

# Marketing the Political Product: Perspectives among Tertiary Students

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**ABSTRACT:** *Most nations are opting for multi party democracy as the system of choosing political leaders. What then do electorates look out for in making their political choices? Political Marketing seeks to apply marketing principles in the design and promotion of the political product. What then is the Political Product? The Political Product as defined by Butler and Collins (1994) is a bundle consisting of the Candidate, the Party organization, and the Ideology of the party or candidate. Based on the Worcester and Mortimore (2001) Political Triangle Model, the study investigates the perspectives of tertiary students (the political consumer) of a Ghanaian private university in making political choice decisions. It sought to investigate their basis for assessing each component in the bundle - Candidate, Party, and Ideology - and how each component is prioritized to arrive at a political choice? Using purposive and convenient sampling methods, a semi-structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The study concluded that in terms of ranking, these tertiary students vote primarily on the basis of the ideology of the candidate or political party, followed by the candidate as a person and lastly the party itself. For the Political strategist, the study helps set up a working framework to develop, promote and sell their political products to the voting consumer. It brings to bear the need for Integrated Marketing Communications and other marketing techniques in the promotion of the political product. Furthermore, this paper reveals some nuances in Political Marketing within the context of a developing country as Ghana and in so doing throws more light in this relatively new area of “selling” the political product.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Candidate, ideology, party, political marketing*

## I. INTRODUCTION

It is very interesting to note that though political outcomes in Ghana over the past twenty years in the Forth Republic have seen the changeover of power between the two front line parties – New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), in all instances the two parties have maintained on average their support base in terms of percentage of the voting populace. Electoral

outcomes have therefore been determined more by the niche of floating non-aligned voters.

This phenomenon in Ghana was clearly expressed by Friday (2007) when he noted that “baring a dramatic electoral realignment, scholars, politicians, and pundits alike anticipate similar voting patterns, though not necessarily similar electoral outcomes, to carry on for the foreseeable future” [11]. If this is assumed true, then what does this mean for the application of marketing tools to solicit for votes to affect electoral fortunes of parties? This question becomes even more interesting in relation to the smaller parties (i.e. Apart from NPP and NDC) being able to make significant political inroads by commanding a sizable support, if even they are unable to win the total of elections. Another interesting viewpoint for Political parties is to explore the various factors or dimensions of the voter decision-making process in Ghana.

In their seminal article, they argued that elections should be one of the new arenas of marketing interest and that political contests remind us that candidates are marketed as well as soap [15]. This is further buttressed by Robert (2008) when he observed that modern party politics is very commonly discussed within the frame of marketing [23]. Success or failure at election time often attributes to the ‘brand image’ projected by a party, and parties invest heavily in political marketing research, testing both the receptiveness of voters to key messages and the effectiveness of ways to communicate those messages.

There is the widespread use of Integrated Marketing Communications within the framework of the promotional tools and the marketing mix to reach the ever-sophisticated Ghanaian electorate. The extensive and expensive use of the mass media, billboards, sponsorship, public relations among others is so obvious during the peak of the political season.

## II. THE LITERATURE

This general overview is confined to the developments just before independence to 2008. The early years after independence (1957 to 1981) can best be described as very turbulent. There however has been relative stability from 1982 to date.

### A. THE NKRUMAH ERA

Kwame Nkrumah is generally acknowledged as the founder of the nation Ghana. His political life in Ghana began with his engagement in 1948 as General Secretary of the first political party, United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC formed in 1947). The founders of this party included J.B. Danquah and Paa Grant. However, by 1949 the energetic, radical, and impatient Nkrumah fell out with the UGCC to form the Convention Peoples Party (CPP). In marketing terms his product to the electorate was “independence now” as against “independence in the shortest possible time” by the UGCC. The majority of electorate bought into his vision and consequently his winning of the general elections.

### B. THE MILITARY ERA (1966-92)

This period witnessed the Second and Third Republic. This was made of Kofi Abrefa Busia’s Progress Party government of 1969-1972 and Hilla Limann’s Peoples’ National Party of 1979-1981, both of which were truncated by military coups prior to their serving their mandated four year term. Hence, of the twenty-eight years (1966-1992), democratic regimes ruled for about only seven years. Five military regimes emerged during the period. The first coup was by the National Liberation Council (NLC), led by Generals Joseph Ankrah and Kwasi Amankwa Afrifah, displaced Nkrumah’s CPP in 1966. According to Agyemang-Duah (2009), its aim was to demystify and discredit Nkrumah, probe his stewardship, and the drafting of a new constitution [6]. Busia, leader of the Progress Party (an offshoot of UGCC) and himself engrafted by the NLC to draft the 1969 Constitution, won the ensuing general elections of 1969. Candidate Busia marketed himself, against the backdrop of ousted socialist Nkrumah, as supporting a liberal economy, free enterprise, development of local and foreign capital, and a respecter of the rule of law. These were in consonance with the ‘Danquah Political Tradition’ of the UGCC.

