

Negative Political Campaigns in Ghana's 2024 Presidential Election Coverage: A Case Study of How Negative Campaigns of the NDC Caused the NPP's Defeat

Seth Sayibu Mahama^{1*}, Rebecca Baalie² and Najatu Umar³

¹Senior Lecturer Department of Journalism, University for Development Studies Nyankpala Campus, Ghana

²Research Assistant Department of Journalism, University for Development Studies Nyankpala, Ghana

³Lecturer Department of Public Relations and Advertising University for Development Studies Nyankpala, Ghana

*Corresponding author

Seth Sayibu Mahama, Senior Lecturer Department of Journalism, University for Development Studies Nyankpala Campus, Ghana.

Received: May 18, 2026; Accepted: May 26, 2026; Published: June 05, 2026

ABSTRACT

Political campaigning in Ghana is fast changing, largely because of the massive use of negative campaigning by political parties to influence voters. This study examines the deployment of negative advertising by Ghana's two leading political parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in the 2024 Presidential Election Campaigns. Using qualitative design involving textual and discourse analysis of speeches and adverts in newspapers and on television by the NDC and the NPP and complemented by results of polls from independent pollsters ahead of the elections, as well as desk studies of the role of the media in negative political campaigning, this study found that sections of the media were biased in favour of the NDC and the NPP in their reportage of the elections. It also found that there was a strong perception among some voters about the influence of negative campaigns in the defeat of the NPP in the 2024 general elections. Given the evidential role negative campaigns have played in the elections, it is recommended that democracy advocates, including the media intensify voter education, especially on manifestoes of political parties, the state of the economy and major pronouncements by political actors on campaign platforms, to ensure that voters are educated to take informed electoral decisions during general elections and not cast their votes based on negative labeling of politicians against their opponents. The media should also desist from allowing politicians to use their platforms to insult in the name of campaigns, as it threatens the peace of the country.

Keywords: Negative Campaigns, Political Parties, Democracy, Media, Elections

Introduction

Negative campaigning has been used in elections across established democracies like the United States and Britain. In the United States, Trump's campaign spent tens of millions of dollars on advertising that attacked Democratic nominee and Vice President Kamala Harris for her previous statements supporting transgender rights, saying she supports the use of taxpayers' funds for gender-affirming treatments for inmates [1]. While Harris portrayed Trump as a weird man, Trump calls her 'comrade', thus linking her to communism. A study on negative campaigning in Britain concludes that negative campaigning is a common feature of constituency-level general election campaigns in Britain [2]. The increase in negative campaigning can be linked to the number of political parties and candidates contesting elections, the widening of the ideological span in the party system as well as the degree of political conflict during

the elections [3]. Kavanagh (1997) explores how political parties across many democracies have come to terms with the use of negative campaigns that rely heavily on the media and advertising agencies (Kavanagh 1997).

In Ghana, political campaigning has evolved into the use of massive use of negative advertisements by political parties to influence voters. The deployment of negative advertising (henceforth negative campaigns) by Ghana's two leading political parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in the 2024 Presidential election campaigns dominated the media landscape as each political party sought to win voters to their side. While the media provided the platform for political discussions to aid voters in making informed choices, the two leading political parties, which are the focus of this study, sponsored adverts in both traditional and new media to attack each other, especially at the tail end of the campaign period between November and December 2024.

Citation: Seth Sayibu Mahama, Rebecca Baalie, Najatu Umar. Negative Political Campaigns in Ghana's 2024 Presidential Election Coverage: A Case Study of How Negative Campaigns of the Ndc Caused the Npp's Defeat. *J Journalism Media Manag.* 2026. 2(2): 1-8. DOI: doi.org/10.61440/JJMM.2026.v2.45

The December 2024 general elections presented interesting results in the history of the fourth republic in both the Presidential and Parliamentary elections in favour of the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The NDC led by John Dramani Mahama polled 56.42 percent against their closest rivals, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) led by Dr. Mahamadu Bawumia, that polled 41.75 percent [4]. In the parliamentary results, the NDC won 184 seats while the NPP garnered 88 seats with 4 as independent candidates in the 276-seat.

