

The Influence of Media on Voting Behavior in Ghana: The Case in Western North Region

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Abstract

The media have strong impact on Ghanaians' voting decisions. Parties in multiple democracies have since harnessed the use of the media in our political process. The objective of the study was to investigate how the media influence voting behavior in the Western North Region of Ghana. In this study, Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were used. The study adopted qualitative and quantitative research designs. Questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect data. A sample size of 404 respondents was studied. The study revealed that voters in the study area have access to communication devices for obtaining information through political campaigns, advertisements on broadcast, social, print, support, and transit media, which all have a significant impact on voting behavior in the study Region. The study revealed that 65.6% of those polled said the media had a major influence on their voting behavior in the 2020 general elections in the research Region. The study also revealed that party affiliation, party manifesto, current economic conditions, family and friends, and current government performance were other factors that influenced voting behavior in the study area apart from the media. The study, therefore, suggested that the technical infrastructure of the media in the study Region be expanded since voters demand increased and improved access to and usage of the media to get information on political parties' operations in order to shape their voting behavior. Also, media sanity should be strengthened in the study Region.

Keywords: Elections, Ghana, Media, Voting Behavior, Western North.

Introduction

Since its independence in 1957, Ghana has undergone a number of democratic elections and military takeovers of civilian regimes, giving rise to the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Republics [1]. Ghana became a constitutional monarchy in 1992, and the Fourth Republic's democratic regime was born. The Country has made significant progress in the establishment of electoral democracy throughout this time [2]. Ghana has had seven presidential and legislative elections in a row since 1992, with three peaceful transitions of power between the incumbent New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the current opposition party, the National Democratic Congress

(NDC). The use of emotional appeals in political campaigns to increase or decrease support for a candidate is a widely accepted practice and a typical component of any campaign strategy [3]. Campaigns frequently attempt to instill progressive emotions such as joy and expectation in their electorates in order to boost voter turnout and electoral politicking while also attempting to heighten dread and disquiet about their major rivals. Fear and nervousness disrupt voter behavioral patterns and prompt individual voters to seek first-hand information on various political issues, whereas enthusiasm tends to reinforce predilection for the candidate and party [4]. Traditional media such as television, radio,

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and newspapers, to name a few, are some of the sources of information available to a voter. Nonetheless, due to the widespread use of virtual social media forums, many voters may access online materials, participate in discussions about the information, and express their own thoughts, beliefs, and expectations from the party and candidate. Although the media has aided in the increase in popularity of politicians and their parties to some extent, they also have the capacity to improve or degrade their chances and voters' perceptions of the parties and candidates. Gossips, misinformation, propaganda, and unpleasant language about certain individuals and parties are all too common in the media, and they can spread far faster than expected, frequently with disastrous consequences. This has often been linked to the lack of editorial filtering and the anonymity of most online data [5]. Various parties can also utilize the media to spread false information and propaganda against the opposition in order to discredit that party or candidate in the eyes of the electorate while exonerating their own. This has a significant impact on people's voting behavior, as many voters rely on their decisions on the news they read or hear in the media. Furthermore, because there are no longer any isolated spots or hiding holes, the media has made voters aware of any form of material proof regarding politicians and their lives [6].

The media in Ghana, as in many other African countries, are growing in popularity by the minute. It's worth noting that political usage of social media is widespread and shows no signs

of abating. Many political parties worked hard to produce tempting messages and use a range of fresh and unconventional approaches to reach out to a bigger percentage of the populace and solicit their votes during the 2016 Presidential and Parliamentary elections in Ghana. Using media platforms and other social networks to reach out to a bigger community is one of the new approaches to achieving political goals. Social media is crucial to democracy in today's politics. The media has the potential to have a substantial impact on voter choice. The media's role in influencing electoral outcomes, particularly radio and television, has grown in importance [7]. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to investigate how the media influence voter's behavior in the Western North Region of Ghana.

The specific objectives of the study were to establish voters' access and use of media in the Western North Region, to determine how the media influences voter behavior in the Western North Region, and to find out other factors which influence voter behavior in the Western North Region.

The Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks of the Study

This study was guided by the Sociological Media Framework of Voting Behavior Pattern, which was built by the researchers from some of the structures and sections of the Rational Choice, Sociological, and Two-Step Flow Theories.