The next military dictatorship regime was Colonel Ignatius Kutu Acheampong’s National Redemption

Council (NRC). This regime in legitimising its stay without handing over to constitutional rule attempted to forge a troika of the military, police, and civilians to form a Union Government. A referendum on this backfired and led to a palace-coup in 1978 and the ascendancy of Fred Akuffo the Chief of Defense Staff. Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings’ Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) struck on 4th June 1979 on the pretext of “house cleaning” the armed forces, as it had failed in the political domain of governance. The regime handed over power to the democratically elected political outsider Hilla Limann and his Peoples’ National Party (PNP) in 1979 to herald in the Third Republic. The PNP had its ideological rooting in Nkrumah’s CPP heritage. Agyemang-Duah describes the regime as rendered impotent by being resource starved, internal fighting, lack of sagacity and economic vision, and a military overcast of Rawlings and his AFRC [2]. True to his words of retaking power, if need be, Rawlings, leading the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) struck again in a military coup on new year’s eve of 31<sup>st</sup> December 1981. Agyemang-Duah states that “the paradox of the PNDC era, and a notable one, therefore, is that it started with dictatorship and ended with democracy, an exact reversal of Nkrumah’s era” (p. 19) [2].

### C. THE FOURTH REPUBLIC (POST 1992)

The fourth Republic has survived five progressively credible democratic elections. 1992 and 1996 was won by Jerry John Rawlings of the NDC, 2000 and 2004 by John Agyekum Kufuor of the NPP, 2008 by the late John Evans Atta-Mills of NDC, 2012 by John Mahama of NDC. This current study concentrates on the elections of the Fourth Republic up to 2008.

### D. THE CONCEPT OF POLITICAL MARKETING

According to Wring (1997), earlier attempts to introduce political marketing into mainstream Marketing was resisted by marketing purists until the mid-seventies [27]. Butler and Collins (1994) as cited by Wring state that “given the nature of political party organisations, the reasons for membership, the historical traditions and the overwhelming amateur and volunteer status of participants; it is not altogether surprising that marketing is perceived in a negative manner” [27]. “... a vulgarising process, whereby outsiders, brought in for their skills in selling soap, would go on selling soap” [22].

By the mid seventies however, sound theoretical basis for the intersection of politics and marketing had been widely. The 1985 redefinition of marketing by the American Marketing Association (AMA) to include the word “ideas” in the product offerings proofed insightful and instructive: “Marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives” [27]. Clement defines political marketing as:

“The marketing of ideas and opinions which relate to public or political issues or to specific candidates. In general, political marketing is designed to influence people’s votes in elections. It is different from conventional marketing in that concepts are being sold as opposed to products or services” [20].

He continues, “Political marketing, however, employs many of the same techniques used in product marketing, such as paid advertising, direct mail, and publicity”. The Constitution of Ghana (1992, Article 55, section 3) defines the role of parties as disseminating political ideas, which tends to validate the usage of marketing principles by political parties [21].

The employment of marketing tools in marketing political ideas to solicit and win electorate votes is then a means for achieving the organisational objectives of winning political power. Schattschneider (1960) states, “Democracy is a competitive political system in which competing leaders and organisations define the alternatives of public policy in such a way that the public can participate in the decision-making process [27].

#### E. KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN POLITICAL MARKETING AND TRADITIONAL MARKETING

While marketing applications may help shape voter preferences there is no question as to the sovereignty of the voter. Lock and Harris (1996) spelt out seven salient differences between political and product/services marketing. Firstly, for any one election, all voters make their choices on the same day. There are almost no purchasing decisions with this characteristic and certainly none which affects as large a number of people. Secondly, while some might argue that there are long term individual costs or regret (in the economist’s sense) in electoral choices, the fact that there is no price directly or

indirectly attached to voting sharply differentiates it from a commercial purchase.

Thirdly, although the actual act of voting may not have a price attached to it, apart from commuting, a voter has to live with the collective choice, even though it might not have been his or her preference. The fourth reason is that the winner takes all as in Ghana and the United Kingdom (UK). Fifthly, the political party or candidate is a complex intangible product which the voter cannot unbundle. Consequently, most voters have to judge on the overall packaged concept or message.

The sixth is that while there may be means of influencing the direction of a local or national party (with clear parallels with conventional product modifications or brand extensions), the probability of introducing a new brand in the form of a new party is relatively remote. The seventh is that in most marketing situations, brand leaders tend to stay in front. In the political terrain, there tend to be two or three major parties which alternate power over the years [12]. Example is NPP and NDC in Ghana, Labour and Conservatives in Britain, Republicans and Democrats in the United States of America.

