



UniMAC
UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION
UniMAC-GIJ

A PROJECT WORK ON

**FRAMING POWER: THE ROLE OF POLITICAL IMAGERY IN SHAPING PUBLIC
OPINION AMONG NPP DELEGATES**

By

EMMANUEL KWASI ADUSEI

[MAMM24005]

**A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF JOURNALISM AND MEDIA
STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS & COMMUNICATION – INSTITUTE OF
JOURNALISM IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
AWARD OF THE DEGREE**

Of

MASTERS OF ARTS

IN

MEDIA MANAGEMENT

2025

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the acquisition of my Masters of Arts (M.A.) Degree at the University of Media, Arts & Communication – Institute of Journalism (UniMAC-IJ).

To the best of my knowledge, this work contains no material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the university, except where due acknowledgment has been made in the text.

Emmanuel Kwasi Adusei


.....


9TH DECEMBER, 2025

(Student)

Signature.

Date

Timothy Quashigah, Ph.D.,


.....

9TH DECEMBER, 2025

(Principal Supervisor)


Signature.

Date

CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

This thesis has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of Project Work laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication UniMAC-GIJ.

Timothy Quashigah, Ph.D


.....

9th DECEMBER, 2025

Supervisor

Signature

Date

ABSTRACT

Political imagery plays a central role in shaping public perception and influencing voter behavior in contemporary Ghanaian politics. This study investigates how the New Patriotic Party (NPP) creates, disseminates, and measures the effectiveness of its visual campaigns. Using in-depth interviews, the research explores the processes, strategies, and challenges involved in producing images that communicate intended messages. Findings reveal that symbols, colors, and slogans are carefully employed to reinforce party identity, engage diverse audiences, and leave lasting impressions. The study highlights the significance of political imagery in framing narratives, shaping opinions, and mediating the relationship between political parties and the electorate.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I extend my deepest gratitude to God Almighty for His unwavering strength, grace, and guidance throughout this academic journey. In moments of doubt and exhaustion, His presence renewed my resolve and enabled me to persevere to this milestone.

My sincere thanks go to my supervisor, Timothy Quashigah, Ph.D., for his exceptional mentorship, patience, and tireless dedication. His insightful feedback, meticulous revisions, and late-night reviews breathed life into every chapter of this thesis.

Acknowledgment is extended to the management and staff of the Parliament House for their cooperation and support, which greatly facilitated the successful completion of this research. Special recognition is also due to the former Minister for Education, Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum, for his invaluable contributions and support that inspired this study.

Deep appreciation is extended to Miss Ernestina Agyeiwaah at the Ministry of Defense, whose thought-provoking discussions greatly influenced and refined the focus of this research. Her intellectual guidance and steady encouragement were instrumental in shaping the study's overall direction. Warm thanks are also due to the former Director-General of the Ghana Education Service, Dr. Eric Nkansah. His kindness, patience, and consistent technical assistance enabled smooth and uninterrupted progress, even in difficult times.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to GOD Almighty, Dr Yaw Osei Adutwum (Former Minister for Education) and to my mother, Mrs Margaret Opoku Adusei.

Table of Contents

DECLARATION.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Problem Statement.....	7
1.3 Research Objectives.....	8
1.4 Research Questions.....	9
1.5 Significance of the Study.....	9
1.6 Scope and Limitations.....	10
1.7 Organization of the study.....	11
CHAPTER TWO	12
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	12
2.0 Introduction.....	12
2.1 Visual communication and image framing	12
2.2 Imagery and Politics	16
2.3 Theoretical framework: Framing Theory of Mass Communication	21
CHAPTER THREE	24
METHODOLOGY	24
3.0 Introduction.....	24
3.1 Research Design.....	24
3.2 Sampling Method and Size.....	25
3.3 Data Collection	25
3.4 Data Analysis	26
3.5 Ethical Considerations	26
CHAPTER FOUR.....	28
ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS	28

4.0 Introduction.....	28
4.1 Thought Processes, Strategies, and Decision-Making in Image Creation	28
4.1.1 Aesthetical and catchy appeal	28
4.1.2 Review and approval.....	29
4.1.3 Target Audience	29
4.1.4 Brand identity.....	30
4.2 Impact of Images on Public Opinion and Perception	31
4.2.1 Memory creation through repetition	31
4.2.2 Trust Building	31
4.2.3 Emotional engagement.....	32
4.2.4 Analysis of impact.....	32
4.3 Challenges in Image Creation and Audience Interpretation	33
4.3.1 Variations of interpretations	33
4.3.2 Internal differences	33
4.3.3 Volatility of the public.....	34
4.4 Discussion.....	34
CHAPTER FIVE	37
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	37
5.1 Summary of Findings.....	37
5.2 Conclusion	37
5.3 Recommendations.....	38
References.....	40
APPENDIX.....	46
Interview guide	46

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The world is increasingly becoming an entity dominated by visuals, where images not only accompany events but also actively shape how those events are perceived and remembered (Kennedy 2008). Photographs, films, and television broadcasts contribute significantly to the way people make sense of global occurrences, influencing public reactions to war, humanitarian crises, protest movements, financial instability, and election campaigns. Political actors have long recognized the power of visual representation, especially since the Vietnam War, when harrowing images circulated through the media altered both domestic attitudes and international responses to U.S. foreign policy (Kennedy 2008). In acknowledgment of this influence, even the United Nations has consistently emphasized the need for visual documentation of global injustices, with the Secretary General urging photojournalists to shed light on atrocities that would otherwise remain unseen and neglected, yet demand urgent attention (Pronk 2005; Devereux 2010). The implication is therefore the impact that images have had on a global scale and this impact is more imminent in the shaping of narratives by political actors, especially when properly targeted at the masses.

Today, the dynamics of visual politics extend well beyond traditional media. Digital platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram have become central to political communication, serving purposes that range from extremist propaganda and recruitment to campaigns for social justice and reform (Pronk 2005; Devereux 2010). Beyond journalism and social media, cultural producers also contribute to political discourse through imagery. Contemporary artists like Anselm Kiefer and Ai Weiwei have emerged as powerful voices of dissent. At the same time, popular

culture, through fashion, video games, and film, often reproduces and enacts the militarized and politicized realities of our time. Likewise, technological advancements, such as drones and satellite imagery, further expand the ways visuals intersect with politics, reinforcing the growing importance of imagery in shaping public consciousness and opinion (Pronk 2005; Devereux 2010). Thus, images have always become an integral part activism and it is apparent that whoever wields power (such as political parties) in any form uses the power that images in different media format and platforms provides to be able to express their worldview.

Furthermore, in an era of globalization and rapid communication, the boundaries between images and visual artefacts are becoming increasingly blurred. What might once have been confined to physical presence now circulates globally through still and moving images. For example, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., designed by Maya Lin, stands as one of the most influential visual artefacts of modern times, attracting millions of visitors who engage with it as a deeply emotional and reflective space. Yet, for the majority of people across the world, the memorial is not experienced directly but rather mediated through images, whether in newspapers, films, television broadcasts, or, more recently, digital platforms. In this way, such artefacts extend beyond their immediate material form (Blieker, 2008). They become what Bleiker (2008) describes as “artefact-performance constellations”, which means hybrid entities that circulate politically and symbolically through the endless reproduction and reinterpretation of visual imagery, from national flags and military parades to televised election debates.