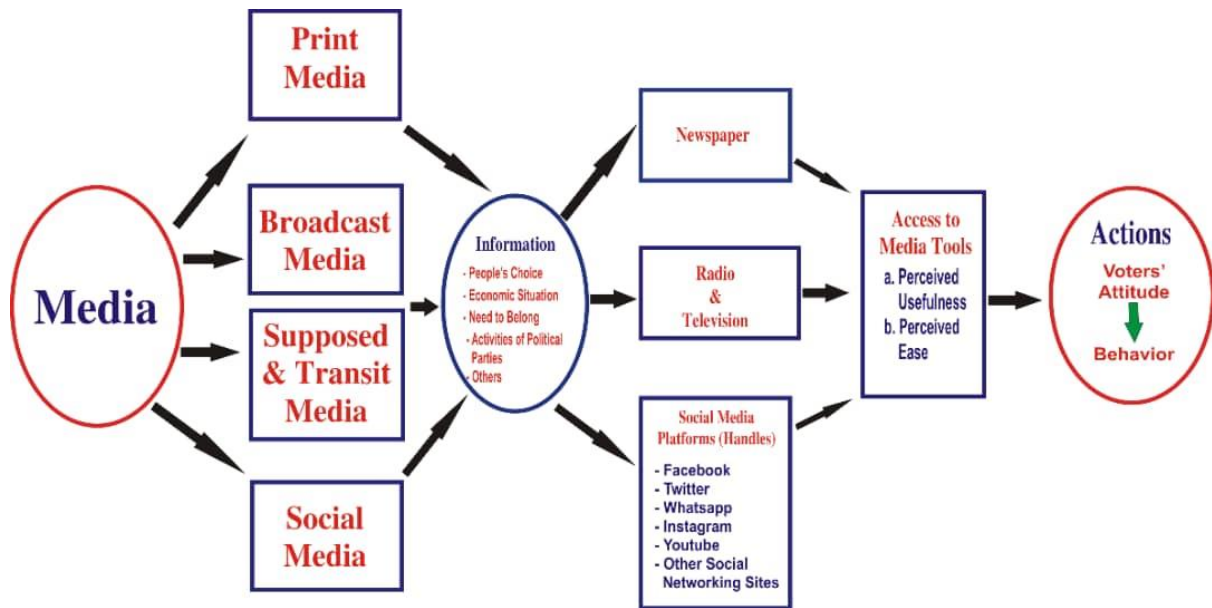


Figure 1. The Sociological Media Framework of Voting Behavior Pattern

Source: Authors' Construct (2021)

The Sociological Media Framework of Voting Behavior Pattern is an amalgamation of the Rational Choice, Sociological, and Two-Step Flow Theories based on some of their proposed and embedded constructs and elements. The framework displays a unique flow of the various media forms and their channels of information dissemination that trigger and accelerate voters' inherent behavioral traits into the actual voting behavior of voters in six stages.

Stage 1: Media

Print media, publishing, news media, photography, film, broadcasting, and digital media are examples of communication channels or technologies and broadly termed as Media. In this construct, information for public consumption (whether credible or misinformation) is carefully planned, designed, and crafted in appropriate forms and channeled through the four outlets (print media, broadcast media, supposed & Transit media, and social media) to their receivers who are compelled to decode them due to the following factors: "the need to belong"; "economic situation"; "people's choice"; and "activities or events currently taking place".

Stage 2: Types (forms) of Media

Print media generally refers to newspapers. Newspapers gather, edit, and publish news and stories. Print media play an important part in every country's development communication. Ghana's government uses print media to ensure the widespread distribution of messages through a variety of newspapers and periodicals. Print media, being a traditional form of communication, plays an important part in the growth. The strengths of Ghana's print media have been primarily formed by the country's past events, particularly its involvement with the independence struggles as well as social emancipation, restructure, and remediation movements. Print media now uses a variety of contemporary and sophisticated technology in both developed and developing nations, and they face severe rivalry from electronic media.

Stage 3: Nature of Information

Information is traditionally thought to be exchanged between people. The argument is that information is present in all-natural systems, including physics, biology, economics, and so on, to the point that these processes may be represented using mathematical models and,

eventually, information processing. The concept of “Nature of Information” is an intellectual concept that does not have a physical manifestation [8]. However, in the context of this research, the “Nature of Information” construct refers to all forms of information disseminated by the media throughout election season that concern “people’s decisions”, “economic situation”, “need to belong”, “activities of political parties in the run-up to elections”, and “other social factors” that inform voters to make a voting choice.

Stage 4: Medium of Information Dissemination

The method through which facts are disseminated to the general public is known as information dissemination. In today’s culture, traditional and social media are the two main ways that people distribute information. Phones, television, oral communication, and print publications are examples of traditional media [9]. In this study, the medium for information dissemination encompasses “Newspaper, Radio, Television, and Social Media Platforms” such as Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram, Youtube, and other social networking sites. The efficacy of a specific distribution strategy is determined by a variety of elements, including the innovation’s features, the target audience, and the communication channel.

Stage 5: Access to Media Tools

In media literacy, access to the tools is defined as how, when, where, and how often individuals have access to the tools, technology, and digital skills necessary to thrive. In this study, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of media tools are the two constructs that trigger the acceptability and use of media tools for accessing information.

Perceived Ease of Use of Media Tools

Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) of a media tool is the extent to which a user of an accessing media tool considers that the use and operation of that tool are less difficult or free from mental

effort [10]. The concept of the perceived ease of use accounts for the level where a user of a media tool accepts the fact that the tool being used to access information would not be difficult to manipulate.

Perceived Usefulness of Media Tools

[10] posits that the Perceived Usefulness (PU) of a medial tool is described as the extent to which a user of a media tool trusts that the use of that tool would help obtain more information to enable him or her to decide which side to vote for. The two constructs assume that the use of a media tool to access information on political party manifestos and party activities is driven by behavioral intention. Nonetheless, the behavioral intention is motivated by the user’s attitude towards the use of the tool to access information on how to vote in a certain direction.

Stage 6: Actions

The outcomes of the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of media tools by a voter trigger the “action” of developing a voting behavior and eventually exhibiting that behavior through vote casting on the day of the election. That is, PEOU and PU lead to the development of voting behavior and the eventual action of the individual to vote in a certain direction.

Methods

Research Design

According to [11], a research design is a precise plan for addressing a research challenge. It is “the plan, structure, and method of investigation designed to get answers to research questions and control variance” [12, 13]. The study looked at how the media influence voting behavior in Ghana’s Western North Region using both quantitative and qualitative research designs. Using mixed methods, the researchers were able to look at the research topics from a variety of perspectives, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand [14].