#### F. THE GENERAL STRUCTURE OF POLITICAL MARKETING

Wring (1997) defines political marketing as “the party or candidate’s use of opinion research and environmental analysis to produce and promote a competitive offering which will help realise organisational aims and satisfy groups of electors in exchange for their votes” [27]. At the root of this definition is a framework Butler and Collins (1994) provide; the *product* (person/party/ideology), the *organisation* (the party machinery) and the *market* (environment) [7].

The *market*, according to Niffenegger (1990) is made up of supporters, floating voters, opponents, and the rules governing the competition [17]. In most electoral system the goal is for the party gaining a simple majority of votes. Butler and Collins (1994) concur on this, but they are quick to highlight the marketing significance of the following characteristics of the electorate: the process is ideologically charged; the vote is a forceful social affirmation; and there exist in the electorate a “counter consumer” [7]. They further state that, “More than any other consumption activity, the vote is an act of social affirmation in the main, the major

social cleavages in society are expressed in elections”

The concept of “counter consumer” is unique to the political market environment in that within the electorate is a group not only interested in its preferred candidate winning an election, but also may be more (or only) interested in preventing another candidate from taking office. The result may be negative communication during the campaign, and objection voting (skirt and blouse voting in Ghanaian parlance). The marketing environment also includes the broadsheet newspapers, specialist magazines and academic briefs offering a plethora of reports, analysis and opinion research material on which political strategists can base their decisions and better understand the economic, media and other factors shaping electors’ concerns [7].

The organization or party (the party machinery) as part of the political marketing structure is the totality of the party machinery and research put into operation to win power through the election process.

### G. THE POLITICAL PRODUCT MIX

In electoral terms the product, a “mix” of variables in its own right, combines three key aspects: “party image”, “leader image” and “policy commitments”. Butler and Collins (1994) posit that though the components are distinct they usually, although not necessarily are indivisible. A marketing implication of this multi-component offer is that they cannot be offered separately, hence resulting in trade-offs of costs and benefits. Market segmentation and positioning must thus take cognizance of the congruence between the candidate, the party, and the message.

This approach has received support from Worcester (1991) and Shaw (1994). Among various electoral groupings it has been found that each of these dimensions of the product carries different weights in voter decision making (to a great extent, this is what this work aims to investigate with a sample of tertiary voters). In the review of the literature on the political product, this study attempts a look at each of the components separately. Though distinct, it (the product mix - person/party/ideology) is offered as whole, and it is expected in some cases an overlap.

### H. THE PARTY

The party product is said to include many different factors: organisation, symbols, constitution, traditional, ideology, activities, and communication

staff among [16]. Lees-Marshment argues that for major parties to win elections, they need to become market oriented: understand the demands of the public and design a product to suit it. In Britain, New Labour appeared to have followed this approach successfully since 1995 to win two landslide victories by changing their core policy – indeed their entire product including leadership, unity and organization - to reflect dominant voter concerns through marketing research [16].

They identify reasons why political marketing may work or fail: party history, party internal culture, organization and attitude to change, effectiveness of communication strategy to show Party change (when pursuing market-oriented strategy), ability to follow early policy themes through to manifesto and election, extent of party unity, leader popularity, and the leader's ability to manage the Party [16].

Robert (2008) [23] states that insights from political psychology have identified two models of political partisanship. The first treats party loyalties as emotional or ‘affective’ attachments which according to Campbell et al. (1960) is “the individual’s affective orientation to an important group-object in his environment” [8]. Green et al. (2002) posits that such affinities typically develop from an early age, as (future) voters learn the same emotional responses, and in turn adopt the same loyalties as their parents or other important socializing. The key implication is that affective loyalties are firm and stable [13].

The second is ‘cognitive’ partisanship, which envisages loyalty as a kind of summary, or ‘running tally’, of positive evaluations of a party [1]. The explanation is that political information available vastly exceeds most people’s capacity or motivation to process it. Running tallies obviate the need to recall specific information about parties. This is a cognitive model in that these running tallies are maintained and updated by voters processing information about parties’ records, competence, and leaders or candidates.

The relative weight or importance of the two components of partisanship (i.e. affective and cognitive) will vary across individuals and across contexts [6]; In other words, some loyalties will be especially cognitive, while others are more affective in nature. The two components are said to be mutually reinforcing. There is however, no contention as to the dual effect of these forces on voter choice. Burden observed that party identification like all attitudes is a combination of

affect and cognition as was earlier established by Greene (2002).

Along the lines of affective loyalty as a means of building party support base, Ayee (2005) defines ethnicity as “the sentiment of loyalty towards a distinctive population, cultural group, or territorial area”. He further states that it is “understood as a form of cultural identity, albeit one that operates at a deep and emotional level” and has a characteristic of a potential of “... spurring group formation and underpinning political organization because it is the collective consciousness that gains relevance to the political process” [4]. Article 55 (4) of the Ghanaian 1992 Constitution stipulates; “every political party shall have a national character, and membership shall not be based on ethnic, religious, regional or sectional divisions” [21].