For the first time in the history of the fourth republic, the NDC and the NPP presented presidential candidates from the north, making the contest between the two rivals even keener. According to Global InfoAnalytics, a leading Ghanaian pollster, concerns about the economy, job creation, and education dominated the minds of voters, leaving corruption as a lesser priority. Key events, including the implementation of the Electronic Transmission levy (e-levy) in 2022, the Ghana cedi fluctuations, and inflationary pressures significantly shaped public opinion regarding governance and economic management.

Prior to the elections, Ghana's economic record did not look good with many major economic metrics showing significant declines. Inflation, for instance, stood at 23.8 percent [5]. While its public debt ballooned to Gh311.1 billion, the national currency, the cedi, unsurprisingly depreciated by 19.2 percent against the dollar by December 2024. The poor economic indicators found expression in rising costs of living, imposing significant burdens on families and businesses.

A national economy challenged on many fronts is an invitation to policy makers to prioritise prudence and fiscal discipline as the major anchors of an economic turnaround. In the midst of harsh economic conditions that compelled the government to seek a bail-out from the International Monetary Fund, the government expended state resources to the tune of 5.8 million dollars on a cathedral project-the National Cathedral-which was only at the ground level [6]. Many Ghanaian workers, including the youth in afforestation programme remained unpaid for years. Government also failed to pay the allowances of about a hundred thousand Nation Builders Corps personnel and engaged in Domestic Debt Exchange Programme that affected thousands of workers [7].

In the midst of these hard economic conditions, the President Nana Akufo Addo was asked by NPP members of Parliament in 2022 to dismiss the Finance Minister for poorly managing the economy, but The President refused and by the time the minister was re-assigned in June 2024, it was too late for the economy to recover [8].

These indicators, undoubtedly shaped the election campaigns, leading to the adoption of new innovations in campaigning, especially by the NDC and NPP who employed new campaign techniques, including the heavy use of the media and negative or attack campaigning, amongst others.

This paper attempts to gauge the prevalence of negative campaigns in the 2024 Ghana presidential elections by the NDC and the NPP and the role the media played in escalating it. The study is important for students of politics, journalism

and communication and politicians who are interested in studying and following election campaign trends in Ghana. We hypothesize that negative campaigns by the NDC against the NPP contributed substantially to the loss of the NPP. The paper seeks to answer the following questions: How prevalent were negative campaigns in the Ghana 2024 presidential election campaigns? What was the perception of voters on the impact of the negative campaigns on the NPP defeat in the 2024 general elections? What role did the media play in amplifying the negative campaigns?

Conceptualizing Negative Campaigns and the Media's Role in Elections in Ghana

Negative campaigning is a worldwide phenomenon which is strategically aimed at galvanizing political support from electorates ahead of competitive elections. Its effectiveness has however been a mixed-bag. While some studies suggest that it depresses voter turnout others argue that it mobilizes voters by supplying information that is critical for the participation of voters in elections [9]. Political party campaigning is changing due to the professionalization of political campaign activities, which is rendering party machinery and grass-roots organizations less effective than they were in the past. Previously, political parties and candidates channeled most of their resources into political rallies, speeches and direct contact to gather the support of electorates [10].

In recent years however, advertising has taken the centre stage of political campaign activities and has become the most commonly used technique to create a favourable image for the candidate and a negative image for the opponent [11]. The creation of negative images for the opponent, which is one of the focal points of this study, is concurred by Kavanagh (1997), who argued that the most important part of political campaign communication is to put a negative gloss on the opponent's records and point to their mistakes and incompetence. Quoting from interviews with pollsters, he notes that political advertising should demonstrate that things are going to be worse under the other side.

In negative campaigning, campaign messages often focus on criticizing an opponent rather than emphasizing the positive attributes or issue positions of the candidate sponsoring the message [12]. Such criticisms and attacks are intended to undermine not only the records, character and policies of the opponent but also their credibility with the hope of influencing voter attitudes [13]. Beyond the attacks and criticisms, negative campaigning endangers effective political polarization amongst political parties in a democracy and individuals who adopt a more negative tone in campaigning are likely to widen the polarization and render it more effective amongst political parties and their following [14].