Profile of the Study Locality (Sefwi Wiawso Municipality of the Western North Region)

The Western North Region was the Region for this study with a focus on the Sefwi Wiawso Municipality. The Sefwi Wiawso Municipality was founded in 1988, and it serves as the administrative center for both the Sefwi-Wiawso Municipal and the Western North Region. Brong Ahafo Region, which is located in the Region's north-eastern corner, borders it on the north. It is bordered on the west by Juaboso and Bia Districts and on the south by Aowin/Suaman. Bibiani-Ahwiaso-Bekwai and Wassa Amenfi border it on the north and south, respectively. The Sefwi Wiawso Municipal Assembly is the Municipality's political and administrative Capital. Sefwi Wiawso is home to the Assembly's offices. According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census, Sefwi Wiawso Municipal had a total population of 151,220 people, with males and females accounting for 50.2 and 49.8% of the population, respectively [15] Similarly, the report estimated the total household population to be 147,162, with 41,513 households. The average household size was found to be 3.5 people [15].

Inclusion Criteria

Persons eighteen (18) years and older who registered and voted in the Sefwi Wiawso Constituency of Ghana's Western North Region in the December 7, 2020 General Elections and agreed to participate in this study were eligible.

Exclusion Criteria

Those who registered but did not vote in the Sefwi Wiawso Constituency during the 2020 General Elections were not included in this study.

Sampling Size, Data Collection, and Data Analysis

Data for this study were gathered through the use of questionnaires and interview guides. Respondents for the study were drawn from the

Sefwi Wiawso Municipality. The study population consisted of 65,497 people aged 18 and above who registered and voted in the Sefwi Wiawso Constituency in the December 7, 2020, General Elections. The sample size of 398 respondents was determined using the Yamane Formula.

$$\text{Yamane Formula, } n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

The sample size for the research is n number of people. Thus, the current voter population surveyed in the Region. N is the number of voter population in the Region, where I is a constant number, and e is the margin of error. This formula used 95% confidence level, and $P = 0.05$ are assumed. As a result, the sample size was determined as follows:

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

Where n =the sample size

N =the population size (65,497)

e =the margin of error (0.05)

therefore,

$$n = \frac{65,497}{1 + 65,497(0.05)^2} = 398$$

The sample for the questionnaire administration was chosen using a convenience sampling technique. Voters who satisfied the study's requirements were discovered using this method. Voters who agreed to take part in the study were chosen. According to [16], a non-probability sample should be considered if the cost of a probability sample is too expensive in comparison to the type and quality of data collected. The questionnaires were administered to a total of 438 eligible voters. To account for anticipated attrition, this sample was increased by 40 eligible voters (10% of 398). Oversampling, according to [17], reduces the influence of a high attrition rate on statistical analysis while also improving the results' validity. In the end, 404 questionnaires were reclaimed from respondents for the study. The purposive sample method was used to choose 10 eligible voters for the interviews to supplement data generated with the questionnaires. [18] states that sampling should be done with a

purpose in order to acquire qualitative data. Purposive sampling gave the researchers the opportunity to select the appropriate sample that provided the information required. Both the convenience and purposive sampling techniques were used. The questionnaire data was analyzed with Excel and presented in tables, charts, and graphs. For emphasis, the information gathered through interviews was presented in descriptions and direct quotations. Following that, the outcomes were discussed.

Results and Discussions

The respondents' gender, age, religion, education, and marital status were all collected as part of the study. Results of data gathered from the field in respect of the objectives of the study were also presented and discussed here.

Gender Distribution of Respondents

Respondents to the research were summarised by gender groups as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid Male	297	73.5	73.5
Female	107	26.5	26.5
Total	404	100	100

Source: Field Data (2021)

According to Table 1, 73.5% of respondents were men, and 26.5% were women. This signifies that men made up the majority of the respondents in the survey. This was because the guys were easily accessible and enthusiastically engaged in the survey. According to [19], gender can have an impact on election choice. Men and

women may view and interpret electioneering topics in different ways. Furthermore, when it comes to voting, they can assess and prioritize matters differently. As a result, understanding and interpreting electoral outcomes are dependent on gender composition and representation in a study.

Table 2. Ages of the Sampled Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid 18 – 25 years	59	14.6	14.6
26 – 35 years	150	37.1	37.1
36 – 45 years	173	42.8	42.8
46 years and above	22	5.4	5.4
Total	404	100	100

Source: Field Data (2021)

From Table 2, 42.8% of the sampled respondents were between thirty-six (36) and forty-five (45) years old.

Sampled respondents whose age fell between twenty-six (26) and thirty-five (35) years represented 37.1%, while those between eighteen (18) and twenty-five (25) years, as well as those whose age ranged 46 years and above,

represented 14.6% and 5.4% correspondingly. According to [20], in the most recent presidential elections, age was one of the biggest predictors of voter choice. As a result, age is a significant factor in shaping voters' opinions on individual subjects. In that regard, different age groups may have different perspectives on topics, and as a result, they will vote differently.