Hence, no party can use any words, slogans, or symbols which could arouse ethnic, religious, gender, professional or other divisions to market itself. However, ethnicity as a potent variable in party dynamics is obvious. This is reflected in the factoring in of ethnic, regional, and social balance by party strategists in their selection of parliamentary and presidential candidates and the running mates. As Ayee (2001) puts it, the instrumentality of ethnicity in product offerings – with respect to presidential and vice candidacy – was such that each of the parties made sure that if the presidential candidate was from the southern part of Ghana, the running mate should be from the northern part and vice-versa.

Agyemang-Duah (2005) makes a definite statement to the effect that, the reality is those Ghanaian electorates are cleaved along ethnic lines represented by the informal description of the NDC as Ewe and NPP as Akan parties. The dichotomy is so deep as to polarize the electorate. It is an open secret that large number of Ewes and Akans get registered into the NDC and NPP respectively. Also, the relative support base of the Convention Peoples’ Party (CPP) is rooted among the Nzemas whose affinity to Nkrumah appears to be unshakable [2]. He concludes that parties appear to lean on ethnicity for support as some form of insurance in an electoral context in which they deem the electorate unpredictable.

## I. THE CANDIDATE

Political marketers establish the increasing importance of leadership in the political market place as a crucial part of the political product. “Leaders are highly visible, therefore, in an era where parties need

to be market oriented to win elections, so must the leaders” [16]. They argue that it becomes even more imperative for parties in opposition to have leaders to manage the change associated with becoming marketing oriented (as was the case of New Labour and Tony Blair in Britain). The leader needs to be popular in terms of leadership style, party leadership style, characteristics, speaking style etc. Foley (2002) argues that there is a “market leadership” (p. 189) and leaders are now “public commodities that are continually probed, tested, and evaluated for their leadership qualities” [26].

Foley (2002) further states that “leaders have to market their parties by first marketing themselves and their ability to provide national leadership and effective governance”. According to Lees-Marshment and Rudd (2003), Christina Dykes, the Conservative’s Head of Development and candidates, noted that candidates are an important part of the product – they are ‘who we put up as the public face’. However, (commenting on the Conservative party) not everyone in the Party has grasped that the product is wide-ranging, since in the opinion of Christina Dykes some still think political parties offer policies, full stop. She believes the idea that they (leaders) have to offer a shape of a party is new (Lees-Marshment & Rudd, 2003).

According to Mensah (2008), on the United States presidential elections “... the McCain campaign sought to project candidate John McCain as the maverick, who in most cases is non-aligned with his party but had the capacity to attract and network the floating voters”. He continues that “However, the maverick was to be supported by someone who could rally the base, the conservative core support. Hence, the selection of Sarah Palin, an embodiment of the Republican ideology, as McCain’s running mate” [19]. In contrast with McCain’s non-aligned strategy is Obama’s party–candidate–policy alignment. In Barack’s campaign, his policy positions, mostly liberal, and political programmes as voter mobilisation and fund raising, had one common philosophical underpinning that could arguably be attributed to the Democratic Party’s characterisation in the general sense – a bottom up approach to nation building.

With the need for pragmatic policies in the global economy there is a coming to the centre of most political ideologies, hence making the leader image more and more decisive in contemporary politics. The personalities of Reagan, Thatcher, Clinton, Mandela, and most recently Obama speaks for itself.

As Philip Kotler comments that voters vote on the basis of mediated images of candidates since they rarely know or meet the candidates [26]. Ayee (2001) reporting on the Ghanaian 2000 presidential elections states the inability of the majority of citizenry to understand election issues, and is further compounded by high illiteracy levels. He infers that it is evident that the majority of voters particularly in the rural areas voted for personalities or parties rather than issues. The subject of leader image or personality and ethnicity is of great interest and magnitude in Ghanaian politics [3].

The personalities remain a dominant factor in parties and party politics in the Fourth Republic. He presents Nkrumah (and to some extent Limann) as prominent in the NDC and PNC, Rawlings and Danquah/Busia prominent in the NDC and NPP respectively. According to him they are used as bywords for party philosophies and ideologies, though non leaves behind any clear ideological blueprint. In contemporary times the work of Ayee (2005) depicts that the dimension of personality in Ghanaian politics in voter choice may be seen sometimes to be weightier than ethnicity. He used the presidential results of the 1992, 1996, 2000 and 2004 elections to illustrate. Within the context of other variables such as voter turnout and other Ghanaian political party dynamics, Ayee believes that sometimes personalities play a great role in garnering votes for parties and not necessarily ethnicity [4].

## J. THE IDEOLOGY/ISSUES

Most pundits believe that the policy platform on which an election manifesto is based underpins the party image. Mensah (2008) associates ideology to be the centerpiece of party politics. Along the same lines, he highlights the brand in politics as manifesting through the traditional left-right ideological leanings as supported by Lilleker and Negrine (2004), as well as Reeves, de Chernatony and Carrigan (2006) [19]. Mensah (2008) explains that people of progressive and equality mindset are likely to network with left leaning thinkers and so do believers of choice and competition align to the right as capitalists and conservative.