Political advertising in Ghana started since the first republic and its focus on negative campaigning, instead of positive appeals, can arguably be traced to the beginning of the fourth republic, which then gained momentum and reached a crescendo in the 2024 electioneering campaigns, especially between the NDC and the NPP. As discussed elsewhere in this paper, Kavanagh argues that not only does negative campaigning put a gloss on the opponent's record; it also shows that things will become worse under the other side. This constitutes a substantial threat

aimed at scaring the voter away from the one who has been labelled negatively.

Negative campaigns are often amplified by the media that play a significant role in disseminating information to inform and enlighten citizens about candidates and political parties in an election contest. The media also provide a platform for discussion and debate amongst citizens on matters relating to elections. Smajlović & Čolakhodžić argue that the media plays a significant role in the election process by providing a platform and access to information about the candidates, their policies and programmes [15]. This role helps in shaping public opinion by educating voters on the policies and programmes of candidates and political parties. Kavanagh (1997) argued that the most significant change in campaign contests has been the role the media plays in the election process, especially television. He argued that modern elections have become mass media elections where political parties and their candidates can reach millions of voters through the power of the press and television (ibid).

Even though traditional media has long played an important role in presidential elections by informing voters about the views and background of candidates for public office, facilitating debate and dialogue between candidates and voters, as well as reporting election results, the advent of social media has changed the narrative as it has revolutionized political campaigning in Ghana. Platforms like Facebook, TikTok, Twitter (X), and WhatsApp allow political parties to disseminate negative advertisements quickly and engage in direct interactions with voters. The technological revolution has, however, rendered social media a fertile ground for misinformation and fake news, which constitute a risk of amplifying the impact of negative campaigns [16].

Due to its perceived polarized nature along political lines, the media in Ghana has often been accused of amplifying the effects of negative campaigns. For instance, media houses with NDC leanings such as Woezor TV and loud Silence TV may emphasize criticisms of NPP policies, while NPP-aligned outlets such as Wontomi T.V. and Movement TV, counter with their own narrative campaigns against the NDC [17]. The above observation by Gyampo has long been acknowledged by Kavanagh, who argues that ‘campaign managers have developed techniques to feed or counter partisan press and try to cope with the increasingly active but statutorily impartial television system’ Kavanagh, 1997, 39.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative study using a case study design to generate and analyse data from purposive sampled negative political advertisements placed on four television (T.V) stations in Ghana. These are two independent T.V stations, JOY T.V and T.V.3 and two perceived politically aligned T.V stations, Woezor TV and Wuntumi T.V that support the NDC and the NPP respectively. We determined negativity based on the reactions of voters and how each of the two political parties reacted to and countered advertisements from their opponents. Out of the numerous advertisements, six were selected from the advertisements placed by the NDC and the NPP against each other on the four T.V stations. The selection was done based on

the determination of issues that dominated the minds of voters ahead of the elections from June 2024 to June 2025., according to Global InfoAnalytics. a leading pollster in Ghana that published voter concerns ahead of the elections.

The pollster posited that issues on the state of the economy, unemployment and education significantly shaped public opinion regarding governance and the economy ahead of the 2024 Ghana general elections [18]. The following chart explains in order of prominence voter concerns on key issues ahead of the elections.

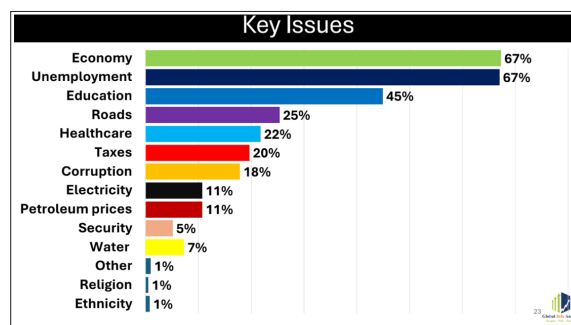


Figure: 1

Credit: Global info Analytics

The advertisements were also selected because they generated the concepts of negative or attack campaigns that were appropriate for the study.