Table 3. Religious Affiliation of Respondents

Religion	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid Christianity	362	89.6	89.6
Islam	29	7.2	7.2
Traditional	12	3	3
Other Religion(s)	0	0	0
No Religion	0	0	0
Total	404	100	100

Source: Field Data (2021)

From Table 3, data obtained revealed that the majority (89.6%) of the sampled respondent were Christians, whereas 7.2% and 3% belonged to the Islamic and Traditional religions, respectively, with No Religion constituting zero,

as shown in Table 3. This suggests that those respondents affiliated to Christianity made up the majority of respondents in the survey. One's religion also has an influence on the choice of who to vote for in elections.

Table 4. Educational Level of Respondents

Education level	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid Primary	0	0	0
JHS	13	3.2	3.2
SHS	123	30.4	30.4
Tertiary	264	65.3	65.3
No Education	4	1	1
Total	404	100	100

Source: Field Data (2021)

From Table 4, it was ascertained that there was no respondent whose level of education truncated at the primary level, but rather 3.2% and 30.4% correspondingly reached Junior High School (JHS) and Senior High School (SHS). The majority (65.3%) of the sampled respondents had attained tertiary education at the time of voting, whereas only 1% (4) of them had no formal education, as shown in table 4. This clearly signifies that the majority of the respondents (65.3%) in the study area have tertiary education qualifications. Respondents,

therefore, were knowledgeable enough to understand and provide appropriate data for the study.

In Table 5, it was observed that the majority (51%) of the sampled respondents were single, whereas 44.1% and 4.7% belonged to the married and divorced respectively. According to [21], marriage lessens political engagement among newly married couples because they are still adjusting to married life and are more concerned with issues of their new economic and social circumstances.

Table 5. Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid Married	148	44.1	44.1
Single	206	51	51
Divorced	19	4.7	4.7
Total	404	100	100

Source: Field Data (2021)

Voters' Access and Use of Media in the Western North Region

Access and Use of Communication Device(s)

The data obtained on voters' access and use of media in the Western North Region is shown in Figure 2.

The study revealed that the sampled respondents, who were primarily resident voters in the study area, have access to communication tools such as smartphones (53.7%), ipads/tablets (36.4%), computers (35.1%), television sets (77.2%), radio sets (55.2%), and information

center services (12.9%), and use them to obtain information on voting and other political activities that take place before and during the election. The high patronage of smartphones for accessing the information on electoral matters by a sizeable number (18 to 45 years) of the sampled respondents, who were primarily a younger generation, is an indication that they are technologically savvy. This finding is in line with a study by [10] that the majority (83.7%) of users of technology are found within the age bracket of twenty (20) to forty (40) years since the usage of ICTs and other communication tools is part of their everyday life.

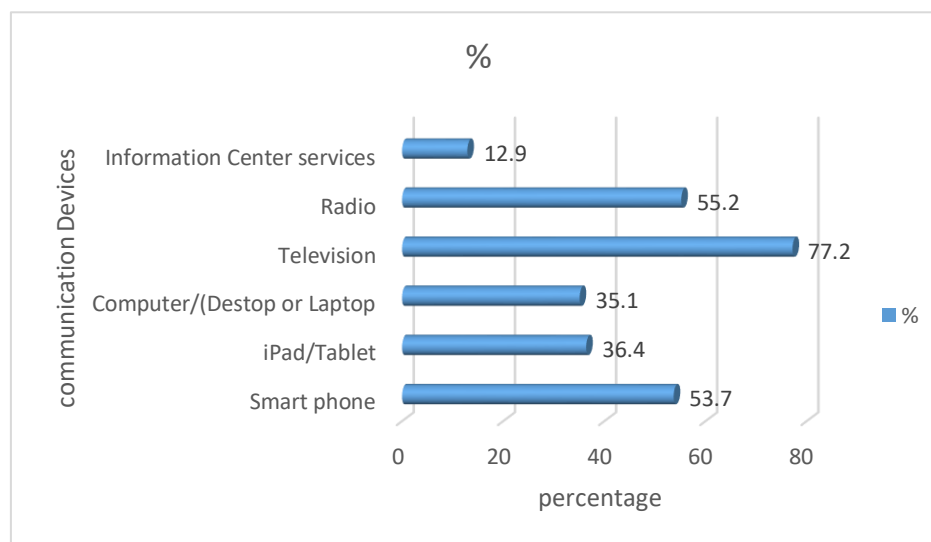


Figure 2. Access and Use of Communication Device(s)

Source: Field Data (2021)

They really use media to access information on political, religious, and other social issues due to widespread ownership and accessibility in their places of abode and at their workplaces. An interviewee remarked, "Yes, we all have access to the media". Yes, we use it because there are media tools in almost every home and workplace.

(Participant "D": A 24-year-old female voter in the Wiawso Constituency:

Yes, we have radio stations, and so we have access to the media. Somehow, we listen to the radio stations, so I can say that we use them in the Western North region (Interview, 2021).

These findings are consistent with findings by [22] that the majority of voters utilize the media in their daily lives since it is a source of political knowledge and information for them.

Number of Years of Use of Communication Device(s)

This aspect of the study sought to establish the number of years the sampled respondents have used communication tools. Figure 3 contains information on the respondents' years of experience using communication technologies.