In continuation, the power of images, however, is not limited to monuments or staged performances. Their affective force often arises unexpectedly in the everyday circulation of visual media. Baird (2003) recalls opening a magazine and being confronted by Sebastião Salgado’s panoramic photograph of a refugee camp in Burundi, an image whose composition was at once

beautiful and tragic, monumental yet intimate. Although accompanied by text, the uniqueness of the photograph was in its capacity to convey a profound human catastrophe in ways that words could not fully capture. Similarly, Alfredo Jaar's installation *Lament for the Images* depicted both the saturation of modern life with images and the haunting possibility of their erasure. In these ways, images operate not merely as records of reality but as powerful mediations that shape how political events and humanitarian crises are understood, remembered, and acted upon.

Moreover, despite the centrality of text in news reporting, photography remains an essential though sometimes underacknowledged form of communication. As Zahur (2023) argues, journalistic practice relies on a symbiotic relationship between words and images: text offers narrative coherence, while photography conveys emotional immediacy and interpretive depth. The visual is never neutral. Through choices of angle, framing, or cropping, photographers inevitably alter the meanings attached to events. A single image can open a window into another world, carrying multiple layers of interpretation depending on the viewer. In this sense, photographs are not merely supplementary to journalism but actively shape public consciousness and political discourse.

In addition, the political weight of photography is vividly demonstrated in contemporary examples. When U.S. Vice President Mike Pence visited detention facilities in Texas in 2019, his verbal assurances that conditions were humane were quickly overshadowed by widely circulated press photographs showing overcrowded migrants behind fences. These images contradicted the official narrative and intensified political pressure on the administration (Vigdor 2019; Klein and Brown 2019). The debate over how such images influence politics is longstanding. Sontag (2004) warned that atrocity photographs could function ambiguously, serving either as appeals for peace or as provocations for revenge. Danchev (2009), by contrast, described photographs as "instruments of the imagination, tools for morals." Despite their different positions, both highlight the role of

photographers as witnesses to politics. Importantly, documentary photographers often go beyond bearing witness, engaging directly in political processes as advocates, experts, or bureaucratic participants. Campbell (2003) emphasizes that the political resonance of war photography depends not only on the image itself but also on the inter-textual context in which it appears. Similarly, Bleiker and Kay (2007) show how humanist approaches to photography can generate awareness of pressing social issues, such as HIV/AIDS in Africa, even as they risk diluting the urgency of response.

The power of political imagery is not confined to journalism, art, or activism. It also permeates fields that are often assumed to be more objective, such as medicine. Feinman and Feinman, drawing on their medical practice, illustrate how biomedical images like X-rays or scans require as much interpretive literacy as artistic or journalistic photographs. While such images may appear “objective,” they are also selective, highlighting certain aspects while obscuring others. Their production is shaped by historical and cultural conventions that influence what is deemed relevant, visible, or useful (Forceville 2013). Moreover, the intended audience, whether medical experts, students, patients, or investors, further determines how these images are crafted and interpreted. Thus, this depicts a broader reality that images are never neutral depictions of truth. They are shaped by context, intention, and reception, making visual literacy essential to navigating the political, cultural, and ethical dimensions of contemporary life.

The persuasive force of images lies in their capacity to tap into human emotions. They can elicit responses of empathy, fear, anger, pride, or solidarity, often more powerfully than text (Lilieker et al, 2019). Iconic examples include the widely shared footage of Mohamed Bouazizi’s self-immolation in Tunisia, which sparked mass protests and eventually contributed to the fall of the Ben Ali regime. But such influence is not limited to extraordinary events. Everyday images are

also mobilized for political purposes. To illustrate, pictures of migrants can be used to justify anti-immigration policies; photographs of homeless veterans may be employed to critique government welfare decisions; and images of stranded polar bears circulate to advocate for environmental reforms. Each of these instances demonstrates how visuals are selectively deployed to communicate ideological messages. Furthermore, political figures are acutely aware of the symbolic weight of images (Lilieker et al, 2019). As Lilieker et al. (2019) note, Boris Johnson's speech, delivered against a backdrop of uniformed police officers, was designed to project authority and strength. However, unplanned images, such as his struggle with a large bull, were quickly repurposed by critics as metaphors of incompetence.

In the African context, in today's media landscape, there exists a close and significant relationship between journalism and the humanitarian aid sector. Aid agencies often act as interpreters of how large parts of the African continent are framed and understood, particularly for audiences outside Africa (Franks 2010). These organizations are frequently perceived both by insiders and the wider public as benevolent institutions engaged in altruistic efforts to help the vulnerable. Yet, in the contemporary era, NGOs have also grown into multinational actors that rely heavily on branding, promotion, and media visibility to sustain their operations. News coverage, therefore, does not simply report on their work but becomes central to raising awareness and securing funding (Franks 2010). This implies that in the African context images created by foreign actors have sought a particular narrative about the continent and this is even still reinforced to this day because of the stakeholders behind the images created. This highlights how a particular group can be painted in a particular light for mass consumption in line with our study's exploration of how institutions propagate this perspective themselves.

This close partnership, however, has consequences for how Africa is portrayed. Studies such as Dolinar and Sitar (2013) have shown that the dominant imagery of Africa, as circulated in Slovenian media, aid organizations, and even academia, is often one-dimensional and biased. The emphasis tends to fall on themes of war, poverty, disaster, passivity, and despair. Missing from these narratives are the diverse voices and perspectives of African people themselves, who are rarely given the opportunity to represent their own realities. This imbalance creates misleading impressions about the continent's challenges and possibilities, often presenting Africa as a space of hopelessness and dependency. Such images not only shape international perceptions but also risk reinforcing a sense of Western superiority, thereby obstructing more nuanced understandings of African development.

In light of these, these observations highlight the central role of imagery in shaping how societies understand humanitarian issues, political debates, and broader cultural values. Images are never passive reflections; they are produced with intent, framed within contexts, and consumed through interpretive lenses that give them meaning. For this reason, it becomes vital to critically examine not just the circulation of images but also the processes behind their creation. This research takes up that challenge by focusing specifically on Ghana, investigating how a political party such as the NPP deliberately construct and curate visual representations of themselves. The study seeks to uncover the thought processes, reasoning, and strategic considerations that underpin the production of such imagery. By exploring how this organization use visuals to frame their work, communicate their authority, and engage with the public, the research contributes to broader debates about the power of political imagery in shaping public opinion, particularly within African contexts where the discourse of representation is gaining momentum.

1.2 Problem Statement

Scholars have long recognized the role of imagery in shaping political life and public opinion. Kennedy (2008) showed how powerful images from the Vietnam War dramatically shifted both domestic and international attitudes toward U.S. foreign policy, while Pronk (2005) and Devereux (2010) pointed to the United Nations' reliance on photojournalists to reveal atrocities otherwise hidden from public view. Bleiker (2008) emphasized that visual artefacts such as monuments, flags, parades, or election debates extend far beyond their physical or local settings, circulating globally as potent political symbols. Baird (2003) argued that images, whether in journalism or art, carry a significant uniqueness that allows them to communicate complex realities in ways that words alone cannot, while Zahur (2023) highlighted how photographs shape journalistic storytelling by framing events through perspective, cropping, and composition. Sontag (2004) and Danchev (2009) further debated the moral weight of photographs of conflict, noting that they can be interpreted as either appeals for peace or calls for revenge, while Campbell (2003) stressed that their political impact always depends on their broader inter-textual context. Expanding on this, Bleiker and Kay (2007) and Johnson (2011) examined how documentary photography can raise awareness of social crises, such as HIV/AIDS, but also risk shifting attention away from individuals to abstract populations. Johnson (2011) extends this further, noting how photography frequently shifts attention from individual suffering toward larger aggregates, reframing how populations and crises are understood.

