 2024 elections by promoting political party narratives on TikTok and Instagram. These influencers leveraged humor, entertainment, and short videos to frame issues in ways that resonated with young audiences, making digital commentary a strategic asset for both the NDC and NPP.

Comparative studies show that close messaging platforms, such as WhatsApp have emerged as a key for political organization, and commentary discrimination. Fisher et al., (2024) conducted a qualitative analysis of political, WhatsApp group usage, analyzing data from 113 in-depth interviews and 15 focus group discussions with political candidates, campaign team members, and party operatives. The study found that Ghanaian political parties employed hierarchical WhatsApp networks to maintain message discipline and control framing within their campaign structures. These private channels enable rapid mobilization, narrative coherence, and targeted agenda-setting, reducing the influence of external gatekeepers.

Similarly, Darkwa et al., (2023) used a case study approach to examine how traditional radio influences agenda-setting. The findings of the study assert that, radio remains influential in rural communities, sustaining its relevance as a framing tool even in an increasingly digital society.

Scholars have cautioned against the spread of misinformation and disinformation within Ghana's political communication space. Ahiabenu et al., (2018) used media tracking and a rapid response mechanism during elections; their findings highlighted that fake news, often circulated through WhatsApp and partisan online platforms, undermines informed decision-making and threatens democratic governance. This underscores, the complexity of Ghana's contemporary communication ecosystem, where commentary across multiple platforms shapes not only electoral discourse but also public trust in democratic institutions.

Despite these strengths, the literature has limitations that constrain its explanatory power. For instance, Yussif et al., (2024) cross-sectional survey means that claims about social media driving political participation remain loud, correlation, leaving open the question of whether the digital exposure genuinely causes participation or merely reflects the pre-existing political interest of young voters. In addition, Fisher et al.'s (2024) reliance on key informant interviews and qualitative ethnography provides depth, but makes it difficult to validate the scale or consistency of WhatsApp networks across consequences.

Another notable weakness in the existing literature in political communication is the insufficient attention given to misinformation and disinformation. Although Ahiabenu et al., (2024) provide evidence of the role of fake news in Ghanaian elections, there has been limited empirical engagement with how misinformation was circulated on emerging platforms, such as TikTok and WhatsApp during the 2024 elections and the extent to which they shaped voter behavior and democratic trust.

Additionally, the commercialized role of social media influencers in Ghana's political campaigns has received minimal academic scrutiny. While CMDiL (2024) acknowledge the involvement of paid influencers in shaping electoral conversation, little theoretical analysis exists on how this trend aligns with agenda-setting and framing functions. Given the green

influence of influencers on youth engagement and political discourse, this area warrants scholarly exploration.

Similarly, Odoom et al., (2024) offer a useful perspective by examining the perception of residence in the Tema Metropolis regarding political use of social media. However, the study is constrained by its reliance on descriptive self-reported data, which restricts the depth of inference and hinders a robust analysis of how specific social media behavior correlates with political outcomes.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study looks at political communication through the lens of agenda-setting and framing theory. These theories will help in understanding how the media and political actors influence people's decisions, and how issues are understood ultimately shaping public opinion and decision-making.

2.3.1 Agenda-Setting Theory

The agenda-setting theory, a communication theory that explains how the media shape public perception by prioritizing certain issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The agenda-setting theory, first introduced by McCombs and Shaw in 1972, in their seminal study of the 1968 United States presidential election, posits that “while the media may not tell the audience what you think, they play a significant role in telling the audience what you think about” (Cohen, 1972). In their analysis of 100 undecided voters in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, McCombs & Shaw (1972) found a strong correlation between the issues raised in the media and the salience of those issues in the minds of the public. This seminal work led to the conceptualization of the agenda-setting function of the media, whereby the media, through prominence of coverage, influence the perceived importance of issues (McCombs, 2004).

The early conceptualization of agenda-setting theory rested on two primary assumptions. First, the media serve as gatekeepers, shaping and organizing reality rather than presenting issues in a purely objective manner (Lowery & DeFleu, 1991). Secondly, the frequent repetition and prominence of specific issues enhance their perceived importance to audiences, thereby shifting salience from the media's agenda to the public's agenda. (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Subsequent research extended these assumptions, showing that agenda-setting effects occur in various contexts, including political campaigns, policy debates and issue framing (Wanta & Ghanem, 2007).

Over time, agenda-setting evolved to include the concept of second-level agenda-setting. While first-level agenda setting focuses on the prominence of the issue, second-level agenda-setting emphasizes the prominence of issue attributes, examining how particular frames are attached to issues that shape public perceptions (McCombs et al., 1997). This expansion aligns closely with the framing theory, as both explore how emphasis and representation influence interpretations (Scheufele, 1999). Additionally, scholars have noted connections between agenda-setting and priming, which suggests that public evaluations of political figures are influenced by persistent media focus on certain issues (Iyengar & Kinder, 1981).

These theoretical developments have sparked scholarly debates about the continued relevance of agenda-setting in today's decentralized media environment. Systemic evaluations reveal that while social media increasingly influences public focus while the traditional media often sets the primary agenda, with digital platforms amplifying it (Zhang, 2023).

Further advancements, such as network agenda-setting, examine how interconnected issues distributed across multiple platforms, create a more dynamic and multidimensional process (Guo & McCombs, 2016). Nevertheless, critics emphasize that audiences are not passive recipients of media content. Factors such as personal preferences, selective exposure, and social

networks can diminish or amplify agenda-setting effects (Scheufele & Tewsbury, 2007). These arguments suggest that while media influence remains significant, it operates within a more participatory and fragmented communication environment.

In the African context, particularly Ghana, agenda-setting research has gained attention in recent years. Findings indicate that conventional media continue to play a pivotal role in shaping political and social discourse. However, social media platforms, such as Facebook and X (formerly known as Twitter) are becoming increasingly influential, particularly among younger demographics (Nkrumah & Hassan, 2021). This shift demonstrates that although the core principles of agenda-setting remain relevant, cultural, technological, and political variations require local research to fully understand the theory's application in different societies.

Many agenda-setting studies combine content analysis in public opinion surveys to measure their effects. Researchers examine the frequency of issues in media coverage and compare these with topics the public considers most important (Wanta & Ghanem, 2007). More recently, computational techniques and data analytics have been applied to monitor agenda-setting in real time across digital platforms, enhancing the methodological toolkit (Stern et al., 2020).

The use of agenda-setting is suited for this study, as it explains how politicians use media to adopt a communication strategy to influence issue salience during election campaigns. The media coverage of the 2024 general elections in Ghana demonstrated the intense competition between the two leading political parties (the New Patriotic Party and the National Democratic Congress), where communication strategies determined not only the issues that got public attention but also how those issues were prioritized in voters decision-making, as the NDC heavily relied on economic hardship, unemployment, and the public perception of corruption for issue salience. Furthermore, agenda-setting provides a useful lens to examine how the

National Democratic Congress utilised political communication theories during the 2024 general election.

2.3.2 Framing Theory

Framing theory is a communication theory that explains how information presented influences how people interpret and respond to it (Goffman, 1974). Entman (1993) also defines framing as the process of selecting and emphasizing specific aspects of perceived reality to promote a specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. Framing theory is a crucial framework in communication, studies, media research, and science for understanding how messages are constructed, presented and interpreted by diverse audiences.

The origin of framing theory can be traced back to Erving Goffman 's frame analysis (1974), in which he defines frames as cognitive structures or interpretative schemas, that people use to make sense of and organize events in their lives. Goffman examined framing from a sociological perspective, focusing on how individuals perceive everyday reality. This concept was later extended to the realm of media and political communication by scholars such as Robert Entman, who argued that framing plays a central role in the struggle for meaning within political discourse. Entman's research highlighted how frames operate within media text to influence public perception and share political reality by either reinforcing or challenging prevailing ideologies.