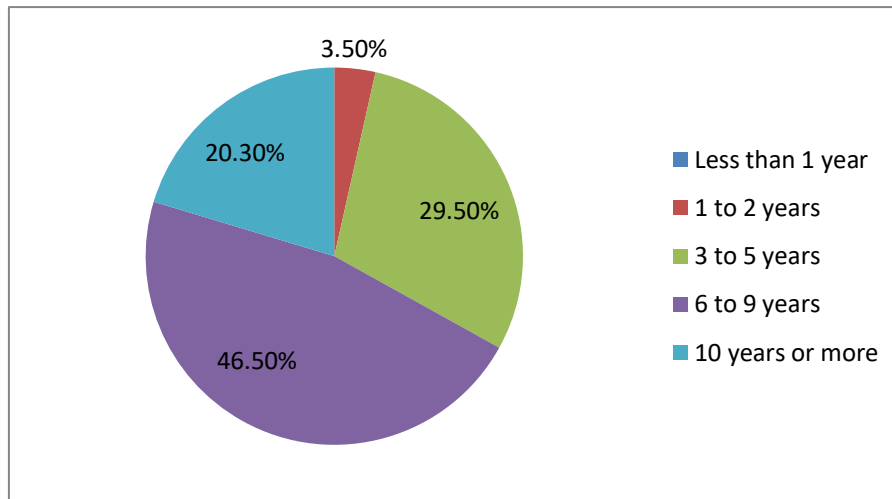


Figure 3. Years of Use of Communication Device(s)

Source: Field Data (2021)

Data shown in Figure 3 indicated that 46.5% of the respondents had used communication tools for a period of 6 to 9 years. In addition, 29.5% of respondents clearly indicated that they had used communication tools for 3 to 5 years, while 20.3%; and 3.5% had used them for 10 years or more; and 1 to 2 years, respectively. This was a clear indication that the majority (66.8%) of the sample respondents in the study area have used communication tools for a long period, spanning over at least two elections.

A respondent in the interview stated that: *Yes, they do because they are the ones who own them.*

Yes, since practically all of them use their mobile phones to listen to the radio, watch television, and read political news (Interview, 2021).

Forms of Media Frequently Used by Voters

The aim of the study here was to determine the forms of media frequently used by voters in the study area. The results from the data collected are displayed in Figure 4.

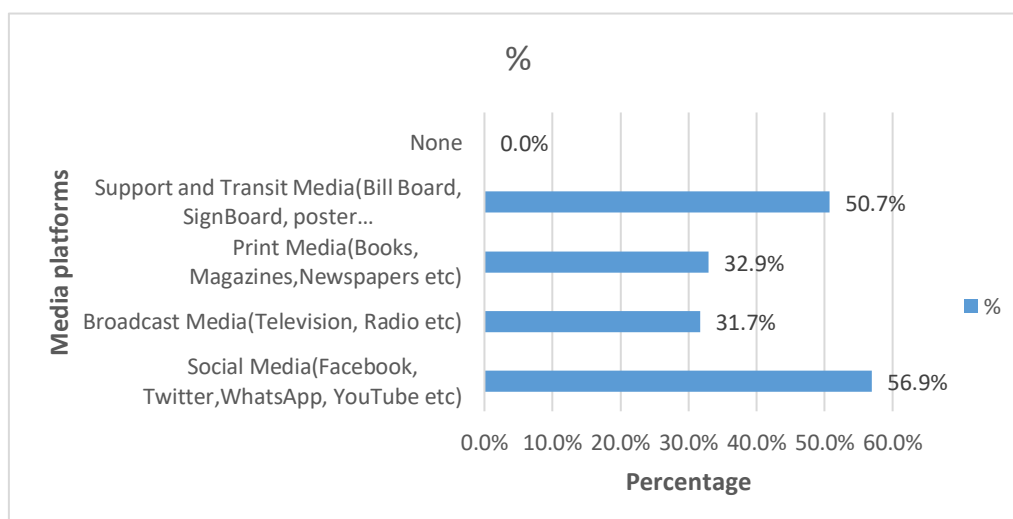


Figure 4. Media Platform(s) used by Voters

Source: Field Data (2021)

According to the data in Figure 4, 56.9 % of the sampled respondents use social media to obtain information on election-related matters, while 43.1% do not; 31.7% obtain information on election-related matters through broadcast media (television and radio), while 68.3% do not; 32.9% obtain information on election-related matters through print media (books, magazines, newspapers, etc.), while 67.1% do not; and 50.7% obtain information on election-related matters through support and transit media (billboards, signboards, posters, information centres, etc.), whereas 49.3% do not. The increased access and use of communication devices among the voting populace within the study area was attributed to the widespread of social communication on media platforms such

as *WhatsApp, Imo, Viber, Facebook, Twitter, television, radio, newspaper, books, magazines, billboards, posters* and the likes in the Ghanaian society [10], and their appreciable high level of education.

Media Influence on Voter Behavior in the Western North Region

How Media Campaign Messages Influenced Voters' Voting Behavior During the 2020 Elections?

Figure 5 depicts the data acquired from the study, which is intended to determine the extent to which media campaign messaging influenced people's voting behavior during the 2020 elections.