Other studies reveal the ways humanitarian, political, and cultural institutions make deliberate use of imagery. Dolinar and Sitar (2013) critiqued the portrayal of Africa in Slovenian media and aid organizations, showing how it is too often reduced to narratives of poverty, war, and despair, while African voices are silenced, an approach that reinforces Western superiority and limits nuanced

understanding of African realities. Lillieker et al. (2019) similarly examined the ways political leaders strategically stage photographs to project authority, while noting that unplanned images can just as easily be used against them. Even in fields seemingly rooted in objectivity, such as medicine, Forceville (2013) demonstrated that biomedical images are constructed through cultural and ethical choices, raising questions about who the image is for and what it is meant to communicate. Across these perspectives, one theme is clear: images are not passive reflections of reality but purposeful constructions that influence attitudes, emotions, and political behaviour.

Despite these insights, much of the scholarship remains focused on global or Western contexts, leaving a gap in understanding how imagery is constructed and deployed in African settings, especially in Ghana. This research seeks to fill that gap by examining how a political party, New Patriotic Party (NPP), in Ghana create and curate visual representations of themselves, and the reasoning behind these choices. By foregrounding the experiences of the image-makers, their intentions, strategies, and reflections, this study explores how visual materials are designed to influence Ghanaian public opinion and shape collective perceptions of such a party. In doing so, it extends global debates about the politics of imagery into an underexplored African context, highlighting how images function not only as tools of representation but also as instruments of persuasion, communication, and identity-making in Ghana.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study is guided by these main objectives:

- To investigate the thought processes, strategies, and decision-making involved in the creation of images by NPP in Ghana.

- To examine the impact these images have on shaping public opinion and perceptions of the political party.
- To explore the challenges encountered in the creation of images, including how audiences may interpret or perceive these visuals differently from their intended purpose.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What thought processes and strategic considerations guide the creation and dissemination of images by NPP in Ghana?
2. How do the images produced by the political influence public opinion and perceptions of their work?
3. What challenges does NPP face in creating images, and how do differences between intended meaning and public interpretation shape their effectiveness?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research is significant because it contributes to the growing discourse on the role of visual communication in shaping public opinion. As earlier studies have shown, images are not neutral but carefully constructed and strategically disseminated to influence perceptions (Kennedy 2008; Bleiker 2008; Dolinar & Sitar 2013; Lilieker et al. 2019). By focusing on Ghana, the study extends this conversation into an underexplored African context, providing new insights into how imagery is mobilized by public organizations.

The findings will add to academic knowledge by deepening understanding of the relationship between image-making, public perception, and political communication in Ghana. It will also

serve as a reference point for future research on visual politics and organizational communication in Africa. Beyond academia, the study has practical implications for policy makers and communication practitioners. For policy makers, it highlights the need to recognize the persuasive power of images in governance, advocacy, and public accountability. For image creators within public organizations or political entities, the research offers a chance to reflect on their processes, re-examine the choices behind visual production, and consider how their work shapes public trust and engagement. By shedding light on both the opportunities and challenges of image creation, the study contributes to a more critical and informed practice of communication in Ghana's public space.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

This study is limited in both its geographical and institutional scope. It focuses specifically on NPP and their operations within the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The choice of this setting reflects both practical considerations of accessibility and the central role of Accra as the party's headquarters. However, this focus also means that the study cannot claim to represent the practices of branches across the entire country.

Additionally, due to constraints of time and resources, only one organization will be examined in depth. While this allows for a closer, more detailed analysis of image creation processes and public reception, it narrows the scope of generalization. The study is also limited to visual images produced for public communication and does not include other forms of media such as radio or text-based campaigns. These limitations, however, do not diminish the value of the research; rather,

they provide a focused perspective through which the dynamics of image creation and public perception in Ghana can be critically explored.

1.7 Organization of the study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the research by presenting the background, problem statement, objectives, questions, significance, scope, and limitations. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature on political imagery, visual communication, and public opinion, situating the study within existing discourses, relevant theoretical framework and highlighting the gap in the Ghanaian context. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology, including the design, sampling, data collection methods, analysis techniques, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents and discusses the findings, focusing on the processes behind image creation, their impact on public opinion, and the challenges encountered, while linking these insights to the reviewed literature and theoretical perspectives. Finally, Chapter Five provides a summary of the study, draws conclusions, and offers recommendations for policymakers, communication practitioners, and future researchers.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This literature review examines how visual communication, political imagery, and framing theory intersect to shape meaning and influence perception. It begins by exploring visual communication and imagery, emphasizing how visuals construct and convey messages beyond words. It then discusses political imagery, showing how visuals are used strategically to shape ideologies and influence voter behavior. Finally, it introduces framing theory as the study's theoretical foundation, explaining how the media's presentation and emphasis of political images shape public opinion, especially among NPP delegates.

2.1 Visual communication and image framing

According to Amit et al., (2017), human culture has always been deeply visual, and throughout history, people have relied on images to express their experiences and understanding of the world around them. From ancient cave paintings to contemporary digital photography, visual representation has served as a powerful means of storytelling and meaning-making. Pictures and words, however, operate through fundamentally different representational systems within the human brain, the visual and linguistic systems respectively (Amit et al., 2017). A key difference lies in their level of abstraction. Pictures tend to physically resemble the objects or realities they represent, serving as reflections of the real world. Words, in contrast, are abstract symbols with arbitrary relationships to their referents, representing the names of things rather than their physical likeness. This distinction gives images a uniqueness, as they can communicate meaning directly

through resemblance, whereas words depend on learned codes and shared linguistic understanding (Amit et al., 2017).

Although language has become the dominant mode of communication in human societies, the importance of visual communication remains significant, especially in the contemporary digital era. The shift from pictorial to verbal communication marked a key development in human evolution, but despite the dominance of language, images continue to play an essential role in conveying emotion, meaning, and cultural values. Research has shown that images can reduce ambiguity in communication, increase the fluency of message processing, and elicit stronger emotional responses than words (Kaye et al., 2017). Pictures not only enhance comprehension but also clarify tone, irony, and affective meaning that may otherwise be lost in written or spoken text. They can communicate positive emotions, convey irony, and create an emotional tone that compensates for the absence of face-to-face interaction. This is particularly significant in today's digital communication, where visual elements such as emojis, memes, and photographs are central to how individuals express and interpret meaning (Kaye et al., 2017).

Images are powerful because they transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries, functioning as universal forms of communication. Sontag (2003) described pictures as an invitation to pay attention, emphasizing their ability to attract and hold human perception. Similarly, Popp and Mendelson (2010) noted that images hold significance because they are not constrained by geography or language, allowing them to communicate across diverse audiences. Photographs, in particular, portray reality directly and vividly, often making them appear more trustworthy or authentic to viewers. According to Mirzoeff (1999, p.4), images impose meaning at one stroke without the need to analyze it, revealing their ability to deliver complex messages instantly. They engage the viewer emotionally, fostering a deep and often unconscious connection to what is

depicted. Thus, the emotional power of images creates a bond between viewers and subjects, allowing visual content to stimulate empathy, outrage, or solidarity depending on the context.