Advertisements from two T.V stations, namely Wuntumi TV and Woezor TV were selected based on their perceived alignment with the political narratives of the NPP and the NDC while TV 3 and JOY TV were selected because of their perceived independence from influence from the NDC and the NPP. With the independent T.V stations, we selected one advertisement each for and against the two political parties, culminating in four negative advertisements. We then selected one each from the partisan T.V stations-Wuntumi T.V and Woezor T.V because they only aired advertisements that were against their perceived political opponent. The advertisements were monitored from November 1, 2024 to December 1, 2024 and were found to have been played regularly on a daily basis.

We also sampled political platform speeches from June 1, 2024 to December 5, 2024 by top leaders of the two political parties that contained negative messages, including insults. These included political pronouncements by the then sitting President, Nana Akufo Addo, his Vice President and Presidential candidate for the NPP, Dr. Mahamadu Bawumia and the Presidential candidate for the NDC, John Dramani Mahama.

In discussing the role of the media, desk analysis was used instead of empirical data because existing data on the role of the media in negative campaigning was enough for the study.

In coding the data, we categorised it into negative or attack campaigns and pure insults. These categories were then used in analysing the data through textual and discourse analyses approaches.

Below is an example of content analytic variables used in

determining negative or attack campaigns and pure insults by NDC candidate Mahama, NPP candidate Bawumia and the former President Nana Addo who campaigned for Bawumia.

Code	Insults	Source	Negative/Attack campaigns	Source
John Mahama	Bawumia should Stop asking <i>stupid</i> questions and focus on the economy	Daily Guide 2024	A vote for Bawumia is an extension of Nana Addo’s presidency	Daily Guide, 2024
Nana Akufo Addo	Mahama is a failed leader		Mahama’s leadership was marked by <i>policy missteps and lack of effective governance</i>	Joy online, 2024
Bawumia	Mahama is running {from debate} like a <i>chicken</i> because of fear		I prefer liar tag to Government Official One	

Figure: 2

Findings

Our findings suggest that negative advertisements in the media played a crucial role in the election campaigns of political parties that contested the Ghana 2024 general elections. Apart from the negative advertisements placed against each other, leaders from the two major political parties also engaged in insults and name-calling on political platforms against each other. The findings also suggest that negative campaigns were focused on character assassination, the economy, corruption, education and economic hardship.

Negative Political Advertisement-Evidence from Independent Television Stations.

T.V3:

T. V. 3 is a leading independent news network with extensive coverage of political campaigns and arguably one of the most watched T. V. stations in Ghana. Advertisements on this channel were aired during commercial breaks on news hours and often advertised for both political parties.

NPP Advertisement on Education against the NDC

“Protect free SHS, Vote Bawumia, No. 1 on the ballot”. This advertisement used by the NPP against the NDC depicts the flagbearer of the NDC as against free education in the senior high school (SHS) level, a programme initiated by the NPP in 2017. This was due to the NDC’s promise to review the policy if they won power. The NPP then interpreted that to mean cancellation. By putting up this advertisement, the NPP hoped that first-time voters in SHS, together with their parents and guardians, will reject the NDC for fear that their victory would lead to the cancellation of the policy.

NDC’s Advertisement against the NPP on the economy and Ghana’s currency (cedi) depreciation

“Eight (8) years under the leadership of Dr. Bawumia, head of economic management team has brought Ghana to its knees, a dollar which was 3.80p under president Mahama now trades at 17.50p and our national debt has skyrocketed. Yet, what do we have to show for it? NOTHING!!! On December 7, vote John Mahama, No.8 on the ballot”.

The NDC hoped to use this advertisement to convince Ghanaians that the NPP flagbearer was incapable of managing the Ghana economy that has brought hardships and should be rejected.

JOY T.V:

Another reputable media house in Ghana with large audience also advertised for both political parties. Example of negative Campaign aired on this channel is in the following dialogue placed on *JOY T.V* by the NDC against the NPP.