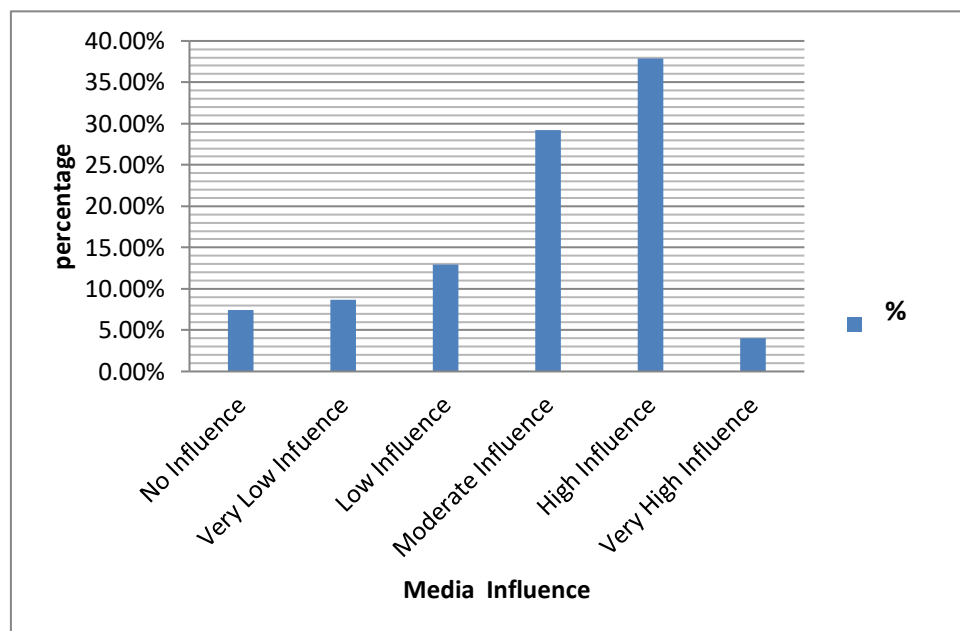


Figure 5. The Extend at which Media Campaign Messages influenced Voters' voting behavior during the 2020 Elections

Source: Field Data (2021)

The study found that 37.9% of voters said media campaign messages highly influenced their voting behavior in Ghana's 2020 general elections, while 4%, 29.2%, 12.9%, and 8.7% said media campaign messages had a very high, moderate, low, or very low influence on voters' voting behavior in the 2020 elections, respectively. With respect to high the influence of media campaign messages on voters' voting

behavior during the 2020 elections, political ads on social media highly influence the voting behavior of voters during elections [23-25]. In discussing how the media influence voter behavior in the Western North Region, the participants of the study area identified a number of issues such as political campaigns, music, and advertisements that run on broadcast, print, social media, support and transit media, and

politician ownership of media outlets. Also mentioned was the hosting of political programs on radios that are listened to by the majority of people for information on current issues in their constituency. Similar findings were reported by [26] that campaigns, politicians, and public discourse have all benefited from political advertising in the media, which has influenced voters to act in ways that benefit political parties. She further observed that the vehicles for political campaigns and sloganeering had been newspapers, direct mail, radio, and television that influence voter behavior in the lead-up to national elections.

Another interviewee recounted that:

the hosting of political programs on radios that are then listened to by the majority of people for information on current issues in their constituency.

Also goes to establish how the media influence voting behavior in the study area. (Interview 2021).

Overall Media Influence on Respondents' Voting Decisions in the Western North Region

The study sought to establish the overall media influence on respondents' voting decisions in the study area. Figure 6. Shows data obtained on the overall media influence on respondents' voting decisions.

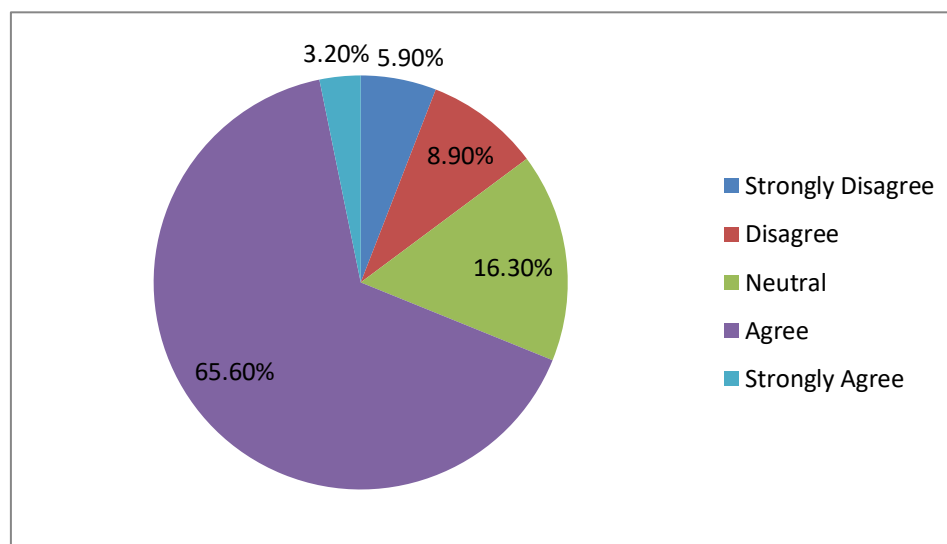


Figure 6. Overall Media Influence on Respondents' Voting Decisions

Source: Field Data (2021)

From Figure 6, The study revealed that the majority of the studied respondents (65.6) agreed that the media have a valuable influence on voters' voting decisions in the study area, while 3.2% strongly agreed, 8.9% disagreed, and 5.9% were undecided. Up to 16.3% of the respondents said they were undecided. The findings in this regard were similar to the work of [27] who stated that the media have a favorable impact on the decision-making process when it comes to the voting intentions of respondents. Also, the media play a major role in the decision-making process and the voting

intentions of the voter. This finding is also anchored in a study by [28], who contended that the popularisation of social media had acquainted billions of voters to vote directly on issues.