Subsequent developments in framing theory have emphasized its dual nature as a media-driven process and an audience-centered interpretative activity. Scheufele (1999) distinguished between media frames constructed by journalists, political communicators, content creator's and individual frames, which act as cognitive filters through which audiences interpret messages. This dual process perspective underscores the complex interaction between media

content and audience interpretation. Additionally, Iyengar (1991) differentiated between episodic frames, which depict issues through specific events or cases and often assign individual responsibility and thematic frames, which present broader structural or societal contexts and encourage systematic explanations and collective solutions.

Empirical studies have identified the use of both generic and issue-specific frames. According to De Vreese (2005), generic frames such as those emphasizing conflict, economic consequences, or human interests are applicable across multiple topics, whereas issue-specific frames are tailored to a specific theme or events. One prominent example is strategic framing, which presents politics as a competitive game focused on winning and losing rather than substantive policy debate. Cappella and Jamieson (1997) argue that this type of framing fosters public cynicism by prioritizing campaign tactics over meaningful civic discourse, thereby weakening democratic participation.

In political, communication, framing serves as a deliberate strategic tool used by political actors to align messages with ideological positions and emotional appeal. Gitlin (1980) notes that media frames are shaped by journalistic norms, institutional structures, and broader ideological contexts. In pluralistic democracies, political communication often involves what Chong and Druckman (2007) describe as “framing contexts” where competing political actors attempt to define issues in ways that resonate with the public. The success of a frame depends on factors such as repetition, source credibility, and the audience’s prior beliefs and attitudes.

The power of framing in shaping public perception and decision-making has been validated by multiple empirical studies. Iyengar (1991) demonstrated that the use of episodic versus thematic frames in news coverage can lead to significant differences in how the audience interprets events. Similarly, Nelson et al., (1997) found that framing political protest as an issue of free expression, rather than public safety, increases public support for civil liberties. These

findings underline the critical distinction between framing and agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), while agenda-setting influences the salience of issues, framing affects how those issues are interpreted and understood.

A primary criticism of framing theory is the absence of conceptual clarity regarding “frames”. D’Angelo (2002) contends that a significant obstacle to the framing theory is its conceptual vagueness. He indicates that academics frequently have divergent views on the definition of a “frame”, with some perceiving it as a narrative aspect and others as a broader interpreted framework. He contends that this makes it hard to use framing theory consistently.

The framing theory serves as the foundation for this research because it goes beyond simply recognizing issues that were brought to the forefront during the 2024 election, instead, the theory explores how the issues were crafted and presented by the NDC communications strategists. Furthermore, the theory assists in comprehending the practical importance of the political communication perspective. The research contributes to the argument about how political parties in Africa use this theory for narrative and public meaning-making. The use of the framing theory helps comprehend the interactive role that political actors and the media play in government.

2.4 Theoretical Justification for the Study

The agenda theory, introduced by McCombs and Shaw in the 20th century is highly relevant to the topic of exploring the practical application of communication theories in Ghana. The position that “the mass media does not tell people what to think but has a great influence on what the people ought to think about”. Scholarly works over the years have tested a theory in various jurisdictions and even demonstrated the theory’s relevance beyond traditional media, extending the application of the theory to the digital communication channels (Guo, 2015).

A study by Kwansah-Aidoo demonstrated how media coverage highlights culturally significant events, thereby drawing public attention towards specific issues. Also, a study by The Ghana Report (2023) illustrates the pivotal role of agenda-setting on the “Stop Galamsey Now” and how the media agenda shaped national discourse and the immediate formation of national policy on illegal mining. In the current digital landscape in Ghana, where social media platforms serve as a source of information, the agenda-setting theory aids in exploring the applicability of Western-formulated political communication theory and its impact in the 2024 general election in Ghana.

The integration of agenda-setting theory and framing theory is justified through its analytical lens. The framing theory describes what topics are most important to the public, but framing theories describes how those topics are communicated and perceived. Agenda-setting’s strength is its emphasis on the importance of issues, yet its weakness is its disregard for interpretive meaning which framing theory provides.

The framing theory which was developed by Goffman (1974) and advanced in media and communication studies by Entman (1993) provides a vast perspective. Entman (1993) argues that framing mainly focuses on how “issues are presented, interpreted and understood”. According to Entman (1993), framing involves “the selection of certain aspects of perceived reality to promote specific problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations and policy recommendations.” Several studies in Ghana have confirmed the use of framing in political communication. Afful (2022) in his work “Election Campaign Framing in an emerging democracy: horse race versus issue framing in Ghana” examined newspaper coverage of election campaigns and found that the media relied on horse race framing, prioritizing candidates’ competition over substantive policy issues. Likewise, Akorfa (2015) demonstrated how the Ghanaian print media framed electoral issues in ways that influence voters, perception

of fairness and credibility. Recently, studies have shown how political actors strategically frame campaign issues on social media with issues like economic growth, youth unemployment, human rights abuse etc. (Ahovi, 2015). The integration of agenda-setting theory and framing theory, provides a robust lens for analyzing the practical application of political communication theories during the 2024 elections.

On the framing theory, its ability to describe the production of meaning, is complemented by its inability to account for the original establishments of agendas. This, the incorporation of both theories enhances the study to examine how Ghanaian political parties and media not only choose which issues to be presented to the public during the 2024 general election but also influence how the public interpret and internalizes these issues

2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed relevant literature on political communication theories, focusing on agenda-setting and framing theories within global, African, and Ghanaian contexts. The review established that, globally social media platforms have redefined agenda-setting processes and framing strategies by fostering participatory political communication and diminishing the monopoly of traditional media. In Africa, studies highlight the strategic use of digital platforms, such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and WhatsApp, for issue salience, narrative control, and mobilisation, despite persistent challenges like misinformation and digital inequality. Within Ghana, communication has evolved into a hybrid media system where social media commentary, influencer-driven campaigns, and hierarchical WhatsApp networks interact with traditional media to shape public discourse and electoral outcomes. However, the review identified research gaps, particularly the lack of empirical studies on the 2024 elections, the limited theoretical application of agenda-setting in the Ghanaian political landscape, and insufficient attention to influencer marketing and closed-group communication platforms.

These gaps justify the need for the present study which seeks to examine how the National Democratic Congress (NDC) 2024 campaign, operationalizes agenda-setting and framing in Ghana, contemporary media landscape.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology that will be employed to explore the practical implications of political communication theories used by the National Democratic Congress during the 2024 general election. The chapter outlines and provides a detailed explanation of the research design, philosophical orientation, data collection methods, sampling techniques, and data analysis procedures employed to achieve the study's objectives. This chapter also addresses the ethical considerations observed during the research process, thereby ensuring the credibility of the findings. The study utilizes primary and semi-structured data, while document analysis provides secondary data. The chapter aims to present a robust methodology for exploring the practical application of political communication theories in Ghana.

3.1 Research Paradigm

Research philosophy refers to the set of beliefs, principles, and assumptions that direct the acquisition, validation, or interpretation of knowledge about a phenomenon within a study. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), it includes the research assumptions about reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology), and the processes used to verify or investigate them (methodology). It shapes the various aspects of the study, including the design, methodology and theoretical frameworks. (Coates, 2023; Creswell, 2014)

The study will adopt a qualitative research paradigm which is anchored in interpretivism. The interpretivism philosophy is anchored on understanding the subjective meanings embedded in the political communication and how they resonate with target audiences. This approach allows for a rich exploration of campaign strategies, framing and agenda setting are shaped by political

actors' intentions, perceptions and interaction within the Ghanaian electoral environment (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The choice of interpretivism is justified by the objective of the study, which seeks to explore how the National Democratic Congress (NDC) strategically utilised political communication theories such as agenda-setting and framing during the 2024 general elections. The semi-structured interviews, which are the primary data collection tool, align with interpretivism assumptions by enabling the campaign strategists of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), communication officers and media consultants to express their own life experiences and perspectives on the strategic application of political communication theories by the NDC during the 2024 general election (Obeng-Odoom, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.2 Research Approach

Research approach constitutes an orderly structure that connects the underlying philosophy to the research design, ensuring the study's alignment and methodological reliability. For this study of exploring the practical application of political communication theories by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) during the 2024 general elections, a qualitative approach is utilised, and an inductive research approach is adopted to explore the life experiences of campaign strategists, media consultants, and the party communicators of the NDC (Creswell, 2014).