A group of young people seated in a circle,

... a guy: **riddle, riddle**

all respond: **riddle**

Guy: **“my administrator wrote a letter to steal 10,000 bags of rice from a businessman for my Ramadan donation, who am I?”**

lady: **guys wait wait! She responds: Alhaji Bawumia the rice master!**

All: **cheer with a hand clap, “yay”**

...**vote for change, Vote for Mahama and the NDC.**

This act depicts the flagbearer of the NPP, Bawumia as one involved in scandalous activities for his gains. This advertisement was put against media reports that Dr. Bawumia’s office diverted rice belonging to the state for his campaign activities.

Advertisement by the NPP against the NDC

An interview John Mahama had with the BBC during which he said he believed everyone has encountered corruption in one way or the other was replayed on JOY TV as an advertisement, sponsored by the NPP to depict John Mahama as corrupt.

The following dialogue explains further;

Reporter: Have you ever engaged in corruption?

JM: as an individual or as? ...

Reporter: As a person,

JM: I believe everyone has encountered corruption in one way or the other...

Voice-over: Dada noaaa (twi), Vote Dr. Bawumia, No.1 on the ballot paper.

Negative Political Advertisement-Evidence from Politically Aligned Television Stations.

Woezor TV (Aligned with NDC): A regional channel that provides insights into grassroots political messaging for the National Democratic Congress (NDC), frequently aired content against the NPP. For example, an advertisement aired on that network frequently during the campaign period claimed that even though a Muslim, Dr. Bawumia consumes pork and drinks alcohol as well as attends church for prayers. This advertisement in question exemplifies a particularly insidious form of negative

campaigning, targeting his moral and religious values to undermine his public image and credibility as a Muslim faithful. Islam prohibits the consumption of pork and intake of alcohol. The advertisement was intended to suggest that he was not a good and devout Muslim and that constituted a risk of turning his Muslim support base away from him.

Wontumi TV (owned by the NPP Ashanti Regional Chairman): A politically affiliated station in the Ashanti region frequently aired campaign advertisements that supported the NPP and condemned the NDC's records. A negative advertisement played by this channel claimed 'John Mahama drinks alcohol', arguably to counter the claim by *Woezor T.V* that Dr. Bawumia drinks alcohol.

Negative Political Campaigns: Evidence from Political platforms

The leading figures in the campaign from both the NDC and the NPP also engaged in attack campaigns on political platforms. For instance, John Mahama, while addressing party supporters at Savelugu in the northern region asked Dr. Bawumia to 'stop asking stupid questions and focus on the economy' while Dr. Bawumia suggested at a rally in Nkawkaw, in the Eastern Region that Mr. Mahama was running away from debating him because he was afraid of his own records that Mr. Mahama was running away like chicken because of fear [19-21]. Earlier in Tamale on October 15, 2024, the then President, Nana Akufo Addo, said Mr. Mahama was running away from the debate because he could not stand up to Dr. Bawumia [22].

On November 24, 2024, while addressing professional groups in Kumasi in the Ashanti region, Nana Akufo Addo again attacked Mr. Mahama when he described him as a 'failed leader who does not deserve a second opportunity at the presidency' and in Accra on December 5, 2024, he described Mr. Mahama's leadership as a 'legacy of failure' and that his 'tenure was marked by policy missteps and lack of effective governance [23].

While the NDC party tagged Dr. Bawumia as a liar for making promises in 2016 that he could not fulfil like the *One Village One Dam* project amongst others, Dr. Bawumia said he preferred a liar tag to being called 'Government Official One' in reference to the Airbus Scandal in which Mr. Mahama was referred to as such by a court in the United Kingdom [24]. Mr. Mahama, on his part, told party supporters at the launch of the party's manifesto at Winneba in the Central Region that a vote for Bawumia was an extension of Nana Addo's presidency for a third term while bemoaning the severe economic hardship facing Ghanaians [25].

Discussion

Prevalence of Negative Campaigns in the 2024 Ghana General Elections

It is clear from the findings above that negative campaigning between the NPP and the NDC was prevalent in the 2024 Ghana general electioneering campaigns. The two political parties-NDC and NPP-crafted their negative campaign messages based largely on voter concerns about education, corruption, unemployment, general living conditions and the economy.