The persuasive strength of imagery lies in its ability to be easily understood, remembered, and retrieved from memory. Bucher and Schumacher (2006) argued that visuals are more effectively processed and retained compared to textual information. Also, images occupy a larger share of mental processing and therefore have a greater impact on people's impressions and judgments. Empirical evidence suggests that visual exposure produces stronger reactions than textual descriptions; for example, people respond more alarmedly to visual images of kidnappings than to written reports of the same incidents. Because visuals trigger emotional pathways in the brain, they evoke more vivid and lasting responses. It has been noted that news images have a unique ability to stir public emotion and prompt collective outcry more effectively than text. Numerous studies support this claim, showing that even the most articulate verbal descriptions cannot match the immediacy and emotional impact of images ((Iyer and Oldmeadow, 2006; Zillmann, Gibson, and Sargent, 1999). This reflects the centrality of visual communication in shaping public perception and response.

The influence of imagery has expanded dramatically in the modern digital landscape. The widespread availability of mobile devices equipped with high-quality cameras and the rise of platforms like Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and YouTube have made images omnipresent in everyday life. As Rosen (2005) observed, the average person in developed societies encounters countless images daily, creating a visually saturated environment. This constant exposure has made images one of the primary ways people consume information, express identity, and engage with social and political issues. Policymakers and communication experts alike recognize this power. Campbell (2007) emphasized that images play a central role in shaping public understanding; thus,

journalists, editors, and media producers deliberately create and interpret images to engage audiences and influence thought. The pictures used in news and political communication have immense potential to activate public awareness.

Furthermore, photographs and videos in news media possess a unique persuasive power because of their perceived authenticity, enabling them to shape public opinion and inspire both citizens and governments to act. Research by Dahmen and Slovic (2017) highlights how powerful images have historically functioned as catalysts for political and social change. For instance, the widely circulated photograph of Emmett Till's mutilated body in an open casket is regarded as a political catalyst that galvanized public outrage and mobilized Americans during the civil rights movement. Similarly, photojournalistic images from the Vietnam War, such as those depicting the suffering of civilians, have often been credited with influencing public sentiment and fueling anti-war protests. However, Dahmen and Slovic (2017) also note that some scholars challenge this view, arguing that it is a myth that iconic images, such as the 'napalm girl', directly shifted public opinion or hastened the end of the war. Beyond historical examples, the emotional impact of imagery continues to shape political responses in the modern era. One striking example is the image of a Syrian father crying as he held his twin babies killed during a suspected chemical weapons attack, an image believed to have spurred U.S. President Donald Trump into military action. From a psychological perspective, emotional engagement is essential for audiences to move from awareness to action, as mere factual reporting often fails to evoke empathy or a sense of urgency. Dahmen and Slovic (2017) explain that emotional imagery helps overcome psychic numbing, a psychological state where repeated exposure to tragedy desensitizes individuals, reducing compassion and motivation to act. Vivid and distressing visuals, such as the close-up photographs of sarin gas victims in Syria, can break through this emotional indifference, compelling both the public and political leaders to

respond. In his statement following the attack, President Trump acknowledged the emotional and moral weight of such imagery, declaring that “when you kill innocent children, that crosses many, many lines, beyond a red line.” This reflects how powerful visuals, more than data or textual accounts, can rekindle moral sensitivity and prompt tangible political action

2.2 Imagery and Politics

Visuals have always been a key element of political communication, but their importance has grown exponentially with technological advancement from the era of the printed press to television, and now to the digital age. Hand (2012) describes the present as the age of “ubiquitous photography,” where images have become central to everyday interaction and self-expression. With billions of photos shared daily across platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, the visual environment has become a defining space for political actors. The proliferation of mobile cameras means politicians are more visible than ever, and visuals have become a deliberate strategic tool in influencing voter behavior. Although scholars like Barnhurst and Quinn (2012) and Graber (1996) have long called for political communication studies to take visuals more seriously, much of the research has remained focused on text. Recently, however, there has been growing scholarly attention to how political imagery on social media constructs meaning, identity, and emotional appeal in political discourse. These developments show how images now function not merely as accessories to political messages, but as active, persuasive instruments that shape public perception and political decision-making.

The role of visual communication in politics is further exemplified in the case of Hungary, where political figures rely heavily on social media, especially Facebook and Instagram, to reach their

audiences. Both platforms serve as spaces for connection and expression, yet their demographics and structures influence how politicians engage with users. Facebook, being the dominant platform used by 85 percent of Hungary's online population, serves as a primary channel for news consumption, while Instagram, with a younger user base, operates as a more visually-driven and informal space (Newman et al., 2019; Perrin & Anderson, 2019). On Facebook, political actors typically use public pages to separate their professional image from that of ordinary users, whereas on Instagram they appear more personal and relatable, blending with the everyday social activity of their followers (Bossetta, 2018). This distinction highlights how visual communication strategies differ across platforms such as Facebook offering more formal political discourse, and Instagram emphasizing authenticity and emotional connection. Such contrasts show how politicians tailor imagery to each medium's culture to maximize visibility and influence, a pattern that echoes global trends in the visual mediation of politics.

Similarly, Milne and MacKenzie (1955) explain that party images function as symbols representing values or ideals that voters hold dear. People often support a political party not necessarily because of its current policies, but because of the symbolic meanings and emotional attachments they associate with it. These symbols go beyond visible emblems such as logos or mascots to include candidates, issue positions, and historical events that embody the party's identity. Party images may therefore be understood through both policy-oriented and non-policy elements. For instance, the Republican Party might be linked to specific issue positions such as opposition to affirmative action or support for capital punishment, while also being represented by symbolic figures like Ronald Reagan or icons such as the GOP elephant. Similarly, the Democratic Party may be associated with support for social welfare programs and affirmative action, as well as personalities like the Kennedys or Jesse Jackson. Hence, party image encompasses all the

meanings and associations that individuals connect with a political party (Milne & MacKenzie, 1955). This understanding is central to the study of political imagery because it shows how visual and symbolic representations can influence public identification with political groups and shape long-term perceptions of power and leadership.

In contrast, Elder and Cobb (1983) further argue that these political symbols gain meaning through individual interpretation. Although a symbol refers to something real, the exact meaning often differs among people, depending on their knowledge, beliefs, and experiences. When individuals react to political symbols, they respond not only to the external reality the symbol represents but also to their personal understanding of it. Therefore, the significance of any political image lies in the cognitive frameworks and ideas that people bring to their interpretation (Elder & Cobb, 1983). This reinforces the idea that imagery in politics operates not just through what is shown, but through how audiences perceive and internalize what they see, which is a key consideration for understanding how visual communication shapes public opinion.

Moreover, Lilleker et al. (2019) illustrate how visual culture has become a defining feature of modern politics, particularly in the United States, where images are central to shaping public perception and political narratives. Throughout history, humans have used visuals to communicate meaning, but in the contemporary political sphere, these images do more than depict; they instruct, influence, and construct social norms and beliefs about leadership, gender, and national identity. However, the notion that “a picture never lies” is misleading, as political images are often strategically curated, manipulated, or staged to create specific impressions that may not fully represent reality. In the age of digital media, this manipulation has become even more powerful and dangerous, with images used to spread misinformation and reinforce existing public biases. In U.S. election campaigns, the use of imagery has evolved into a double-edged tool. On one hand,

visuals can humanize political candidates and make them more relatable to voters, as seen in Barack Obama's and later politicians' use of selfies and behind-the-scenes social media videos. On the other hand, the same digital platforms have enabled the rapid creation and dissemination of attack imagery, memes, and manipulated videos that can distort public understanding. Political leaders such as Donald Trump have mastered this visual strategy, using social media to project images of strength, power, and success, carefully managing every gesture, setting, and pose to reinforce a narrative of authority and dominance. Lilleker et al. (2019) argue that such practices highlight the immense persuasive power of imagery in U.S. politics, capable of mobilizing citizens, shaping perceptions, and redefining the nature of political communication itself.