A qualitative research approach is suitable, as the goal of the research is not to test existing hypotheses but rather to generate insights from rich contextual data that is gathered through semi-structured interviews with party strategists, party commentators and media consultants, as this is necessary for understanding the dynamic nature of political communication in the

Ghanaian electoral context. This enhances the study's ability to bridge theoretical and practical underpinnings of political communication (Patton, 2015).

3.3 Research Design

Research design is an essential framework that outlines the structure and methodology of a study, specifying the procedures for its execution (Singh, 2014; Akhtar, 2016). It acts as a guide for researchers, taking them from coming up with hypotheses to analyzing the data (Singh, 2014). The design includes choices about what data to gather, where to collect it, when to collect it, and how to analyse it (Singh, 2014; Yin, 2003; Oranga & Matere, 2023). For this study on the practical application of political communication theory, a case study was chosen. A case study design is effective as it allows the research to situate the findings within the context of Ghana's political landscape, thereby bridging theory and practice (Yin, 2017).

The choice of case study design, allows for the collection of rich, detailed data through multiple sources, such as semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The research design ensures consistency across the study's philosophy, methodology, and data-gathering strategy, thus strengthening the validity and depth of the findings (Stake, 1995).

3.4 Study Area and Justification

The study area in research refers to the geographical and institutional context where the study was conducted. It encompasses both the physical location and the organizational setting (Shehadeh, 2020). A comprehensive description of the study area includes geographical features, resources, land use, climate, socio-economic characteristics, and infrastructure (Singh & Singh, 2021; Gyimah-Boadi, 2021). The study was conducted in the Greater Accra region. The Greater Accra region was selected for its diversity in terms of socio-economic development, infrastructure, and educational access. The National Democratic Congress

(NDC) employed series of communication strategies during the 2024 general election which enabled the party communicate its policies to the diverse Ghanaian voter segments. Greater Accra represents the urban center with a diverse voter segment, this geographical diversity ensures that the study captures a wider range of perspectives and experiences from party campaign strategists, communications officers of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), media practitioners, political marketing consultants, and public relations practitioners.

3.5 Target Population

The target population refers to the total number of people or organizations that are interested in the research project. When it comes to research technique, the target population is an essential term that should be differentiated from the larger population of interest (Willie, 2022). It plays a significant part in the process of designing research, affecting interpretation, and directing sample strategies (Willie, 2024). For this study, the population comprises individuals and groups who were directly engaged in or had specialized knowledge of the 2024 National Democratic Congress (NDC) election campaign in Ghana. The population comprises campaign strategists, who were in charge of organizing the party's entire communication and election strategy. It also includes communication officers who ran media campaigns, ran social media accounts, and wrote public messages during the campaign (Creswell, 2014; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

The population demographic also includes media professionals, including journalists, editors, and media analysts who wrote about or interacted with the NDC's campaign efforts. The research population also includes political experts and commentators who watched and judged the party's communication strategies. These organizations were chosen because they have firsthand knowledge and experience with how to put communication tactics into action, such as agenda-setting and framing, and how they affect how voters feel and interact (Bryman, 2016;

Patton, 2015). Through the participation of individuals who have direct involvement or specialized knowledge, the research can capture the subtle realities of political communication in Ghana's 2024 general elections. This helps to increase the validity and depth of the findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

3.6 Sampling Technique

Sampling procedures refer to methods used to select participants from a target group for conducting research investigations. According to Kandola et al. (2014) and Roy (2019), there are two primary classifications: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. A sampling approach that falls under the category of probability sampling is one in which every individual in the population has an equal chance of being chosen. Non-probability sampling refers to procedures in which each individual in the target population has an unequal chance of being selected, whereas simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling, and multi-stage sampling are all examples of this type of sample. The sample methods that fall under this category are convenience, purposive, and snowball sampling (Kandola et al., 2014; Omair, 2014).

The study will employ a purposive sampling strategy which is suitable for qualitative research aimed at obtaining rich, in-depth data from individuals with specific experiences relevant to the research objectives. Participants will be deliberately selected based on knowledge, role and direct involvement in political communication during the 2024 general elections. The sample will therefore include key members of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) campaign team at the national, regional and constituency levels that played a strategic role in terms of messaging, media planning and voter engagement. These participants are expected to provide insider perspectives on the formulation and execution of the party's political communication strategies. In addition, political communication experts, such as academics, media analysts,

consultants and campaign advisors, will also be engaged to offer a critical reflection and contextual interpretations of the campaign strategies. Their inclusion will ensure a broader understanding of the theoretical and practical dimensions of political messaging, audience targeting and digital engagement.

3.7 Sample

The process of selecting a subset from a target group to represent the entire population is known as sampling, and it is an essential component of the design of research (Knechel, 2019; Turner, 2020). Compared to studying entire populations, sampling allows for data collection more practically and cost-effectively (Turner, 2020).

The sample size for this study is based on a purposive sampling technique. Because the research is qualitative, it looks for depth and richness in the data instead of numbers. It is anticipated that 10 to 20 individuals would be interviewed, encompassing campaign strategists, communication officers, media practitioners, and political analysts.

This sample size was chosen to provide a balanced depth and breadth, allowing for detailed qualitative analysis while also capturing a range of perspectives. The sample was designed to ensure representation from different stakeholders as it includes a range of opinions about the implementation of the NDC's communication tactics while preserving the adaptability to investigate subtle and context-specific findings. Purposive sampling ensures that study participants are relevant and informed. This enhances the credibility, validity, and depth of the findings (Mason, 2010).

3.8 Data Sources

The primary source of data for the research study was collected directly from individuals who were involved in or have an expert opinion of the NDC 2024 election campaign. The primary source of data is collected through semi-structured interviews with campaign strategists, communications officers of the party, media practitioners, and political analysts or consultants. These persons provide firsthand and rich data and insights into the use of theories such as the agenda-setting and framing theory that were strategically used by the NDC.

In addition, secondary data will be used to complement and contextualize the research findings. Secondary data, including party reports, media publications, campaign speeches, press releases and social media posts, will be analyzed.

3.9 Data Collection Techniques

Research necessitates the collection of data to investigate the subjects under study (Mazhar, 2021). There are many ways to get information, such as using both primary and secondary data sources. The study employs qualitative data collection methods, primarily through semi-structured interviews for the collection of primary data, because they provide the flexibility to probe participants' responses while ensuring that key theories are addressed. This method allows participants to share their experiences and perspectives in their own words, providing rich insights into the study of the practical application of political communication theories employed by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) during the 2024 general election. The semi-structured interviews are conducted face-to-face or virtually depending on the participants' availability and convenience. All interviews will be audio recorded with participants' consent and further transcribed to ensure accuracy. Notes will also be taken during

the in-person interview to capture non-verbal cues that may not be evident in the audio transcript.

In addition to the primary data collection, secondary data will be collected and analyzed to triangulate and complement the research findings. The secondary data includes press releases from the NDC, speeches, party manifesto, media publications and social media posts.

The data collection methods are justified as both primary and secondary data collection methods ensure a methodological triangulation, which enhances the credibility, depth and robustness of the findings.

3.10 Data Analysis

Data analysis is an essential process for deriving significant insights from data collected, employing diverse methods and approaches (Islam, 2020). It includes procedures such as sorting, altering, and modelling data to help people make decisions in many areas (Myatt, 2006). The analysis process usually involves defining the problem, getting the data ready, visualizing it, and using statistical and mining methods (Myatt, 2006). In this study, data collected in the study will be analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative analytic method that enables the identification, organization and interpretation of recurring themes and patterns across various data sources. The data analysis will be manually analyzed.