Other Factors that Influence Voter Behavior in the Western North Region

Apart from the media, the study wanted to find out what other variables impact voter behavior during elections. The sampled respondents presented the following as other factors influencing voter behavior during elections that are not related to the media.

Table 6. Other Factors that Influence Voter Behavior during Elections apart from the Media

Item	Frequency	%
Party affiliation	49	12
Development projects	41	10
Party manifesto (policies and programs)	36	9
The personality of the candidates	69	17
Prevailing economic situations	15	4
Family and friends (close relations)	8	2
Performance of the government of the day	12	3
House to House campaign by candidates	24	6
Position on specific issues by voters	12	3
Political rallies	24	6
Ethnic consideration	16	4
Cocoa pricing	4	1
Party sloganeering	58	14
Employment policies	24	6
Participation in social functions (e.g. funerals, weddings and naming ceremonies)	8	2
Religious inclinations of people	4	1
Total	404	100

Source: Field Data (2021)

These observations are in line with a similar study conducted by [29], who indicated that among voters, knowing local candidates, concern about local policy issues, among others things such as affiliation with a political party; development initiatives; and the party manifesto (policies and plans); candidates' personalities; economic conditions that are now in effect; close relatives and family members; the current government's performance; ethnic inclinations; prices of commodities; the style of the campaign propaganda for a political party; policies affecting employment; participation in social events (for example, funerals); and people's religious preferences are the main factors influencing voter behavior during elections. This data implies that the majority of voters are evaluative voters, who analyze the qualifications of candidates before casting their ballots. The relevance of candidate personality as a determinant of vote choice in the study area is supported by [30], who claimed that Jerry John Rawlings won the 1992 and 1996 Ghana

elections largely due to his personality, charisma, and leadership traits; thus, the defeat of the NDC in the 2000 elections was caused by Rawlings' absence as a candidate [30, 31].

Other case studies from around the world also show that personality has a role in political conduct. [32] studied Italian national voters; [33] studied South Korea; [34] studied the Netherlands; [35] studied Germany; and [36, 37] studied the United States. Despite the fact that all of these studies show that personality influences political conduct, the extent to which candidates personality influences political attitudes and behaviors differs greatly from place to place, implying that context is crucial [33].

The findings were similar to those of [38-39] who both claimed that the NPP's election 2000 slogan, "Hwe Wo Asetena Mu, Na To Aba Pa," which translates to "Examine Your Life and Vote Accordingly," was appealing and thus successful in persuading voters to vote for the party into power in the 2000 election. Similarly, the NDC's motto "Better Ghana Agenda" and

pledges like “employment for everybody” and “one-time premium payment of national health insurance” were essential in the party’s election victory in 2008. Furthermore, education was a major campaign issue in the 2016 elections. While the ruling NDC campaigned on expanding educational access through infrastructure development, the NPP offered free senior high school education if they were elected. The NPP’s campaign promises of restoring teacher and nursing training allowances, one-district one-factory, one-village one-dam, and one-constituency one-million dollars for projects, in addition to its flagship free senior high school policy, are thought to have contributed to the party’s victory in the 2016 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections. The NPP was effective in communicating a message of hope to the electorate, whilst the incumbent NDC campaigned solely on the achievements of their infrastructure. The electorate responded positively to the opposition NPP’s campaign theme, and they were elected to power. As a result, the study claims that campaign efforts in Ghana influence voting behavior. These data support Popkin’s theory that campaign pledges are important factors in elections.

In most circumstances, voters will look to election campaigns for information on parties, candidates, and policy positions [40-42] both affirm the relevance of the campaign factor, claiming that campaign messaging assists the electorate (mainly unaligned voters) in determining which party and candidate is better prepared to handle their difficulties and

expectations. [43] also provides evidence that election campaigns have a significant impact in a variety of ways. Furthermore, this study, as well as studies by [44], demonstrate that campaign pledges do contribute to electoral victory in Ghana, despite the fact that other factors influence voter behavior.

Interestingly, [45] in his study on “How Do Voters Decide,” found that ethnic and economic factors have little impact on voting behavior in Ghana: they have no impact on how the bulk of the population casts their ballots. This outcome contradicts the popular perception of Ghana’s elections, which holds that they are merely an ethnic census. Furthermore, the findings imply that the majority of Ghanaians are evaluative voters, who base their voting preferences on a rigorous assessment of competing candidates’ competency and campaign promises. Essentially, this study emphasizes the importance of personality and pragmatic policy in winning elections. As a result, politicians must consider public perceptions of their trustworthiness and image, as well as the policies they offer to the campaign platform.

Non-Media Factors have More Influence on Voter Behavior than That of the Media

The study sought to establish how non-media factors have more influence on voter behavior than that of the media, if at all and the data in Figure 7 shows the way and manner these other factors influence voting behavior more than that of the media.