Furthermore, according to Wang et al. (2023), the rise of social networking platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok has fundamentally transformed political communication. Politicians and parties now use these platforms not just for information dissemination but as tools of persuasion and propaganda. During elections, for instance, candidates and political organizations rely heavily on social media fan pages, visual ads, and multimedia content to reach voters who may not engage with traditional media outlets. Previous studies have focused mainly on analyzing text-based propaganda or identifying automated accounts, but newer research is increasingly turning toward the study of image-based propaganda, examining how visual elements—such as facial expressions, symbols, and color schemes—affect engagement and political attitudes. Despite this growing attention, Wang et al. (2023) note that significant gaps remain in understanding how slogans, visuals, and aesthetic elements differ across contexts such as election and referendum campaigns, and how these elements shape broader public opinion. This shows that while political propaganda has evolved to become more image-centric, the mechanisms behind its visual influence are still underexplored.

Likewise, Political propaganda itself is one of the most enduring tools of political communication, used to shape ideologies, mobilize support, and influence voter behavior through text, images, and videos. While early studies often focused on textual analysis and automated information flows (see Wang et al., 2023), the use of visual propaganda has expanded dramatically with the rise of social media. Research has examined how political imagery operates through different forms such as candidate images, campaign posters, and ideological symbols. For instance, Mattes et al. (2017) found that visual impressions of candidates could significantly affect electoral outcomes, while Håkansson et al. (2018) traced the evolution of Swedish election posters, noting consistent visual patterns and emotional cues over the decades. Similarly, Fox (2021) demonstrated that contemporary campaign posters have become more sophisticated, combining visual complexity with persuasive messaging. Studies such as Al-Azzawi and Saleh (2020) further reveal how American presidential campaign posters use color, posture, and text to convey authority and trust, while Pretorius (2019) and Vliegthart (2020) show how nonverbal cues and personalization trends dominate campaign visuals in South Africa and the Netherlands respectively. Benoit (2012) also observed that U.S. presidential posters increasingly emphasize candidate character over policy substance.

Although the influence of political branding is well established, scholars note several unresolved questions about how branding operates in the contemporary, digitally mediated environment. Luca (2024) stresses the strategic value of strong political brands for shaping public opinion and calls for further work on how issue salience and neuromarketing techniques affect voter responses. In particular, prior research has not fully explored how positioning functions as a mediating mechanism such as how the way a party or candidate is framed (through information channels, messaging strategies, and candidate attributes) translates branding into voter effects, which López

Ortega (2024) and Coffé and von Schoultz (2021) identify as important avenues for understanding voter perception. Similarly, political issues may act as moderators that either amplify or blunt the influence of branding: an image that persuades on one issue may be neutralized by another more salient policy concern.

2.3 Theoretical framework: Framing Theory of Mass Communication

Framing theory, first introduced by Erving Goffman in *Frame Analysis* (1974), extends the agenda-setting concept by emphasizing how issues are presented rather than merely what issues are presented. While agenda-setting theory tells audiences what to think about, framing tells them how to think about it. Goffman proposed that people interpret the world through “primary frameworks”, which are mental structures that help individuals make sense of events and experiences within broader social contexts. These frameworks can be natural, referring to interpretations of physical events, or social, concerning human interactions and cultural meanings. Both forms of framing are central to understanding how meaning is constructed and shared in communication processes. In its simplest form, framing explores how bias or orientation can emerge in messages that appear neutral, whether in traditional or digital media. It explains how meanings, connotations, and symbols within media texts shape public perception. Framing involves the selection and emphasis of certain elements, such as words, images, metaphors, and narratives, to influence how audiences understand and evaluate issues. By doing so, framing sets boundaries around an issue, determining what is included or excluded from public discourse (Goffman, 1974).

Researchers such as Entman (1993) expanded framing theory by identifying selection and salience as the two central mechanisms of framing. To frame, therefore, is to select certain aspects of

perceived reality and make them more prominent in a text or image to promote a specific interpretation, causal understanding, moral evaluation, or recommended course of action. Entman also outlined four key components in the communication process such as the communicator, the text, the receiver, and culture. Each interacts dynamically to shape meaning. The communicator (often a journalist or political actor) constructs messages based on personal values and ideological schemata. The text, through its words, images, and structures, embodies the frame. The receiver interprets the frame based on prior experiences and beliefs. Finally, culture provides shared references and symbols that influence both message creation and interpretation.

Other scholars, such as Pan and Kosicki (1993), further refined these ideas by proposing analytical tools for identifying frames, including textual structure, visual imagery, narrative organization, and implicit conclusions. Taylor (2008) synthesized earlier models into seven interpretive elements that can guide framing analysis: Problem Definition, Causal Interpretation, Moral Evaluation, Attribution of Blame, Identification of Solutions, Risk Assessment, and Treatment Recommendation. These components together explain how communication frames define problems, assign causes, assess moral responsibility, and suggest remedies or courses of action.

Thus, framing operates through mechanisms of presentation, repetition, and exclusion. Media practitioners may consciously highlight certain perspectives to persuade audiences or may do so unintentionally due to cultural or institutional influences such as editorial policies, ownership pressures, or professional routines. According to Entman (1991), framing is distinguished from the text itself—it is the underlying process that gives meaning and impact to media content. Through techniques such as word choice, visual emphasis, subheadings, and image placement, frames guide interpretation and emotional response. Visual imagery, in particular, is a potent framing tool, as it can instantly evoke associations, moral judgments, and collective emotions.

In addition, framing also distinguishes between frames in thought and frames in communication. Frames in thought refer to internal cognitive structures that shape how individuals perceive and understand issues, while frames in communication refer to the deliberate construction of messages to influence those perceptions (Druckman, 2001). For instance, a politician who presents a protest as a “free speech issue” invokes a specific communication frame that directs the public to interpret the event through the lens of democratic rights rather than social unrest. This process illustrates how framing can shape political discourse, mobilize public support, or alter perceptions of legitimacy and morality (Jacoby, 2000). Ultimately, framing theory provides a comprehensive approach to understanding how communication structures meaning. It not only explains how issues are represented but also how audiences come to interpret and internalize those representations.

In the context of this research, framing theory offers a critical framework for analyzing how visual communication influences political perception. Within Ghana’s political landscape, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) has increasingly relied on visual media such as campaign posters, social media graphics, videos, and photographs to construct and project political meaning. Applying Goffman’s and Entman’s framing principles presents a deeper understanding of how imagery functions as both a communicative and ideological mechanism in shaping opinion within the party’s internal political culture. Thus, it serves as the theoretical framework to determine how the communicators of the NPP use imagery to communicate to the populace and influence their perception of the party.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used to explore how political imagery shapes public opinion among delegates of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in Ghana. It explains the research design, sampling strategy, data collection process, and data analysis procedures, as well as the ethical principles that guided the study.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design, focusing on in-depth exploration rather than measurement or generalization. According to Yin (2018), qualitative research was appropriate for understanding phenomena within their real-life contexts, especially when boundaries between the phenomenon and its environment are blurred. The focus on political imagery within the NPP aligns with this principle, as the meanings, interpretations, and influences of political visuals are context-dependent and deeply tied to party communication dynamics.