The researcher first read through the transcripts and documents to gain insights from the entire data. Next, codes were assigned to significant segments of the data, which were then grouped into themes. These themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data. Finally, the themes were interpreted in the context of the research questions and existing literature to draw conclusions into the strategic application of political communication theories utilized by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) during the 2024 general election. The

approach is well-suited for understanding the depth and complexity of political communication practices, especially within the context of election campaigns.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are crucial to this research as they safeguard participants' rights, preserve the study's integrity, and sustain academic standards. This study followed well-known ethical rules, such as getting permission, keeping information private, keeping participants' identities secret, letting them choose to take part, and being honest (Creswell, 2014; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

Firstly, informed consent was obtained from all participants before their involvement in the study. This will involve providing clear and detailed information about the purpose of the study, the methods to be used, the expected duration and the nature of participation.

Furthermore, participants' privacy in the study was maintained through strict confidentiality and anonymity. All identifying information was removed from the transcript and research documents, and pseudonyms were used in reporting the findings of the research.

Lastly, the research obtained ethical clearance from the appropriate Institutional Review Board before data collection began. This step ensured they met the required ethical standards for human subject research and international ethical guidelines.

3.12 Chapter Summary

The chapter explained the study's methodological framework, which was based on an interpretivist philosophy that seeks to understand participants' points of view in the socio-political context of Ghana's 2024 general elections. A case study design and qualitative research approach were utilised to understand how the NDC used communication theories,

including agenda-setting and framing. The study population consisted of campaign strategists, communication officers, media practitioners, and political analysts, chosen via purposive and snowball sampling to guarantee pertinent findings. The primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews, supplemented by secondary sources including campaign documents and media reports, with the sample size determined by data saturation. Thematic analysis was used to detect repeating patterns and themes. Ethical standards, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary involvement, were also followed to ensure that the results were credible and trustworthy. This methodology consequently establishes a robust basis for examining the NDC's communication strategy in the 2024 elections.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

The chapter presents and analyses the findings of the study on the strategic application of political communication theories by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) during the 2024 general election in Ghana. By analyzing interviews with political marketing consultants, media practitioners, communications officers of the National Democratic Congress, in addition to analyzing secondary materials such as press conferences, campaign speeches, rallies and national broadcasts. The analysis is structured thematically in line with the research objectives, highlighting patterns, recurring themes, and varied perspectives from the primary and secondary data. The key themes explored include the extent to which the NDC's campaign message reflected agenda-setting and framing strategies, the role of digital and traditional media in campaign communication and the effectiveness of various voter engagement approaches within Ghana's socio-political landscape. Where applicable, the findings of the research are compared with existing empirical literature to unearth similarities, differences, and contributions of this study to scholarly debates.

4.1 RQ1. What were the main communication strategies employed by the NDC during the 2024 general election?

This research question aims to understand the main communication strategies that were employed by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) during the 2024 general election. By exploring the communication strategies used, the study sought to unearth the communication forms crafted and implemented by the National Democratic Congress served as the guiding

principle of communication for the NDC during the campaign period of the 2024 general election in Ghana.

4.1.1 Exploring the Communication Strategies of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in the 2024 general elections.

Ghana's general election in 2024 provides a striking example of how political communication affects election results, as the National Democratic Congress (NDC) adopted a variety of communication tactics that combine traditional campaign tactics with more recent political communication models. To engage the Ghanaian voter, control the national discourse, and establish the National Democracy Congress (NDC) as the most credible rival to the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP), the party's media strategy during the election was well planned and strategized. The importance of agenda-setting, framing, grassroots mobilization, digital engagements, press conferences, and symbolic display of power in the National Democratic Congress's communication framework is demonstrated from interviews with party communicators, journalists, political consultants, marketing consultants, and secondary data from media reports and academic commentary. Together, these tactics help to establish the NDC as a responsive and voter-focused party one also highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of its communication strategies.

The party intentionally prioritized economic hardship, unemployment, and corruption as the election's central concern was a recurring theme identified from the data analyzed from the interviews with party communicators, political marketing consultants, and journalists.

Respondent 2, a constituency communications officer of the NDC remarked "The NDC, focused on issues that affected ordinary Ghanaians. By 2024, the economic situation of the country had worsened. We reminded the voters that under the NDC, inflation was around

13.5%, compared to over 54% under the NPP. We presented ourselves as the better managers of the economy. The second issue was on education, parents were frustrated with the double-track system and the decline in quality education. The NDC proposed a solution to restore quality and confidence in education. Third was healthcare, and then NDC has a record of building hospitals and expanding infrastructure. We campaigned on continuing that legacy. Fourth, we emphasized governance and taxes, people were unhappy with multiple taxes such as the tax on electronic transactions. We assured voters that the NDC government would correct these mistakes. Finally, we addressed justice and the rule of law, many citizens had lost confidence in the judiciary, believing it was no longer independent. We campaigned on restoring trust and confidence in the judicial system.”

The NDC controlled the electoral narrative and made sure that voters’ perception about the government’s performance was shaped by economic mismanagement by continuously amplifying these grievances. This finding is supported by secondary data from a post-election survey by the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), in collaboration with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), 2025; Africa Policy Research Institute, 2024; The Africa Report, 2024; Centre for Democratic Development Ghana (CDD), 2024; Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC), 2024 noted that inflation, currency depreciation, corruption, unemployment, environmental crisis (galamsey) are central issues that dominated public debate, largely because the NDC persistently returned to these themes during rallies, press conferences, and interviews. This strategic prioritization reflects the agenda-setting principle, described by McCombs and Shaw (1972), where political actors influence what the public considers important by shaping issue salience through repeated communication.

The NDC, however, did more than just draw attention to the problems. Deliberate framing was another tactic the party used to appeal to people’s emotions. Campaign members, localized and

dramatized the issues of economic distress rather than discussing them in general macroeconomic abstractions. Respondent 1, a Greater-Accra constituency communications officer of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) stated that:

“The most popular policy was the 24-hour economy. We broke it down into simple, practical scenarios people could relate to depending on the community. For instance, in Ga-Dangme-dominated areas, I used local examples. We also campaigned on the cancellation of e-levy, which resonated with the youth. At markets, we explained how the Women’s Development Bank would empower women through loans and create jobs for their daughters. In elite communities, we focused on investment issues and blocked funds. Basically, every community required a tailored message: blending English and Twi in cosmopolitan areas, using market-friendly language for traders, and policy focus explanations for elites.”

Also, respondent 5 commented on how the NDC framed its issues by stating that: “Culture was very important. The people of Teshie have a unique character, they are outspoken, unapologetic, and politically strong-minded. So, our message was framed to resonate with their identity. Politically, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) had lost favor, people were dissatisfied after eight years of their administration, so we tapped in. Socially, the Member of Parliament (MP) on the ticket of the NDC made himself available in every aspect of the people’s life- funerals, outdoors, graduations, and other social events. Economically, he supported small traders, hairdressers, seamstresses and artisans with stipends and resources to improve their work. By whipping himself into the fabric of people’s lives, socially, politically, and emotionally our message of change became very credible.”

This strategy is consistent with Entman’s (1993) definition of framing as the process of selecting and emphasizing certain aspects of reality to shape audience interpretation. The NDC framed the election as a choice between continued suffering under incompetent leadership and

the promise of rescue through change. Slogans, such as “Rescue Mission 2024” and hashtags such as #ResettingGhana, #24HourEconomy, #Mahama4Change2024, #MahamaForPresident, #NDC2024, and #MahamaMediaEncounter carried this frame across traditional and social media platforms. A secondary data from a feature write-up by Daniel Kwame Ampofo-Adjei, the head of Institutional Development, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning at the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) titled “Ghana’s 2024 General Election: The double-edged sword of political messaging,” argue that the NDC’s communication strategy successfully framed the government’s record by linking it to debt accumulation and corruption scandals, also weaponizing speeches of appointees of the NPP administration through negative frames. This findings from both primary and secondary data are reinforced by Afful (2017) analysis that elections communication in Ghana is influenced by strategic issues framing, where political parties strategically select aspect of reality to shape voter interpretation.