Hence, ideology becomes arguably the common definitive element inherent in the party, the candidate, and the policy. Ideology therefore separates and identifies one party from the other, one candidate from the other and one policy from the other. Ideology is said to become a firmly anchored differentiated knowledge structure in the minds of

electorates (Schneider, 2004, p. 51) [24]. "It drives issue positions and directs political discourse amongst electorates. Ideology is basically 'the essence of the political difference amongst parties especially in the long term as candidates and policies change in frequent pace'" (Mensah, 2008, p. 6 - 7). He postulates that a political brand could thus be defined as "an object of political equity (political value) which is managed to advance a political entity's course" (p. 7). For him the object of political equity includes the party itself as an embodiment of certain belief systems (ideology) and other values, the party's candidate presented at elections who is also an embodiment of certain belief systems (ideology), and finally, policy positions as an embodiment of certain belief systems (ideology) and the commitment to the public good [21].

Wring (1997) emphasises the concept of positioning as central place in political marketing analysis. In their work, Smith and Saunders (1990) [25] point to the potential political problems caused by "the flight to the centre" (i.e. neither capitalist or socialist but rather pragmatism) whereby parties fail to differentiate the brand values of their "product" through use of its Unique Selling Point (USP) or other positioning tools (Fletcher, 1984) [10]. By 1996, Borre (1996) states that Ghana had come closer to a two party system, but differing from the traditional left-right divide in Ghanaian politics. Both sides are competing more for successful implementation of market economies. He writes in reference to the 1996 elections that "The campaign accordingly has shifted from an emphasis on various ideological issues to more pragmatic issue of continuity versus change, the Rawlings forces naturally standing for continuity, and the Kufuor forces, for change" (p. 213) [5].

Borre states that it is often doubted that countries with a mainly illiterate population are able to develop a kind of political competition in which issues play a dominant role. On the contrary, we find that, conceived as simple evaluations of the state of society and campaign slogans about the general mode of politics, issues did play an important role in the case of the Ghanaian 1996 elections. Another interesting value proposition in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections was the policy campaign of "domestication", implying self-reliance by the Great Consolidated Popular Party (GCPP) under veteran politician the late Dan Lartey.

Mckwartin (2001) rightly alludes that these conclusions about the efficacy of party identification,

issues, and social factors in voting were obtained from empirical studies of developed countries, e.g. United States of America, with a strong civic culture. The question then is how applicable will resultant models - such as that by Lewis-Beck and Rice (1992) for forecasting elections in the United States of America - work in developing and emerging democracies such as Ghana? Mckwartin admits that this is not fully known as works in relation to Africa in general and Ghana in particular is young and now growing [18].

### III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

For the Political Marketer, the question is what causal variables explain these entrenched trends so as to allow for the deployment of marketing communications to influence and possibly change voter choice to their favour. Put differently, what does the Ghanaian voter use to differentiate between their party options in their voting decisions? The very essence of political marketing is to “woo” voters to vote for a party so as to obtain a majority to retain or regain political power. Butler and Collins (1994) provide a structural framework for political marketing; the *product* (person/party/ideology), the *organisation* (the party machinery) and the *market* (environment) [7].

This paper concentrates on the *product* and reviews it in the light of Ghanaian politics. This is done among a social grouping of tertiary students using Worcester and Mortimore (2001) Political Triangle theoretical model to analyse voter evaluations among its target audience [26]. The model showed that consistently in Britain (1987, 1992, 1997, and 2001) voter decision making on the political product gave first priority to the policies appeal, the appeal of the candidate in question was second, and then thirdly the appeal of the party itself.

Within the Ghanaian political market environment, the applicability of the model results has not been authenticated. This study seeks to determine in rank order of significance the various elements of the political product. One may assume that the personality of the candidate and the party image resonate more as affective/emotional influencers, and policies/ideology as cognitive in nature for political decision-making.

### IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of the study were:

- To evaluate the perceptions of these tertiary students on the political product of person, party and ideology in their political decision making process.
- To determine the relative weights attached to the three dimensions of the political product (person, party, and policies/ideology) by the students.
- To find out whether the political decision-making process of the students has been consistent based on the results Worcester and Mortimore (2001) model.

#### A. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The paper addresses the following pertinent research questions:

- How important is personality/candidate appeal in political product voter decision making?
- How important is the party appeal to the voter decision making?
- To what extent is policies/ideology significant in political product voter decision making.
- How do the Ghanaian tertiary electorates rank the political product (i.e. party, ideology, and candidate) in their political decision-making process?