To collect data, the study employed in-depth, semi-structured interviews with individuals directly involved in political communication and image creation within the NPP. As Creswell (2014) explains, interviews allow participants to express their perspectives in their own words while enabling the researcher to probe deeper for clarity and meaning. This design ensured that the research captured both the intentional framing choices made by communicators and the perceptions of those affected by these visual narratives.

3.2 Sampling Method and Size

Purposive sampling was used to select proponents with relevant experience and knowledge about political imagery and communication within the NPP. Participants included party communicators, media officers, social media strategists, photographers, and content creators who actively contribute to shaping the party's visual identity. The inclusion criteria required that participants have at least three years of experience in political communication or image management within the NPP and be directly involved in campaigns, publicity, or delegate engagement. This ensured that the data gathered reflected informed and contextually diverse perspectives.

A total of twelve participants were selected. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006, pp. 59–82) suggest that data saturation often occurs around the twelfth interview, with the majority of themes emerging by the sixth. Therefore, this sample size was sufficient to capture the range of experiences and insights while allowing for in-depth analysis. Access to participants was obtained through formal communication with NPP regional offices, and all participants were provided informed consent before their inclusion.

3.3 Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 30-45 minutes each. This flexible format allowed participants to discuss their experiences with visual communication, the rationale behind specific imagery, and their views on how such visuals influence delegates' perceptions and loyalty. The interview guide included questions on image

design, framing choices, target audience perceptions, and the role of imagery in shaping narratives of power, credibility, and leadership within the NPP.

Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or through secure online platforms to ensure accessibility and comfort. With permission, all sessions were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim. To ensure accuracy, participants were allowed to review their transcripts and clarify or expand their statements (member checking). This process enhanced credibility and ensured that participants' meanings are accurately represented.

3.4 Data Analysis

The study employed thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), following six key stages: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, identification of themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and presenting the results. This method was suitable for the study as it helps uncover patterns of meaning across the participants' narratives about political imagery and its framing effects. An effective tool was used to organize and code the data efficiently. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to identify how political images are constructed, the meanings ascribed to them, and the ways they shape delegates' opinions within the NPP.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used, and any identifiable information will be removed from the transcripts. Data was securely

stored in password-protected files, accessible only to the researcher. The study also ensured respect for political sensitivities, given its focus on a partisan context, by maintaining neutrality and avoiding any association with party propaganda or endorsement.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses the findings from interviews conducted with delegates and media personnel of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in Ghana. The study sought to understand the processes behind the creation of political images, the strategies involved, their impact on public opinion, and the challenges associated with producing effective visual materials. The analysis is organised around the three objectives of the study, with each section presenting thematic insights drawn directly from participants' experiences and reflections.

4.1 Thought Processes, Strategies, and Decision-Making in Image Creation

4.1.1 Aesthetical and catchy appeal

Participants consistently highlighted that the creation of images within the NPP is a deliberate, multi-layered process designed to achieve both aesthetic appeal and political messaging. The main ideology behind the process is the need to ensure that images are visually appealing, symbolically resonant, and approved through appropriate party channels before public dissemination. For example, P8 noted that “we want people to see the images and then it grabs their attention”. P12 emphasized the importance of quality in both production and conceptualisation, stating that

“ . The process starts with the images being shot with quality cameras... quality of the images and the approval of the images by appropriate authorities so that

immediately it goes out there, it gives the audience... a particular kind of meaning that will really stick..."

This statement demonstrates that the NPP sees these images as deliberate tools for shaping perception, with strong emphasis on aesthetic values.

4.1.2 Review and approval

Institutional vetting and approval emerged as another key aspect of image creation. Participants described a bureaucratic review process involving media teams, party executives, and even feedback from average party members before materials are released. P3 explained, "after it is designed, the process goes to a review committee who must approve before publication," while P4 noted that images "go through several levels of vetting...media team, management, and we also go to the average people." This shows that decision-making in image production is highly regulated, ensuring that every image aligns with the party's strategic messaging and maintains a consistent visual identity. In addition, P5 noted that

"Sometimes, the images are taken during events or conferences, but the selection of which image should go out is very thought about. We have a team that approves everything that we have to put out because we make sure that it sells what we want to say."

This statement demonstrates that the NPP sees these images not as mere representations but as deliberate tools for shaping perception, requiring careful planning and executive oversight.

4.1.3 Target Audience

Another central theme is the attention to the target audience and messaging. P2 observed that the design process begins with identifying the audience and creating images that communicate specific ideas aligned with party objectives. According to P2, "... with the thought and processes, number

one is the target audience and what information they are giving out.” Likewise, the target audience informed the choice of media for the dissemination of the materials. To illustrate, P10 noted that

“For example, we have prints, we have traditional, and we have digital. Looking at the party members and Ghanaians, we have people from all works of life. Traditional media goes to our older generation when they use radios mostly and TVs. Print media and the digital go to we the generations now... For we to reach our Target audience, we have to go through print so that we can get the audience from there. Also, we have to go digital to get our audience from there, and we have to go to traditional to get our mothers, our fathers, our grandmothers...”

This demonstrates that image creation is strategic, focused on the desired reception and interpretation by different segments of the public.

4.1.4 Brand identity

Participants also highlighted the importance of strategic appeal and memorability. Images are designed to be “catchy” and capable of leaving lasting impressions. P1 reflected on how certain visuals inspire audience engagement and even creativity, stating, “immediately they see the image, they started to create songs out of it”. In addition, P3 noted that party symbols and colours are central to reinforcing political identity, by explaining “the process also move towards National Sentiments and then the colours of the New Patriotic Party.” By utilizing recognisable symbols such as the party’s elephant logo and the red, blue, and white colour scheme, images are deliberately designed to ensure instant recognition and reinforce party loyalty. This suggests that the NPP actively designs images to generate sentimental attachments. The strategic combination

of symbolism, quality, and audience targeting indicates that NPP's image-creating process is well-brainstormed and deliberate.

4.2 Impact of Images on Public Opinion and Perception

4.2.1 Memory creation through repetition

Participants consistently reported that images produced by the NPP significantly influence public perception and reinforce party messaging. A key theme that emerged is the creation of memory and recognition. P6 described how images from previous elections, such as the "Four More 4 Nana" campaign, became embedded in public consciousness: "it will stick on the mind, stick on the eyes, and stick on the lips." Similarly, P11 explained that even individuals unfamiliar with candidates develop recognition through repeated exposure to posters and other visual materials:

"You see, we have people in villages and towns where they have not seen this candidate before. Even some delegates may not even know the candidate, but by seeing a picture poster somewhere, it leaves an imprint."

These statements indicate that the NPP intentionally leverages repetition and visibility to create durable associations between imagery and political figures.

4.2.2 Trust Building

Another significant finding is that images serve as a tool for building trust and legitimacy. P6 suggested that visuals create confidence in party leadership, stating that "when you put a picture out there, it builds trust." P5 further argued that "the strategic use of images helps candidates appear more relatable and credible to the public. Through such visual communication, the party is

able to reinforce perceptions of competence, leadership, and reliability”. This illustrates the psychological power of visual media in shaping political sentiment.

4.2.3 Emotional engagement

Participants also highlighted the emotional and cultural impact of imagery. P1 reflected on how visual materials provoke audience engagement, highlighting that

“Looking back to our previous elections, there are some kind of images that comes out from NPP that people... even immediately they see the image. They started to create songs out of it. I mean, the kind of images that stick into people’s minds for them to even be creative.”