Another theme identified from the primary data on the communication strategies employed by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) is grassroots mobilization and interpersonal networks to penetrate the communities. This approach enabled party communicators to directly communicate the policies of the NDC to the Ghanaian voter and to take direct feedback from the members of the various communities they visited. Respondent 1 commented that “we mainly use two strategies: door-to-door campaign and open-air campaign. The door-to-door involves reaching people in their homes, workplaces or markets to share campaign messages. The open-air campaign organized gatherings in open spaces where we addressed larger groups about our policies. Apart from the door-to-door and open approach, we also relied on sound vans. The vans moved through the communities announcing our activities and mobilizing people. We gave megaphones to branch-level communicators to spread the messages.”

While grassroots mobilization reflected continuity in Ghanaian campaigning, the NDC also innovated by embracing digital platforms as never before. The party realized that young voters were increasingly influenced by online communication leading to the establishment of a dedicated digital team. Respondent 7, a Ghanaian journalist opined that “I think the NDC did well with the communication approach, particularly the way they used different communication channels to deliver their messages to their target audiences. On platforms such as Twitter now X, the NDC were very visible, holding online conferences and flooding the timeline with content. The NDC branded themselves aesthetically, the colors were brighter and more attractive online, and the NDC maximized this to project a new image.” Respondent 10 also assert that “Yes we used both heavily, on social media we relied a lot on TikTok influencers and Facebook, but in a very targeted way, engaging influencers that were popular in our constituencies.” Imani’s pulse reports (2024) showed that the NDC strategically leveraged social media to disseminate their intended messages through memes, short videos, and engaging content keeping the NDC’s content engaged more with the active social media users.

Despite the growing role of digital communications, traditional media remained integral to the NDC’s communication. “On traditional media too, they were always available. They didn’t care which media houses called them; they would always show up everywhere. If one communicator wasn’t available, another was put forward. They filled every media gap, unlike the government side, which sometimes struggles to provide voices. The NDC’s communication was very aggressive across both social media and traditional media.” Respondent 7 observed. “The NDC also deployed strong voices within the media. Figures such as Shemima Muslim, Bridget Otoo and Joyce Bawah consistently explained policies, engaged the public and strengthened credibility.” Respondent 3, a journalist also remarked. This finding is collaborated by Afful, E. (2017), who observed that political trust and message acceptance are greatly

reinforced through message credibility and consistency, especially through reputable media characters. Additionally, this finding is also backed by another study by Glate, Dzansi, and Onojaefe's (2024) assertion that online searches and have become decisive influencers on voter behavior in Ghana as competitive democracies like Ghana, credible spokespersons play a crucial role as a bridge between the voter and political institutions, increasing the persuasiveness of a political message.

The NDC's diverse communication strategies are demonstrated by the combination of agenda-setting, framing, community engagement, traditional and social media communication, and grassroots mobilization. The purposefulness of these decisions is highlighted by the interview data and their ability to influence voter opinion is supported by secondary data. What shows up is a party that blended traditional and modern communication methods, adjusting to Ghana's changing political landscape without sacrificing its customs at the grassroots level.

4.2 RQ2. How Did These Communication Strategies Reflect or Differ from Already Established Political Communication Theories Such as The Agenda-Setting Theory and Framing Theory?

The goal of the research question is to examine whether the communication strategies adopted by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) during the 2024 election align with or diverge from established political communication theories such as agenda-setting and framing theory. By doing so, it not only tests the applicability of Western-developed political communication theories but also highlights how the Ghanaian sociopolitical realities may shape or challenge theoretical assumptions.

4.2.1 To Assess How These Communication Strategies Reflect or Differ from Well-Known Communication Theories Like Agenda-Setting and Framing theories.

The communication approach adopted by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in the 2024 elections reflected many of the assumptions of political communication theories, particularly the agenda-setting and framing theory. Both, primary and secondary data suggests that, the NDC did not only apply the core principles of these theories but also stretched them, adapting to the strategic use of new media communication tools and localized contexts in ways that goes beyond traditional theoretical models.

Agenda setting in action is amplified by the National Democratic Congress (NDC)'s focus on unemployment, economic hardship, and corruption. Respondent 7 opined that “they set the agenda in diverse ways. One of the first things they did was to organize routine press events held mostly at their party headquarters. I think monthly. I attended two of these. Their communications director and other executives spoke on national issues breaking them down for the media. For example, they unpacked the PDS scandal in the energy sector, at one of these events. They did not wait for the government to lead the conversations; they led them. By holding press conferences and inviting the media, they ensured that the next day and sometimes the weeks, their agenda dominated discussions.” Also, respondent 3 contributed to how the NDC set the agenda for the next 2024 general election by stating that “their agenda was clear, to unseat, the NPP. They highlighted issues such as galamsey, corruption, misappropriation of funds and bad governance. They also drew attention to alleged judicial bias. Through this, the NDC tapped into public anger and frustration setting the tune for change.” This purposeful approach to drawing attention to topical issues during the campaign season is highlighted by this statement. These findings reinforce a study done by McCombs & Shaw (1972) which

points to the National Democratic Congress (NDC) systematic efforts to determine what the public should think about.

Moreover, second-level agenda-setting was also evident during the campaign, where the focus was on how to think about issues rather than just what to talk about. The NDC localized economic arguments by emphasizing characteristics such as “high cost of living,” “corruption,” “unemployment” an input by respondent 6, which connects issues of abstract with the real-life experiences of the Ghanaian people. This indicates the NDC’s tactics moved beyond the establishment of the party’s program to include influencing the frameworks that people use to perceive economic deterioration.

Another theme identified from the data is the essential component of framing, as the National Democratic Congress strategically framed issues to influence people’s attitudes, beliefs and behavior. The NDC, offered prognostic frames through its “Rescue Mission,” and “Building the Ghana We Want Together” through narrative and motivational frames by urging the Ghanaian voters to embrace change, therefore attributing the economic woes to mismanagement and corruption under the leadership of the New Patriotic Party (NPP). Also, issues of “corruption,” “mismanagement of the Ghanaian economy,” “misappropriation of state funds” were among the issues discussed on traditional and social media platforms, citing instances where state funds were used in projects that couldn’t yield their intended purpose and discussions on how such situations could be avoided in the future. This situation justifies Entman’s definition of framing as the selection and amplification of specific features of reality to support a particular interpretation, which is consistent with this purposeful focus.

Also, the symbolic use of campaign songs, branding of party paraphernalia, and billboard messages is evident during the campaign season. The National Democratic Congress engaged musicians to help disseminate the policies of the party (NDC) utilizing this means as a form of

communication. Respondent 3 remarked that “beyond social media, the party also heavily invested in physical branding and paraphernalia. Their T-shirts, billboards, and party materials were of higher quality and boldly displayed the party’s color’s and messages. I will call a particular T-shirt that has stood out for its vibrant design, which made even the simplest voter understand the message. This extended to their billboards and other campaign materials which reinforces visibility. Another aspect was music. The NDC worked with musicians to create catchy campaign songs that resonated with the people. These tunes were memorable as children and adults alike could recall them.” This model of communication is explained through the lens of symbolic interactionism. According to Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969), symbolic interactionism emphasizes that humans act towards things based on the meanings those things hold, and such things emerge through social interaction and are subject to interpretation. The campaign songs and the brand standing of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) functioned as powerful symbolic tools of communication, mobilizing voters through the construction of shared meanings and political identity.

4.3 RQ3. How Relevant and Applicable Are Western Political Communication Theories in Explaining the NDC’s Communication Approach Within Ghana’s Unique Social-Political Context?