### V. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is deemed very significant in contemporary Ghanaian body politic as the general electorate becomes more and more politically discerning, and highly sophisticated. Why is the voter becoming more discerning and sophisticated? Technology has made the voter generally more informed on a daily basis through the bombardment of the mass media in almost every corner of the nation in his/her dialect. There is a global analysis of local issues afforded by mixed blessings of globalization - internet, foreign news media, ease in human travel, foreign cultures among others. There is the wave of vibrant political discourse in a progressively freer atmosphere so called “freedom of expression”. There is now also the emergence of the “politically savvy” party activists in the form of political strategists, spin-doctors, and propaganda secretaries whose job it is to use public

relations and the media to give their respective parties competitive advantage in the political market environment.

As our politics becomes more and more sophisticated the role of marketing in politics is bound to be significant to the degree to which its application is appropriately placed in the Ghanaian political environment. To know the relative significance of the party, the candidate, and the party stance on issues or ideology would be instructed in the design and targeting of promotions to the electorate. The study may therefore serve as baseline investigation for politicians, marketers and other practitioners who may wish to investigate the subject on a larger scale to include a broader cross section of society. The findings of the study may help in policy making among politicians in Ghana.

## **VI. METHODOLOGY**

### **A. RESEARCH DESIGN**

The design of the study was guided by our earlier stated research objectives, the availability of necessary data, time and cost issues. Informed of these, the study applied Primary Descriptive research using quantitative sample survey method. In this descriptive research study we were able to describe (to an extent) how respondents have voted over the years and bring out the nuances influencing voting decisions. Our choice of survey method was informed by it is quick, less expensive, efficient, and accurate means of assessing information about a population. The literate status of our respondents allowed for the self administered questionnaires. The approach of quantitative data collection (through questionnaires) allowed for moving from opinions and variables with precise numerical information. This then allowed for analysis using Statistical Product for Service Solutions (SPSS).

The Descriptive approach implied that the study basically explored and described the voting patterns of the respondents. It therefore lacks the component of explanations based on a scientific investigation of causal relationships. The use of non-probability sampling for convenience sake has leant our study to the inherent weakness of this sampling method. Firstly, our inability to obtain the sampling error and secondly, projecting our data beyond the sample might be limited. Likewise, the researcher's biases in sampling may be a further weakness. However, the merit of the practicality of this sampling method within the challenging context of responsiveness of

our sampling frame members was compelling enough. To further offset the inherent weaknesses, some form of quota and purposive system was applied to allow for even representation in terms of the demographic distribution in the sampling frame.

### **B. POPULATION**

Ghanaian eligible electorates of over 15million (18 years and above and of a sound mind) are many and scattered across the length and breadth of the country, However, the population of this study is tertiary students of a private university of a little over 10,000. The sampling frame was Post Graduate students.

### **C. SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE**

The sample size based on the rule of thumb was on 65 respondents, which translated to a sampling ratio of about 0.6%. This is consistent with previous studies in the literature. The sampling frame reflected a high incidence rate of voting. In the selection of this sample, two main sampling variations of non-probability sampling were used. These are purposive and convenient sampling methods.

Purposive sampling was used to specifically select from the population. Additionally, convenience sampling was used to select the individual students. The researcher used this sampling method to select the students who happened to be present at the time and place of the study. The sample selection process was continued until the required sample size of 65 graduate students was reached.

### **D. INSTRUMENT**

For the purpose of this study, a structured questionnaire was used. The choice of the questionnaire for this study was based on its specific benefits (Denzin and Lincoln, 2002), These included relatively low cost, structured information and few open questions made analyzing questionnaires relatively straightforward, gave respondents extended time to formulate accurate responses, produced quick results and were a stable, consistent and uniform method of collecting data[26]. The questionnaire for this study was adapted from the work of Worcester and Mortimore (2001).

The questionnaire sought to not only determine the relative weights of the components but also try to establish the relative importance of different factors

within individual components. The questions are investigative in nature and relates to the research questions and objectives. The questionnaire was divided into five sections. Section one focused on the demographic profile of the respondents i.e. gender, age and voting history. The second, third and fourth sections dealt with the respondents evaluation of the political products; candidate, party and ideology appeals. These sets of questions used a 5-point Likert scale to establish the degree of agreement or disagreement to various descriptions or attributes of the political product. The fifth set of questions served to find out the relative importance of the components.

#### E. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

For the purpose of this study, mainly primary data were used. The researcher personally distributed the questionnaire to the respondents and the questionnaire was self-administered. The choice of self-administered questionnaire was informed by the fact that the respondents were literate enough to comprehend the issues raised in the questions and would solicit appropriate responses. Also, the subject (political choice) may be seen as fairly sensitive and hence confidentiality and freedom was fairly guaranteed by self-administered questionnaires.

Additionally, the use of questionnaires and the standard nature of the questions prevented the respondents' answers being contaminated or distorted by an interviewer. This ensured reliability which might be compromised with interview-administered questionnaires.