This indicates that the NPP intentionally produces images that resonate emotionally. Through emotional engagement, images become potent tools for political messaging.

4.2.4 Analysis of impact

Participants indicated that the effectiveness of political images is largely measured through the reactions and engagement of the target audience. P1 explained that the party monitors immediate responses to released visuals, noting that “immediately the picture goes out there... the reactions, the comments, and all that...”. Similarly, P8 emphasized the role of audience interaction as a metric for effectiveness, stating that “by their engagement, their contribution, and their feedback...if the engagement is high, the comments are positive...then I know I am communicating effectively.” Collectively, these insights reveal that the NPP evaluates the success of their visual materials by tracking direct feedback, ensuring that the intended message is received by their intended audience.

4.3 Challenges in Image Creation and Audience Interpretation

4.3.1 Variations of interpretations

Despite the strategic and structured approach to image creation, participants highlighted several challenges. One recurring theme is interpretive variability. P10 reflected on how different individuals may perceive the same image differently:

“You see, we are all different people and from different walks of life. What I think might work for me might not work for the outside people or the target audience, so creating an image that is going to benefit and to carry the goals and the purposes of the party, is sometimes very difficult. Also, because what I will create today, you might like it... Adwoa might not like it, and it's going to bring that conflict of interest, so these are some of these challenges.”

Likewise, P3 echoed this, explaining that “trying to get true meanings to every picture is difficult.” These accounts suggest that even carefully planned images are subject to different interpretations, complicating the party’s goal of conveying precise messages.

4.3.2 Internal differences

Internal conflicts and preference clashes also emerged as a key challenge. P2 described disagreements among team members over image design, stating, “This person wants this, the other wants that, and you are in the middle.” P1 highlighted the hierarchical changes, “...sometimes, it is a matter of changing the leaders. One leader comes in and wants to do different styles or has different preferences so there is lack of consistency.” This demonstrates that the production of political images is not only technically challenging but subject to bureaucratic changes and differences, with multiple stakeholders shaping decisions and sometimes producing conflicts.

4.3.3 Volatility of the public

Finally, participants emphasized the risk of public backlash. P2 explained that reactions from audiences provide a measure of success or failure: “if there is backlash and negative talk then what I’ve done is a no, so immediately I have to reverse it.” Furthermore, P12 stated that:

“Sometimes you can do everything right, but the audience will find something to be negative about. So as much as you find a formula that works, it is still subject to the feelings of the public. I mean, we try to get it right a lot of the time, but sometimes it happens.”

Thus, P5 similarly highlighted the importance of monitoring public engagement and response to ensure effectiveness. These insights reveal that audience perception is dynamic and can quickly undermine intended messaging, posing a challenge to the image creation process.

4.4 Discussion

The findings show that the creation of images by the NPP is a carefully planned process. Delegates explained that every image goes through multiple stages, including conceptualization, approval by executives, and quality checks before being shared with the public. This reflects the idea from Amit et al. (2017) that humans rely on images to communicate meaning directly, because pictures resemble reality and can deliver messages more quickly than words. In the context of Ghanaian politics, the NPP’s use of symbols, colors, and slogans, such as the elephant logo and “4 More 4 Nana,” illustrates how visuals are used strategically to shape perception and create lasting impressions in the minds of voters.

Delegates also emphasized the role of audience targeting in image production. Images are tailored to reach specific groups through traditional, print, and digital media, ensuring that messages

connect with both older and younger voters. This aligns with findings by Wang et al. (2023) and Bossetta (2018), who note that the effectiveness of political imagery depends on its ability to engage different audiences according to platform and context. In practice, the NPP uses visuals not only to inform but also to evoke emotional responses, build trust, and reinforce party identity. Kaye et al. (2017) note that images can communicate tone, emotion, and cultural values in ways that words alone cannot, which explains why visuals are central to the party's communication strategy.

The study also highlights challenges in creating images. Delegates noted that not all images are universally understood or accepted. Differences in taste, interpretation, and audience perception can affect how visuals are received. Elder and Cobb (1983) argue that political symbols gain meaning through individual interpretation, which explains why a well-designed image may resonate with some viewers while being misunderstood by others. Delegates use audience feedback, comments, engagement metrics, and public reactions to evaluate the effectiveness of their images. This approach mirrors Bucher and Schumacher's (2006) idea that visuals are more easily retained and remembered, making audience response an important measure of impact.

Another key finding is the emotional power of images. Delegates observed that certain visuals become memorable and even inspire creative expressions, such as songs or discussions, highlighting the persuasive and affective influence of political imagery. This supports Dahmen and Slovic's (2017) view that emotional imagery can prompt action and engagement. The ability of visuals to stick in the minds of viewers and evoke strong emotional responses shows that images are not just tools for decoration, but for mobilization and public persuasion.

Finally, the strategic use of consistent symbols, colors, and slogans strengthens party branding and identity. The NPP's visuals communicate values, achievements, and political messages in a way

that reinforces voter loyalty and recognition. This is in line with Milne and MacKenzie (1955), who suggest that party images function as symbols that represent ideals and values to which voters emotionally connect. It also reflects the insights of Lilleker et al. (2019), who highlight how visual culture shapes modern politics by instructing and influencing public perception. In sum, the findings confirm that in Ghanaian politics, imagery is a deliberate and powerful tool used to engage voters, build trust, and shape public opinion.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study explored the processes, strategies, and effects of political imagery by the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The findings indicate that:

- image creation is a highly deliberate and structured process, involving planning, quality control, and executive approval before dissemination.
- Images created by the NPP are designed to be visually appealing, and easily recognizable, often utilizing party symbols, colors, and slogans to reinforce political messages.
- Images are distributed across multiple platforms, including print, traditional media, and digital channels, to reach diverse audiences.
- Audience engagement through comments, shares, and other forms of interaction is a key indicator of the effectiveness of images.
- Challenges in producing visuals were also identified, particularly in ensuring authenticity and consistency while appealing to diverse audience segments.

5.2 Conclusion

The study shows that political imagery is a central component of NPP's communication strategy. Images are not merely aesthetic; they function as strategic instruments for framing political narratives, influencing public perception, and sustaining the visibility of party leaders and policies. Through careful design, attention to symbolism, and audience feedback, the party ensures that

images leave lasting impressions, shaping both awareness and political sentiment. The findings demonstrate that the effectiveness of these images lies in their ability to combine visual appeal with symbolic meaning, making them memorable and persuasive.

Moreover, this study reveals the interplay between strategic planning and audience interpretation. While the party controls the production and dissemination of images, the ultimate impact depends on how audiences perceive and interact with these visuals. This reflects the dynamic nature of political communication, where meaning is co-constructed between the producer and the viewer. Consequently, political imagery remains a powerful tool in Ghanaian electoral politics, with both opportunities and challenges for influencing public opinion.

Finally, the findings align with framing theory, which posits that media and political actors shape public perception by emphasizing certain aspects of reality over others (Entman, 1993). The NPP's deliberate use of colors, symbols, and slogans demonstrates how frames are constructed to guide audience interpretation, reinforcing the party's identity and policy narratives. Thus, the production and dissemination of political images by the NPP reflects the practical application of this theoretical framework, illustrating how imagery functions as both a communicative and ideological mechanism in shaping opinion within the party's internal political culture.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed for enhancing the strategic use of political imagery in Ghanaian electoral campaigns.