The goal of the research question is to determine the relevance and applicability of Western developed political communication theories and how these theories explain the strategic communication approach of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) during the 2024 general election within Ghana’s unique socio-political environment.

4.3.1 To Examine How Well These Theories Apply Within Ghana's Unique Political, Cultural and Electoral Context.

The National Democratic Congress (NDC) communications strategy for the 2024 general election ought to be analyzed by situating Ghana's distinct sociopolitical setting to understand its relevance and applicability of Western developed political communication theories. The agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), framing theory (Entman, 1993), symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969), and two-step flow theory (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1995) and many more communication theories provide useful analytical tools for analyzing the communication tactics of the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The primary and secondary data show that although the theories provide insights into the key campaign elements, they are unable to adequately address the structural, cultural and local factors that influence political communication in Ghana.

A political communication theory, such as the agenda-setting theory, developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972) was a powerful communication tool utilised by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in its communication strategy during the 2024 general elections. Setting issue agendas such as "worsen economic conditions," "corruption," "disrespect to the Ghanaian voters," "unemployment," and many more issues. These issues were highlighted during party rallies, news conferences and social media campaigns, the party continuously increased the prominence of the issues on major political, social and traditional media platforms. Secondary materials have confirmed how strategic communication shapes media discourse. However, the Ghanaian sociopolitical environment displays a more in-depth layer in setting public agendas. Issues were not raised on platforms and abandoned, but were narrated or framed to appeal to the various segments of the Ghanaian society. Issues were not abstractly raised but are associated with the day-to-day experiences of the Ghanaian voter. Respondent 6, a Greater

Accra constituency official of the NDC commented that “we segmented our communities. For example, if you are Ga and you deliver your message in Ga, the love and attention you receive from the people is far greater than delivering your message in another language. People feel involved and valued when the communication reflects their identity.” This illustrates that in Ghana, agenda-setting is an effective tool but it isn’t only about amplifying issues but relating the issues to the living conditions of the Ghanaian people. Scholars such as Glate et al. (2024) and Boateng et al. (2024) have similarly noted that issues salience in African politics is often mediated by culture and identity, rather than media repetition.

Secondly, framing theory, a political communication theory which is concerned with the selection and amplification of specific features of reality to support a particular interpretation, is consistent with this purposeful focus. The theory was not merely highlighted but framed through an emotionally resonant narrative that emphasized the daily struggles of the Ghanaian voter. Contextually, the policies of the NDC were framed through symbolic performances such as large rallies, which were a central frame in themselves, signaling support and momentum. These visuals and symbolic frames were reinforced through social media especially social platforms such as TikTok, Facebook and X formerly Twitter, where crowd images and slogans widely circulated. This therefore reinforces that, while framing theory remains useful, its application in Ghana requires an understanding of the interplay between symbolic politics, grassroots narratives, and digital amplification. Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969) symbolic interaction views this meaning emerges through shared symbols and Collective interpretations. In this context, the National Democratic Congress’s (NDC) campaign materials and performances became instruments of social interactions, transforming abstract political concepts into tangible emotional experiences for voters.

Moreover, Ghana's electoral culture incorporates interpersonal communication, oral tradition, and community leadership as vital channels for persuasion, whereas Western literature on political communication frequently highlights the media important role in influencing public opinion. The National Democratic Congress (NDC) dependency on door-to-door campaign, market activations, and the involvement of local leaders, chiefs, and influencers to disseminate the policies and ideas of the party were frequently brought up by the respondents. This is consistent with the two-step flow communication (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1995), in which opinion leaders act as a conduit for information between the public and political elites. In Ghana's situation however, these opinion leaders include grassroots activists who are integrated into social and cultural institutions in addition to elites. Similarly, to this, Ahiabenu (2023) notes that online and offline mobilization co-exist in Ghanaian campaigns since the impersonal trust networks and digital platforms both have political impact.

The combination of digital communication and traditional oral symbolic forms shows how political communication theories work differently in Ghana, which is a country with many different cultures. The National Democratic Congress (NDC) influence over problem salience and narrative building is explained by agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) and framing theory (Entman, 1993), but its application in Ghana is enhanced by communalism, linguistic identity, and symbolic performance. Therefore, without taking into account the ingrained sociocultural processes that influence voter interpretation and involvement in Ghana, Western developed political communication theories provide basic insights but fall short.

4.4 Chapter Summary

The chapter critically analyzed the political communication strategies and principles utilised by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) during the 2024 general elections anchored on the primary data (interviews) and documents, conferences and manuscripts (secondary data).

According to the findings, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) utilised door-to-door campaign or communication approach, press conferences, rallies, traditional media and social networking platforms to communicate to the Ghanaian voters. Also, the findings revealed that, political communication theories such as agenda-setting, framing theory, symbolic interactionism and the two-step flow communication were some theories evident in the communication approach of the NDC. Agenda-setting played its role in the elections given the emphasis placed on economic mismanagement, corruption and poor infrastructure development. Additionally, the study demonstrated that digital platforms, rallies and symbolic acts boosted the messaging of the NDC. Moreover, while Western developed political communication theories such as the agenda-setting and framing theory were evident in the communication approach of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), it's application required contextual adaptation such as factors of local tradition and the advanced model of political communication (utilizing social media platforms).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

The chapter presents a summary of the key findings, recommendations, and conclusions from the study on the practical application of political communication theories. The chapter synthesizes the study's key findings on the explanation of the practical application of political communication theories: A case study of the National Democratic Congress 2024 election strategy. The chapter consolidates the findings from both primary and secondary data, interpreting them in relation to the research objectives and the theoretical framework that backs the study, particularly the agenda-setting and framing theory of political communication. The study further situates itself within the broader scholarly debates on political communication and assesses the relevance and applicability of Western developed political communication theories to Ghana's social-political context. The chapter concludes the effectiveness of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) communication approach and highlights the implications of the findings for political communication practice, theory, and future research. Finally, the chapter provides recommendations aimed at improving the use of communication strategies in Ghanaian electoral politics and developing a more context-sensitive understanding of political communication within Africa.

5.1 Summary

The study revealed that the National Democratic Congress (NDC) adopted a multifaceted political communication approach that utilised a face-to-face approach, the use of traditional media, and the use of social media networking platforms to effectively reach diverse voter groups. Drawing from both interview primary data and secondary data sources, agenda-setting,

framing, symbolic interactionism, and the two-way communication processes highlighted key electoral issues such as corruption, economic mismanagement and governance accountability. The findings also revealed that, while the National Democratic Congress (NDC) reflected core principles of Western developed political communication theories, particularly agenda-setting, framing theory, and many more theories, these approaches were localized to suit the Ghanaian sociocultural and political context.

5.2 Key Findings

The study on the practical application of political communication theories: a case study of the National Democratic Congress 2024 election strategy revealed from the interviews with political communication officers for the National Democratic Congress, journalists, and political marketing consultant and secondary data reports and media analysis demonstrate that the National Democratic Congress (NDC) campaign communication was a deliberate fusion of contemporary digital engagements, traditional interpersonal mobilization and the contextualized theoretical adaptation. The research showed that the NDC's communication approach was not only rooted in Western developed communication theories but was reshaped to fit Ghana's socio-political environment.