As evidenced above, the free SHS policy, cedi depreciation,

corruption perception, domestic debt and the general harsh economic conditions were the focal point in advertisements by the two political parties on independent *JOY T.V and T.V 3*. On *Woezor TV and Wuntumi TV* that are politically aligned to the NDC and NPP respectively, the two parties placed direct insults, referring to each other's presidential candidate as alcoholic, while the NDC added that Bawumia ate pork even though his religion Islam forbids the eating of pork.

These attack campaigns were not confined to TV adverts alone but on political campaign platforms as Mahama, Nana Addo and Bawumia engaged in open insults and personality attacks as discussed above. These negative attacks, including plain insults arguably compromised the media's neutrality in the election reportage and threatened peace and responsible journalism in the run-up to the 2024 general elections.

Perception Of Voters On Influence Of Negative Campaigns In Npp Defeat

Some voters held the perception that negative campaigns by the NDC against the NPP arguably partly influenced the defeat of the NPP in the December 7, 2024 elections. Perception of Dr. Bawumia's lack of independence from Nana Addo's influence was generated by the NDC and harped on by its flagbearer John Mahama during the campaigns when he maintained that a win for Bawumia will be an extension of Nana Addo's presidency for a third term. This perception is contained in data from two studies conducted by the *Global InfoAnalytics* and the Mike Oquaye fact finding committee put up by the NPP to find reasons for the party's loss. Results of polls from *Global InfoAnalytics*, suggested that public dissatisfaction with Nana Addo's governance and Bawumia's ties with him contributed significantly to the NPP's loss. According to the polls, 68 percent of Ghanaians blamed Nana Addo for the NPP's defeat while 78 percent of respondents in the NPP party's fact-finding report felt Bawumia's association with Nana Addo made it difficult for the party to present him as an independent minded person and this alienated many voters on the campaign trail [26,27].

The following chart explains reasons for the NPP's defeat according to the polls with president Nana Addo leading the blame train with a whopping 68 percent.

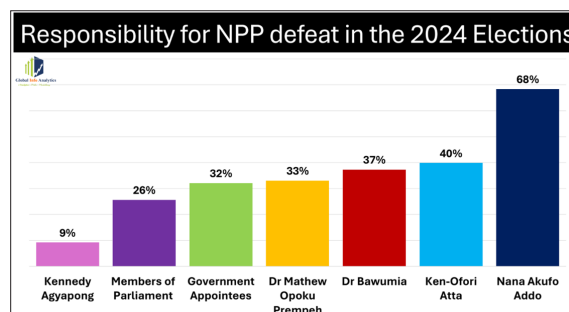


Figure: 3

Credit. Global InfoAnalytics

While the sample size for *Global InfoAnalytics* was over 8 thousand across the country, that of the NPP fact-finding committee was not made known. However, the work lasted from January to April 2025 in all the 275 constituencies across the

country, with respondents being party members, journalists, the grassroots and political analysts. This arguably makes the findings far reaching and the perception less negligible.

Role of the Media in the 2024 Ghana General Election Campaigns

The traditional media in Ghana played a significant role in the 2024 general election process. They did not only provide a platform for politicians to reach voters with their campaign messages, but also covered political parties' activities on a daily basis. Television stations like *T.V. 3*, *JOY T.V.* and Ghana Television attached their correspondents to presidential candidates who reported on their campaign activities across the country. The media also provided space and airtime for political actors to engage in debates about the economy, job creation, employment and the general management of the country. The media again scrutinized the manifestoes of political parties and conducted fact-checks on them to ascertain whether or not their manifesto promises were factually deliverable.

These notwithstanding, sections of the traditional media engaged in activities that were arguably unethical, especially *Woezoe T.V.* and *Wuntumi T.V.*, respectfully aligned to the NDC and NPP. As discussed elsewhere in this paper, the two television stations did not only broadcast news about their preferred political party but also used their platform to broadcast insults and negative attacks on opposing candidates. For instance, *Woezor TV* and *Wuntumi TV* broadcasted direct insults, referring to each other's presidential candidate as alcoholic.