1. Political parties should invest in audience research to better understand how different demographics interpret images, ensuring that visuals resonate widely without compromising

authenticity. Tailoring images for diverse cultural, age, and regional groups will help improve the reach and effectiveness of campaigns.

2. Parties should implement standardized procedures for image approval and quality control to maintain consistency in branding, symbolism, and messaging. This includes creating guidelines for color schemes, slogans, and image composition, which would reduce inconsistencies that may dilute the intended impact of visuals.

3. Parties should integrate feedback mechanisms to continuously monitor audience engagement and perception. Metrics such as social media interactions, comments, and shares can provide real-time insights into the effectiveness of images, allowing for timely adjustments to campaign strategies.

4. Political parties should explore creative and innovative approaches to imagery, including the use of multimedia formats, interactive visuals, and storytelling techniques that evoke emotional and cognitive engagement.

References

- Amit, E., Hoeflin, C., Hamzah, N., & Fedorenko, E. (2017). *An asymmetrical relationship between verbal and visual thinking: Converging evidence from behavior and fMRI*. *NeuroImage* Vol. 152
- Baird, D. (2004). *Between The Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics*. Retrieved from <https://brooklynrail.org/2004/01/art/between-the-eyes-essays-on-photography-and-politics/>
- Barnhurst, K G., & Quinn, K. (2012). *Political Visions: Visual Studies in Political Communication*. London: Sage
- Blieker, R. (2018). *Mapping visual global politics*. London: Routledge
- Bleiker, R. and Kay, A. (2007). *Representing HIV/AIDS in Africa: Pluralist Photography and Local Empowerment*. *International Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 51 (1)
- Bossetta, M. (2018). *The Digital Architectures of Social Media: Comparing Political Campaigning on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat in the 2016 U.S. Election*. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* Vol. 95 (2)
- Bucher, H-J., & Schumacher, P. (2006). *The relevance of attention for selecting news content: An eye-tracking study on attention patterns in the reception of print and online media*. *Communications*. *The European Journal of Communication Research*, 31(3)

- Campbell, D. (2003). *'Documentary Photography and Imaging the Famine' in Francois Deberix Rituals Of Mediation: International Politics And Social Meaning*. University of Minnesota Press,
- Campbell, D. (2007). *Geopolitics and visuality: sighting the Darfur conflict*. Political Geography Vol. 26
- Cobb, R. W., & Charles D. Elder. *The Politics of Agenda-Building: An Alternative Perspective for Modern Democratic Theory*. The Journal of Politics, Vol. 33 (4)
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dahmen, N. & Slovic, P. (2017). *How much power can an image actually wield?* The Conversation
- Danchev, A. (2009). *On art and war and terror*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Devereux, L. (2010) *'From Congo: Newspaper photographs, public images and personal memories*. Visual Studies Vol 25 (2)
- Dolarin, M. & Sitar, P. (2013). *The use of stereotypical images of Africa in fundraising campaigns*. European Scientific Journal Vol. 9 (11)
- Druckman J. N. (2001). *Evaluating framing effects*. Econ. Psychol. Vol. 22
- Entman, R. M. (1991). *Framing U.S. coverage of international news: Contrasts in narratives of*

- the Cuban missile crisis*. Journal of Communication Vol. 41(4)
- Forceville, D. (2013). *Imagery in the 21st Century*. Journal of pragmatism. Vol. 59
- Franks, S. (2010). *The neglect of Africa and the power of aid*. The International Communications Gazette Vol. 72 (1)
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Northeastern University Press.
- Graber, D. A. (1996). *Say It with Pictures*. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science Vol. 546
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation. Field Methods, 18(1)
- Hand, M. (2012). *Ubiquitous Photography. first ed*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hodson, D. (2019). *Can Photographers Influence Politics?*. Retrieved from <https://www.e-ir.info/2019/09/01/can-photographers-influence-politics/>
- Iyer, A., & Oldmeadow, J. (2006). *Picture this: Emotional and political responses to photographs of the Kenneth Bigley kidnapping*. European Journal of Social Psychology Vol. 36
- Jacoby W. G. (2000). *Issue framing and public opinion on government spending*. American Journalism of Political. Science. Vol 44
- Johnson, H. L. (2011). *Click to Donate: visual images, constructing victims and imagining the*

female refugee. Third World Quarterly, Vol. 32(6)

Kaye, K. L., Malone, A. S., & Wall, J. H. (2017). *Emojis: Insights, Affordances, and Possibilities for Psychological Science*. Trends in Cognitive Sciences Vol 21 (2)

Kennedy, L. (2008). *Securing vision: Photography and US foreign policy*. Media, Culture & Society, 30, 3

Klein, B. & Brown, P. (2019). *Pence: Border facility conditions are unacceptable*. CNN Politics

Lilieker, D., Veneti, A., & Jackson, D. (2019). *The Power of Image in Politics*. Social Science Space

Milne, R. S., & MacKenzie, H. C. (1954). *Straight fight: A study of voting behaviour in the constituency of Bristol North-East at the general election of 1951*. London: Hansard Society.

Mirzoeff, N. (1999). *Visual Culture*. New York, NY: Longman.

Newman, N., R. Fletcher, A. Kalegeropoulos, and R. K. Nielsen. (2019). *Reuters Institute Digital News Report, 2019*. Oxford: Reuters Institute, University of Oxford.

Pan, Z., & Kosicki, G. M. (1993). *Framing analysis: An approach to news discourse*. Political Communication, Vol. 10(1)

- Perrin, A. & Anderson, M. (2019). *Share of U.S. Adults Using Social Media, Including Facebook, Is Mostly Unchanged since 2018*. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/10/share-of-u-s-adults-using-social-media-includingfacebook-is-mostly-unchanged-since-2018/>.
- Popp, R. K., & Mendelson, A. L. (2010). *'X'-ing out enemies: Time magazine, visual discourse, and the war in Iraq*. *Journalism* Vol. 11(2)
- Pronk, J. (2005). *We need more stories and more pictures*. Retrieved from www.janpronk.nl/speeches/english/we-need-more-stories-and-more-pictures.html
- Rosen, C. (2005). *The Image Culture*. *The New Atlantis: A Journal of Technology and Society*, Vol. 10
- Sontag, S. (2004). *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Penguin.
- Taylor, P. L. (2008). *Framing in geographical analysis of environmental conflicts*. *Geoforum*, Vol. 39(5)
- Vigdor, N. (2019). *Pence Defends Conditions at Migrant Detention Centers in Texas*. *New York Times*
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods (6th ed.)*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Zahur, E. (2013). *The Camera's Gaze: Politics of Photography*. Political Pandora.
- Zillmann, D., Gibson, R., & Sargent, S. L. (1999). *Effects of Photographs in NewsMagazine*

Reports on issue Perception. Media Psychology, Vol. 1(3)

APPENDIX

Interview guide

1. Please state your role
2. What thought processes go into the creation of images and artworks by NPP in Ghana, even from the last elections?
3. What strategies do you use in portraying certain imagery that you want people to associate with the NPP?
4. What processes goes into approving and sending the images onto platforms such as print, traditional and digital media?
5. How do the images produced by the NPP influence public opinion and perceptions of their work?
6. Can you give practical examples of how these images influence public opinions of the NPP and your works, even from the last elections?
7. What challenges does NPP face in creating images that fit your standard?
8. How do you measure that you are communicating well or effectively to your target audience?
9. How do differences between intended meaning of your image and public interpretation of misinterpretation shape the effectiveness of your work as visual communicators?
10. Any other comments about the creating of images to influence public opinions about the NPP?