A major key finding from the communication strategies of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) during the 2024 general election was heavily agenda-driven and issue-based. Key issues like corruption, economic mismanagement, unemployment and ineffective governance were at the forefront of the party's (NDC) communications. By repeating and emphasizing these issues, the NDC successfully shaped public opinion and made sure that the topics most relevant to the party's campaign narrative were regularly covered by the media and public. The agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), which holds that political actors can shape public opinion by elevating particular concerns is supported by the study. An interview, with Kwame Adinkra

(pseudonym) a Greater Accra communications officer of the NDC confirms this by stating that “The NDC’s focus was on issues that affected Ghanaians. The first was the economy. By 2024, economic conditions were very difficult. Inflation, exchange rate, fuel prices, and the cost of living had worsened under the NPP. We reminded voters that under the NDC, inflation was around 13.5% as compared to over 54% under the NPP. We presented ourselves as the better managers of the economy.” Similarly, secondary data from graphic online in the election showed that “high inflation,” “rising prices of foods and essentials,” “currency (cedi) depreciation,” and “a large national debt,” dominated public debate, largely due to the National Democratic Congress (NDC) persistent emphasis on these subjects. These data suggest that the party’s communication successfully dictated the political conversation, compelling other political actors, especially the New Patriotic Party (NPP) to respond to their agenda.

Another key finding identified from the data is the National Democratic Congress (NDC)’s strategic use of framing to influence how its main issues were interpreted. In line with the theory on framing, the party did more than set an agenda; it also defined how issues should be viewed (Entman, 1993). The use of themes such as “Rescue Mission,” “Mahama is the hope,” and “Building the Ghana we want together” gave emotional and moral meaning to the campaign of the NDC, therefore employing the Ghanaian voter to be part of a national duty of rebuilding the nation. The NDC also presented itself as a credible alternative capable of restoring national dignity. Journalist Ansah (pseudonym) identified that “The NDC’s campaign or communication during the campaign centered around change. They continuously communicated the need for a reset, showing that the community by extension the country could be changed and the new leadership was needed to replace the NPP government. Their reset agenda was very thematic throughout the campaign. They also positioned themselves as a viable alternative to the government. At every point when issues arose, they had a counter-

proposal or alternative solution. They were not just making noise; their communication came with policy alternatives that projected them ready to govern.” Key campaign videos, political commentaries and billboards and social media posts that were analyzed as secondary data portrayed that these frames consistently appeared in campaign messaging.

Another major finding was the strategic and extensive use of digital communication platforms (social media). The National Democratic Congress strategically used platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), Snapchat, Telegram and WhatsApp to amplify its message and to engage a segment of the Ghanaian voter. The study revealed that the digital platforms were not only used to disseminate the messages of the NDC but also served as an interactive space and an avenue to educate. The NDC had a dedicated digital team that operated on both national and regional levels and was well coordinated and equipped with tools to monitor online conversations, identify emerging themes and narratives and respond to misinformation. “On platforms such as Twitter (now X), the NDC was very visible, hosting online conferences and flooding timelines with content.” Respondent 3 remarked. A secondary data report from Citi Newsroom and The Ghana Report supports these findings, noting that the NDC had massive online dominance that the incumbent party (NPP) between August and November 2024.

Furthermore, interpersonal and community-based communication was identified as the dominant and effective communication strategy the NDC employed. Regional, constituency, and polling or ward stations’ communications officers stressed the significant importance of interpersonal communication during the campaign period. This mode of communication was effective in rural and peri-urban communities where access to digital platforms was limited. Respondent 5 confirms this with his remark “a lot of methods worked by the most impactful

were the community engagements, the dawn and late-night broadcasts and the door-to-door outreach. These allowed us to connect directly with the people.”

Additionally, the findings revealed that the strategic use of symbolic and cultural themes played a crucial role in enhancing voter identification and mobilization. The National Democratic Congress (NDC) leveraged music, language, colors and party symbols, and cultural expressions to create a sense of belonging and emotional attachment among supporters. A popular campaign song “Kwen Kwen” composed by Nacee, not only entertained but carried the political message (policies) of the National Democratic Congress with an additional message of unity, resilience and progress. The symbolic use of the party’s colors red, green, white and black also played a crucial role in reinforcing identity and loyalty.

Finally, the research identified that Western developed political communication theories provided a useful foundation for analyzing the communication strategies utilised by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) but the theories were effective with adaptation of Ghana’s unique political and social setting, as the National Democratic Congress (NDC) communication approach was multifaceted, delivered and contextual.

5.3 Conclusion

The study concludes that the National Democratic Congress (NDC) strategically integrated both traditional and modern communication approaches to enhance the electoral fortunes of the party (NDC) during the 2024 election. The study revealed that theories such as agenda-setting and framing theory played a key role in influencing public discourse, presenting issues such as corruption, economic mismanagement and youth unemployment are some central themes that resonated with the Ghanaian voter. Social media platforms also played a key role in amplifying the narratives, engaging the youth, and countering the messages from opposing

political parties. However, the study also established that Western developed political communication theories such as agenda-setting and framing theory provide useful analytical tools but their application is shaped by local cultural norms, parties' identity and the dynamics of grassroots mobilization. The study unveils that the National Democratic Congress (NDC) campaign's success was driven by its ability to link theories with local realities, which reinforces the need for political communication models that reflect Africa's diverse democratic experiences.

5.4 Limitations

The study with its insightful findings has its own limitations. The first limitation of the study was its reliance on self-reported data from interviews, which may be influenced by participants' personal biases. Also, the number of party communications officers interviewed is relatively small though the information provided is in-depth but may not capture the communication approach utilised across all regions and constituencies. Moreover, despite the numerous attempts by the researcher, campaign strategists of the national campaign team of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), political marketing consultants and public relations practitioners could not be consulted to provide insights into the communication strategies of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) during the 2024 general election. Nonetheless, these limitations do not diminish the study's contribution but rather highlight the need for future research to incorporate mixed methods and broaden the datasets for a more comprehensive understanding of political communication in Ghana.

5.5 Suggestion for Future Reference

Future research could expand the understanding of political communication in Ghana's multiparty democracy. Future research should explore comparative analysis of the various

political parties in Ghana such as NPP, NDC and CPP, breakaway groups such as Movement for Change, and emerging political movements such as the New Force, to know their similarities and differences in their communication strategies. Also, future research could adopt the use of mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative research methods) that integrate social media analytics, voter perception behaviors, and content analysis to measure the real impact of political messages on voter behavior. Additionally, future research should investigate what influences misinformation, political polarization, and how media ownership on party communication strategies and voter trust. Lastly, future research should also examine how gender, class, and regional diversity influence political messaging and representation in campaign narratives.

5.6 Recommendations

The findings of the study underscore the importance of strategic communication in shaping electoral outcomes in Ghana. The study recommends that the National Democratic Congress (NDC), other political parties and political movements incorporate culturally and socially grounded communication approaches to their communication, as Western developed political communication theories such as agenda-setting and framing theory remain analytical tools, but don't identify the unique elements of cultural and social factors that shape voter behavior in Ghana. Integrating local communication forms such as community storytelling, traditional media, and the use of local dialect makes the campaign message more authentic to the Ghanaian voter.

Also, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and other political parties ought to maintain active communication beyond the election period. Political parties must sustain civic engagement and issue-based communication to bridge the gap between electoral promises and governance outcomes. Therefore, establishing communication mechanisms such as town hall

meetings, the use of traditional media, social media platforms, and community forums helps political parties stay connected with voters. This communication approach enhances political transparency, accountability, and democratic participation.

Also, the study recommends stronger collaboration between political actors, academia, and the media to advance the development of Ghana-centered studies that explore the intersection between communication, politics and culture.

Fourthly, the effective utilization of agenda-setting, framing and symbolic strategies to influence voter perception and control of campaign narrative during the 2024 general election. It is however recommended that political parties institutionalize communication research as a continuous process. Regular opinion polls, audience segmentation and data-driven messages ought to guide the future campaigns of political parties.

5.7 How the Study has Contributed to Knowledge

The study adds to the body of knowledge on political communication in Ghana, by contextualizing Western developed political communication theories such as agenda-setting and framing theory within Ghana's socio-political environment. This demonstrates that while these theories provide useful analytical tools, their explanatory power is limited and aligned to local realities which are characterized by traditional mobilization, cultural values, and digital media dynamics.