#### F. DATA ANALYSIS

The data that was collected from the respondents was evaluated mainly quantitatively using the Statistical Product for Service Solutions (SPSS) version 17. The analysis of the data was essentially descriptive in nature by means of frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviations. To analyse the Likert scale Questions, frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation values were obtained from the SPSS. Ultimately, the mean values were used to make a decision on each of the statements. To do so, the computed mean was compared to the scale in

**Table 1** for interpretation.

In order to apply the Worcester and Mortimore (2001) Model, the respondents were asked to allocate ten points among the three components (candidate/ideology/party) of the political product;

totaling 10. The sum of weights/points for all the respondents on each component was added up using the SPSS and converted into a percentage of the total points.

### VII. RESULTS

#### A. DEMOGRAPHY OF THE RESPONDENTS

55.4% (N= 36) of the respondents were male while the remaining 44.6% (N= 29) were female. Average age was 38.

**Research Question 1: *Has personality/candidate appeal any role to play in political product voter decision making?*** Below is the set of related issues investigated from respondents on the candidate appeal as they make voting decisions:

- The importance of good oratory skills of candidate's image
- The importance of the ethnic background of candidate
- The importance of the candidate being patriotic
- The importance of political experience and popularity
- The importance of marketability of the candidate
- The importance of charisma being necessary as a leadership quality
- The importance of the candidate being seen to be simple and down to earth
- The importance of the candidate being seen as independent minded
- The importance of high level of education of the candidate
- The importance of the candidate being seen to be party bred

Summary of the respondents' evaluation of the candidates' appeal.

The study revealed that the statements *that "candidate must personally understand Ghana's problems"* (Mean= 4.45) and *"candidate must be patriotic"* (Mean= 4.37) have the two highest mean scores. This implies that the majority of the respondents considered these two issues as very critical in their political decision-making in terms of the *candidate appeal* of the political product. Overall, the mean score for the overall candidates appeal was 3.76 (std. dev= 1.01) out of 5.00 suggesting that the

respondents agreed with the majority (if not all) of the statements under the candidates appeal.

**Research Question 2: How important is the party appeal to the voter decision making?** Below are the set of related issues investigated from respondents on the party appeal as they make voting decisions:

- The importance of party being seen to keep its manifesto promises
- The importance of the party engaging in marketing programs
- The importance of party hierarchy members being class, ethnic and gender balanced
- The importance of the party understanding issues confronting the nation
- The importance of party being managed and organised by professionals
- The importance of a personality to dominate the party
- The importance of the party being seen as united.
- The importance of the party being winnable (from research opinion polls)
- The importance of differences in ideology among parties.

Table 1: Interpretation of Likert Scale Responses

Scale	Mean	Interpretation
1	0.00 – 1.49	Strongly Disagree
2	1.50 – 2.49	Disagree
3	2.50 – 3.49	Uncertain
4	3.50 – 4.49	Agree
5	4.50 – 5.00	Strongly Agree

Source: Likert (1932)

#### Summary of the respondents' evaluation of the party appeal

The study revealed that the statements that “*the more united the party is, the better the appeal*” (Mean= 4.51) and “*party must understand issues confronting the nation*” (Mean = 4.48) have the two highest mean scores among all the party appeal variables. This implies that the majority of the respondents considered these two issues as very

critical in their political decision-making in terms of the ideology/issue appeal of the political product.

Overall, the mean score for the overall party appeal was 4.02 (std. dev= 0.95) out of 5.00 suggesting that the respondents agreed with most of the statements under the party appeal.

**Research Question 3: To what extent is policies/ideology significant in political product voter decision making?** Below are the set of related issues investigated from respondents on the ideology appeal as they make voter decisions:

- The importance of sensible policies as being crucial to win votes
- The relevance of the notion that the global system does not allow for strict political ideologies
- The importance of voter understanding the different political ideologies.
- The importance of reading party manifestoes before voting
- The truth in the notion that illiterates in Ghana would not vote based on ideology

#### Summary of the respondents' evaluation of the ideology/issues appeal

The study revealed that the statements that “*having sensible policies is crucial to win a vote*” and “*understanding of the different political ideologies is necessary in making choice*” both had a tie with the highest mean score (Mean = 3.94) among all the ideology appeal variables. This implies that the majority of the respondents considered these two issues as very critical in their political decision-making in terms of the ideology/issue appeal of the political product. The mean score for the overall ideology appeal was 3.71 (std. dev= 1.13) out of 5.00 suggesting that the respondents agreed that the ideology of a candidate or a party is very essential in their decision making process.

**Research Question 4: How do the Ghanaian tertiary electorates rank the political product (i.e. candidate, party, and ideology) in their political decision-making process?**

#### Ranking of the Political Product in Ghana's Electoral Systems

This study applied Worcester and Mortimore (2001) Model for the analysis of the political product of *party, ideology/issues, and candidate image* within

the Ghanaian context. The process is to have respondents allocate ten points among the three components (candidate/ideology/party) of the political product. The total of all the points was to sum up to 10. Upon having all the figures of respondents, the sum of weight/points for all the respondents on each component was added up (using the SPSS) and converted into a percentage of the total points.