Social media also played a significant role as political parties used platforms like *Facebook*, *TikTok*, *Twitter (X)*, and *WhatsApp* to engage with voters on their policies and programmes while refuting fake news about their candidates. However social media was also used by both the NDC and the NPP to engage in attack campaigns, including insults of opposing presidential candidates. For instance, Facebook pages like *NPP Project Bureau* and *NDC T.V.* engaged in open insults against Mahama and Bawumia, calling them drunkard; and Bawumia a pork eater [28,29]. These insults were repeated severally on other social media networks like *WhatsApp*, leading to intense and unhealthy debates amongst supporters of the two political parties ahead of the elections.

Concluding Reflections

This study has demonstrated that negative campaigns was a common feature in the 2024 Ghana general elections. Independent media stations like *T.V.3* and *JOY* news played adverts sponsored by the NDC and the NPP that negatively attacked one another and called for support from voters. While the NPP attacked the NDC's stance on the free SHS policy portrayed Mahama as corrupt and one who does not listen to the concerns of the citizenry, the NDC portrayed Bawumia as a thief, one who presided over a failed economy and piled up the country's public debt while failing to arrest the fall of the cedi against the major currencies like the dollar. These campaign messages lay claim to Geer and Kaid & Holtz-Bacha treatises on negative campaigns that argue that such campaigns focus on criticizing an opponent rather than emphasizing the positive attributes of the sponsor and intending to undermine the records, character, policies and credibility of the opponent in order to influence voter attitudes

[12,13]. Kavanagh's (1997) treatise that contends that the most important part of political campaign communication is to put a negative gloss on the opponent's records, point to their mistakes and incompetence and demonstrate that things are going to be worse under them is also exemplified in this study.

While the independent media restricted themselves to playing advertisements that hardly contained plain insults, except one reference to Bawumia as having allegedly stolen rice, the politically aligned NDC *Woezo T.V.* and NPP *Wuntumi T.V.* played adverts that insulted the character and personality of both Bawumia and Mahama, calling them drunkard and pork eater in counter broadcasts.

The conduct of these partisan T.V. stations epitomize Gyampo's thesis on negative advertising that argues that polarized media often amplify the effects of negative campaigns by countering narratives from opposing political parties [17].

There is evidence from the two polls that some voters held the perception that the alleged lack of independence of Dr. Bawumia from Nana Addo's influence caused the NPP votes. This negative impression about Bawumia not being his own man was created and harped on by the NDC on their campaign platforms. Given the harsh economic conditions under Nana Addo at the time of the elections, the negative tag arguably created a climate of fear among voters who did not want another Nana Addo presidency in Bawumia and thus alienated the NPP.

The media's role in the elections was a mixed-bag. While it provided platform for the parties to disseminate their campaign messages, the media also arguably engaged in irresponsible reportage, especially against Mahama and Bawumia. The widespread reportage of Mahama's insult of Bawumia as 'silly' and 'stupid', the NDC's tag of Bawumia as a 'liar', Bawumia's references to Mahama as 'a chicken', and Nana Addo's description of Mahama as a 'failed leader' epitomized irresponsible and unethical journalism.

Bosch and Gyampo are on point when they suggest that a polarized traditional and social media often amplify the effects of negative campaigns to emphasize criticisms or counter narratives by opponents [17].

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is clear from the above discussion that negative campaigns were prevalent in the Ghana 2024 general election and these negative campaigns, according to perception of some voters, inured to the benefit of the NDC. Evidence also abounds that notwithstanding the positive role of the media in providing a platform for political parties to reach out to voters, their role in broadcasting negative adverts and reporting on open insults against Mahama and Bawumia on political platforms was arguably irresponsible and unethical. This did not only heighten the political tensions ahead of the Ghana 2024 general elections but also constituted a threat to peace ahead of the elections. Treatises on negative campaigns as a tool to discredit an opponent in a political contest as argued by Kavanagh (1997), Geer (2006) and Kaid & Holtz-Bacha (2006) as well as the amplification of these negative campaigns by the media as argued by Bosch (2017) and Gyampo (2017) have been useful in this study [12,13,16,17].