5.8 Chapter Summary

The chapter provides a comprehensive discussion on major key findings, summary, conclusions, limitations, suggestions for future research, recommendations, and how the research has contributed to knowledge. The research established that the National Democratic

Congress (NDC) strategically employed both traditional and digital communication tools during the 2024 general election, to frame issues and set the political agenda relating to issues such as poor governance, corruption and youth unemployment. The chapter also discussed how Western developed political communication theories like agenda-setting and framing theory were useful in understanding certain aspects of the campaign, as the theory did not entirely capture the cultural, social and political context that shaped the communication strategies of the National Democratic Congress (NDC). Limitations such as self-reliance on qualitative data were acknowledged. Finally, the chapter offered recommendations for strengthening party communication structures and developing local political communication frameworks that reflect Ghana's evolving democratic context.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CAMPAIGN STRATEGISTS\

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for participating in this study; this interview is part of a study on the NDC's communication strategies during the 2024 elections. The aim is to understand the strategies used, how they connect to political communication theories, and their relevance in Ghana's political context. Your responses will be confidential and used only for academic purposes.

1. Can you briefly describe your role in the NDC's 2024 election campaign and your involvement in communication strategy?
2. What were the main communication strategies adopted by the NDC during the 2024 elections?
3. Which communication channels (traditional media, social media, community engagement, etc.) were prioritized, and why?
4. How did the campaign team tailor messages to different voter groups such as youth, women, and rural communities?
5. How did the NDC decide which issues to highlight or downplay in its messaging during the campaign?
6. In what ways were key issues framed to shape public perception of the party and its opponents?
7. To what extent do you think your strategies reflected communication concepts like agenda-setting and framing, whether consciously or unconsciously?
8. How much influence do you believe the NDC's communication had on media coverage and public debate during the 2024 elections?

9. Do you think Western political communication theories such as agenda-setting and framing adequately explain how campaigns operate in Ghana?
10. In what ways did Ghana's political, cultural, or social context shape or modify the communication strategies you used?
11. Were there aspects of the NDC's communication approach that existing theories could not fully explain?
12. What lessons can future campaigns learn from the NDC's communication strategies in 2024?

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR POLITICAL MARKETING CONSULTANT

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for participating in this study; this interview is part of a study on the NDC's communication strategies during the 2024 elections. The aim is to understand the strategies used, how they connect to political communication theories, and their relevance in Ghana's political context. Your responses will be confidential and used only for academic purposes.

1. From your perspective, what were the key communication strategies adopted by the NDC during the 2024 elections?
2. How effective were these strategies in shaping voter perceptions and influencing electoral outcomes?
3. In what ways did the NDC's communication reflect agenda-setting in terms of issue prioritization?
4. How did framing techniques manifest in the party's messaging, especially on sensitive issues like the economy or governance?
5. To what extent did the NDC's communication approach align with or diverge from established political communication theories?
6. Do you think Western communication theories like agenda-setting and framing adequately explain the NDC's strategies in Ghana's political context?
7. What unique cultural, social, or political factors influenced how these strategies were applied during the campaign?
8. What key lessons should future campaigns in Ghana learn from the NDC's 2024 communication approach?

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MEDIA PRACTITIONERS

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for participating in this study; this interview is part of a study on the NDC's communication strategies during the 2024 elections. The aim is to understand the strategies used, how they connect to political communication theories, and their relevance in Ghana's political context. Your responses will be confidential and used only for academic purposes.

1. How would you describe the overall communication approach of the NDC during the 2024 elections from a media perspective?
2. What were the dominant themes or messages from the NDC that you observed in your reporting or coverage?
3. How effective do you think the NDC was in using traditional media and digital platforms to reach different audiences?
4. In your experience, how did the NDC attempt to set the agenda during the 2024 campaign?
5. Can you identify examples of framing used by the NDC to shape narratives on issues like the economy, corruption, or governance?
6. To what extent do you think the media amplified, reshaped, or challenged the NDC's messaging during the campaign?
7. Do you think Western political communication theories such as agenda-setting and framing explain how the NDC engaged with the media and the public? Why or why not?
8. What unique challenges or opportunities did Ghana's media environment present to the NDC in communicating its message?

9. From your observation, what communication strategies by the NDC were most effective in gaining media traction?
10. What lessons should political parties learn about media relations and communication strategy from the 2024 elections?

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR) PRACTITIONERS

INTRODUCTION

This interview is part of a study on the NDC's communication strategies during the 2024 general elections. The aim is to understand how PR principles shaped political messaging, how these strategies align with theories like agenda-setting and framing, and how communication was adapted to Ghana's unique political and cultural environment. Your responses will remain confidential and are for academic purposes only.

1. From your public relations (PR) perspective, what role did public relations play in the NDC's 2024 communication strategy?
2. What techniques or tools were most effective in building the party's image and reputation during the campaign?
3. How did PR practices influence which issues the NDC highlighted (agenda-setting) during the campaign?
4. In what ways were messages framed to shape how voters perceived the party and its opponents?
5. What PR strategies were used to manage negative publicity, attacks from opponents, or misinformation during the elections?
6. Can you share examples of how messaging was adjusted to respond to emerging issues during the campaign?
7. Do you think Western PR and communication theories fully explain the realities of political campaigns in Ghana? Why or why not?
8. What local cultural or social factors influenced how PR strategies were applied in the NDC's 2024 campaign?

9. From your experience, what aspects of the NDC's PR approach were most successful in engaging the public?
10. What lessons should future political campaigns learn about the role of PR in Ghanaian elections?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR REGIONAL, CONSTITUENCY, AND POLLING/WARD STATION COMMUNICATION OFFICERS

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for participating in this study; this interview is part of a study on the NDC's communication strategies during the 2024 elections. The aim is to understand the strategies used, how they connect to political communication theories, and their relevance in Ghana's political context. Your responses will be confidential and used only for academic purposes.

1. What specific communication strategies did you use to engage voters in your region/constituency/polling station during the 2024 elections?
2. Which communication channels (radio, social media, community meetings, door-to-door, etc.) were most effective in reaching people locally, and why?
3. What were the main issues or messages you were asked to emphasize, and how did you present them to make sense to your audience?
4. How did local cultural, social, or political factors influence the way you communicated the NDC's message?
5. Looking back, what communication methods worked best, and what challenges did you face in implementing them?

CODING SHEET

1. Communication Channels

- Walk-in approach or house-to-house campaign
- One-on-one conversation
- Community engagement
- Dawn or late-night broadcast using party vans
- Social media communication platforms (Twitter formerly X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, Telegram)
- Traditional media (Television, Radio, Newspapers, Community Information Centers)

2. Message Content and Framing

- Economic hardship (Tackle Inflation, High cost of Living, Review Taxes, Fuel Price Hikes, Reduce Port Duties)
- Environmental Concerns (Using Artificial Intelligence to Curb Galamsey)
- Justice Reform (Resetting the Ghanaian Judiciary)
- Governance critique (Arresting Corrupt Officials using Operation Recover All Loot, Respect the Ghanaian People)
- Education (Moving Double Track System to Single Track System, A dedicated Source of Funds for Free Senior High School Policy, Free Academic Fees for first year Undergraduate Tertiary Students)

3. Cultural and Social Dynamics

- Use of local dialect for communication (Twi, Ga, Ewe, Fante, Hausa)
- Campaign Song and Music
- Strong Brand Appeal
- Gendered Appeal (Female Vice President)

- Support micro groups in campaign communities (Artisan's and Traders)

4. Media and Agenda Setting

- “Moment of Truth” Weekly Press Conference
- NDC 360
- Mahama Meets Editors
- Utilize strong media personalities and media houses (Bridget Otoo, Shamima Muslim, Captain Smart, Joyce Bawa)
- Utilize Social Media Influencers (Kalyjay)

5. Opportunities

- Volunteer Commitment
- Grassroots Sacrifice

6. Challenges

- Resource Constraints (Fuel Shortage, Logistics, Equipments)
- Attacks During Late Night Broadcast
- Financial Challenge