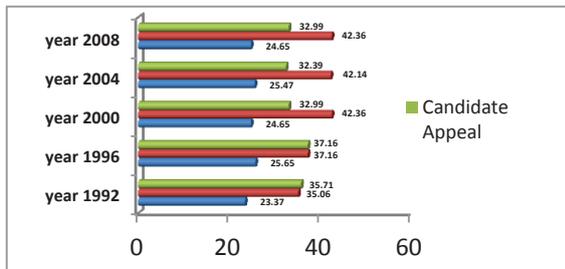
As shown in Table 2 and Figure 3, the model was applied to the record of voting patterns by the respondents in 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008. It is evident that during the period under consideration within Ghana’s democratic governance system, the majority of the tertiary respondents voted primarily on the basis of the ideologies or issues appeal of the political product as indicated by the its highest

Figure 3: Voting patterns of respondents based on political products

Percentage scores on the components of the political products at least in 2000, 2004 and 2008. In 1992 the ideological appeal fell second to candidate appeal by just 0.65% point. In 1996 it was at par with the candidate appeal.

This period was the infantile period of our budding democracy. The study further found that, the candidates appeal was the second dominant factor in the political decision making of the respondents. Finally, the party appeal was the least considered factor in the political decision making habit of the respondents.

Overall, percentage score for the ideology appeal was 39.82%, followed by candidate appeal (34.25%) and the party appeal (24.96%).



Percentage of Respondents

Table 2: Ranking of the Political Product in Ghana’s Electoral Systems

Year	Cumulative Score			Grand Total	Proportion of Grand Total			Percentage (%)		
	PA	IA	CA		PA	IA	CA	PA	IA	CA
1992	36	54	55	154	0.2337	0.3506	0.3571	23.37	35.06	35.71
1996	38	55	55	148	0.2568	0.3716	0.3716	25.68	37.16	37.16
2000	71	122	95	288	0.2465	0.4236	0.3299	24.65	42.36	32.99
2004	81	134	103	318	0.2547	0.4214	0.3239	25.47	42.14	32.39
2008	71	122	95	288	0.2465	0.4236	0.3299	24.65	42.36	32.99
Total	297	487	403	1196	1.2382	1.9908	1.7124	124.82	199.08	171.24
Average	59.4	97.4	80.6	239.2	0.2476	0.3982	0.3425	24.96	39.82	34.25

Source: Field Survey (2011). Where PA = Party appeal; IA= Ideology appeal and CA= Candidate appeal.

## VIII. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings thus suggested that the ideology or policies of the candidate and the party is the main issues that influence the decision making of the electorates in Ghana, at least among tertiary voters. Therefore, presidential candidates and political parties that focus on development of effective and workable policies were more likely to win the votes of Ghanaian electorates. These findings concurs with the original study conducted by Worcester and Mortimore (2001) which found that the policies or ideologies of the candidate or party was the main factor that determine the political decision making behaviour of electorates; followed by the candidates appeal and lastly the party's appeal [26].

Thus, the Worcester and Mortimore (2001) Model results to an extent may be applicable for Ghanaian tertiary voters. Additionally, the evidence from this study (among tertiary students) refutes the findings of Agyemang-Duah (2005) and which concluded that personalities remain a dominant factor in party politics in the Fourth Republic and that issues or ideologies are not the dominant factors for voter decision making in Ghana's electoral system. This study is also a confirmation that issues play crucial role in the electoral decision making of electorates in Ghana and thus support the finding of Borre (1996) and Key (1966) that issues did play an important role in the Ghanaian elections of 1996, 2000, 2004, and 2008[14].

The applicability of the Model results within the context of Ghana, provide empirical support for determining market positions for political parties and candidates as well as help them in their policy development and marketing communication process to the electorate. In view of the aforementioned findings and discussions, the following conclusions are drawn:

- The Worcester and Mortimore (2001) Political Triangle Model results may be applicable in determining the basis for voting decision-making process among Ghanaian tertiary voters.
- The respondents evaluate their political decision during voting primarily based on

the ideology of the particular party or candidate in question.

- The candidate's appeal is the second most important decision-making criteria for tertiary students when voting.
- The political party of a presidential candidate is the least factor that influences a voter to vote in a general election.

### B. RECOMMENDATIONS

More emphasis should be placed on the policies that the party is willing to implement. The choice of a presidential candidate by any political party should be based on the candidates understanding of the problems that confront Ghanaians and should also exhibit a great deal of patriotism.

There is also the need for political parties to use aggressive integrated marketing communication strategies that can effectively and efficiently communicate the visions of the party or its candidate. Future research could be undertaken to understand the antecedents that lead to the integration of marketing orientation into political parties. Such a research could extend this current study to a larger scope and scale.

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