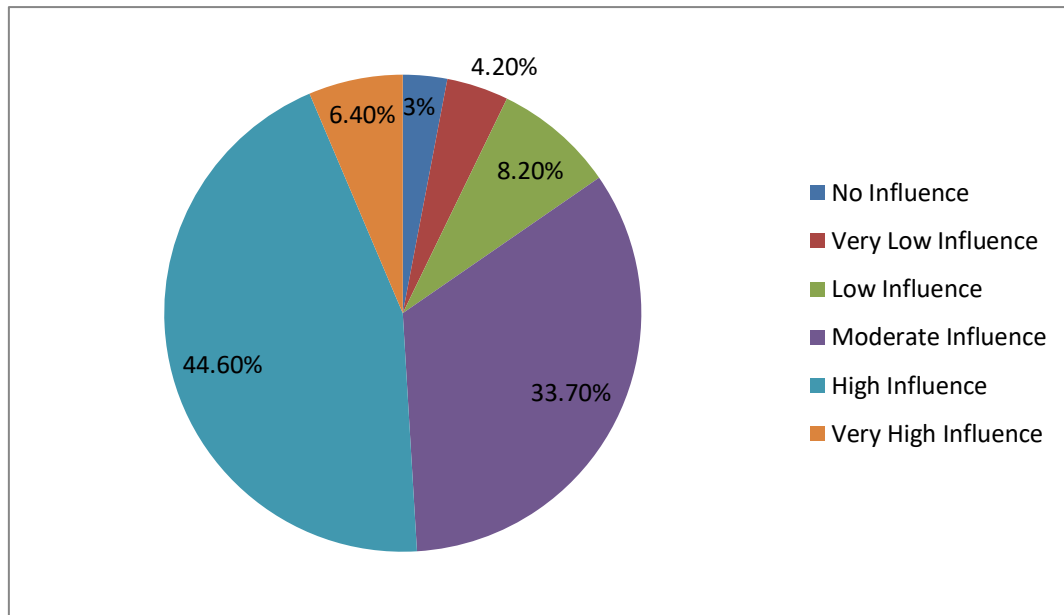


Figure 7. The Way and Manner Non-media Factors have more Influence on Voter Behavior than that of the Media

Source: Field Data (2021)

From Figure 7, it was observed that there is a high level of influence (44.6%) and a moderate level of influence (33.7%) of non-media factors on voting behavior than that of the media, compared to very high influence (6.4%), low influence (8.2%), and very low influence (4.2%). Respondents who believed that there was no influence constituted 3%. This finding can be likened to similar findings by [46] who indicated that in Ghana, the campaign message and the presidential candidate's ethnicity have a significant impact on voter choice. More importantly, patronage politics and thematic programs are more important than media in influencing voting behavior during elections (ibid). This finding is also consistent with [47] finding that when voters base their decision on the policy and economic preferences that underpin a preferred ideology, their voting behavior is heavily influenced. Conversely, [48] found, based on the 2005 Round three (3) Afrobarometer survey of seven African nations, that while ethnic relationships influence vote choice in Africa, retroactive appraisals (evaluative voting) of economic achievement are also significant. Contrary to the findings of this

study regarding development projects and the performance of government, the ability of politicians or governments to give private and public goods to their citizens is not tied to voters' evaluative behavior but rather to the actual or predicted performance of the candidates [49].

Drawing on the finding from other factors that influence voter behavior in the Western North Region, the responses from the participants of the study indicated that they are driven by political party policy proposals, house-to-house campaigning during elections, money, and gifts, music, and commercials that run on broadcast, print, social media, and support, as well as support and transit media, which I believe influence voting behavior in the Region.

Personally, I base it on the policy proposal from the competing political parties in a particular year's election. Based on that, I see the difference between the ones that are good to me. I go with those ones and vote accordingly.

(Participant "A": A 34-year-old male voter in the Wiawso Constituency).

This finding is supported by [50], who state that voter responses to election pledges are

compared to voter responses to political party activities in the past.

The participants also recounted that:

money and gifts influence people's voting decisions and choices before and during elections all.

(Participant "T": A 30-year-old male voter in the Wiawso Constituency).

I can say money. Politicians use the money to influence voters to change their minds to vote on their behalf. So, money is another factor.

(Participant "C": A 37-year-old male voter in the Wiawso Constituency).

This finding is consistent with an observation by [51] which opined that the provision of cash or other tangible goods by political elites to voters might have a significant impact on people's voting decisions.

Other responses elicited from the interview showed that:

Apart from the media, people will go for house-to-house campaigns during election time to convince people to vote for them on election day.

(Participant "B": A 27-year-old male voter in the Wiawso Constituency).

This is evident in a study by [52], who state that because most politicians do not operate in a free atmosphere, they must rely on a house-to-house campaign approach to persuade voters to vote for them.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study investigated the influence of media on voting behavior in the Western North Region of Ghana. The study found that residents in the area have access to communication tools such as smartphones because of the cosmopolitan nature

of the area and the availability of adequate technological infrastructure. Consequently, they use them to obtain information on voting and other political activities that take place before and during elections, and it has become part of their daily lives. Voting behavior is influenced by political campaigns, music, and advertisements on broadcast, print, and social media, according to the study. Findings showed that 65.6 % of those polled said the media had a major impact on their voting behavior in the 2020 general elections in the research Region. Apart from the media, the main other factors that influence voting behavior are party affiliation, development projects, party manifesto, current economic conditions, family and friends, current government performance, political rallies, ethnic leanings, cocoa prices, money, and gifts, party sloganeering, and employment conditions.

Voters require increased and improved access to and usage of the media to get knowledge of political parties' religious, social, and educational policies in order to develop their voting behavior, therefore, the technical infrastructure of the media in the research Region should be expanded. Also, Media sanity should be strengthened in the study Region to create a conducive political environment for voters in quest of accessing electoral information towards elections through the broadcast, print, social, support and transits media.

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Conflict of Interest

In this study, there is no conflict of interest.

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