Polls' results by Global InfoAnalytics and the NPP fact-finding report on why they lost the 2024 Ghana general elections have also been valuable in this study. These polls support the phenomenon that negative campaigns by the NDC against the NPP was substantive in the defeat of the NPP in the Ghana 2024 general elections.

Given the evidential role negative campaigns have played in the Ghana 2024 elections, it is recommended that democracy advocates, including the media should intensify voter education, especially on manifestoes of political parties, the state of the economy and major pronouncements by political actors on campaign platforms to ensure that voters are educated on the true state of affairs of the country to make informed choices in general elections. Winning elections based on how effective your negative campaigns work, without recourse to good policies and programmes could open the floodgates for more insults that could compromise the peace in the country.

The National Media Commission should consider the possibility of formulating a regulation to empower them to scrutinize campaign adverts, distinguishing criticisms from insults to obviate the potential for increased attack adverts and insults in future elections in Ghana.

Media houses should also endeavor to black out political actors who insult opponents in the name of political campaigns.

Presidential candidates of incumbent political parties should learn to assert themselves in their campaigns and distance themselves from out-going presidents and their records as this 2024 elections and the ones before it have shown that out-going presidents who campaign for their party presidential candidates fail to make any significant impact as voters see their efforts as an attempt to exert influence on these candidates in the event of their victory. President Jerry John Rawlings of the NDC campaigned for Prof. Evans Attah Mills, the party's flagbearer in 2000 but he lost. President John Agyekum Kuffour of the NPP campaigned for Nana Addo who led the NPP in 2008 but he lost and Nana Addo has also campaign for Bawumia but he lost the 2024 elections to the NDC.

References

1. Associated Press. Trump and Vance make anti-transgender attacks central to their campaign's closing arguments. 2024. <https://apnews.com/article/trump-harris-transgender-politics-61cff97a64fac581ffc5f762be4c57d3>
2. Caitlin Milazzo C, Ryan JB. Perceived negativity in British general election communications. *Electoral Studies*. 2024. 92.
3. Elmelund-Præstekær C, Svensson HM. Ebbs and flows of negative campaigning: A longitudinal study of the influence of contextual factors on Danish campaign rhetoric. *European Journal of Communication*. 2013. 29: 230-239.
4. Electoral Commission of Ghana. 2024 Presidential Election results Press Release.2025. <https://ec.gov.gh/2024-presidential-election-results/>
5. World Bank Report. Report on Overview of Ghana's Economy. 2025. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ghana/overview> Accessed April 5.
6. Bbc.com. Ghana President Nana Akufo-Addo's cathedral plan stalls amid economic. 2023. [crisishttps://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64553791?at_medium=social&at_campaign_type=owned&at_link_origin=BBC_News_Africa&at_format=link&at_campaign=Social_Flow&at_bbc_team=editorial&at_ptr_name=facebook_page&at_link_id=09262884-B101-11ED-9E5E-F31C0EDC252D&at_link_type=web_link](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64553791?at_medium=social&at_campaign_type=owned&at_link_origin=BBC_News_Africa&at_format=link&at_campaign=Social_Flow&at_bbc_team=editorial&at_ptr_name=facebook_page&at_link_id=09262884-B101-11ED-9E5E-F31C0EDC252D&at_link_type=web_link)
7. DailyGuideNetwork. Election 2024: E-Levy, Hair- Cut, Cathedral Contributed To Our Defeat – Bawumia. 2025. <https://dailyguidenetwork.com/election-2024-e-levy-hair-cut-cathedral-contributed-to-our-defeat-bawumia/>
8. Citinewsroom. All NPP MPs now in favour of sacking of Ofori-Atta – Majority Leader. 2022. <https://citinewsroom.com/2022/11/all-npp-mps-now-in-favour-of-sacking-of-ofori-atta-majority-leader/>
9. Makulil A. Negative Campaigning and Vote Choice: Rationale, Trends, and Future Research: International Political Science Abstracts: Documentation Politique Internationale; Sage Publications. 2024.
10. Opeibi T. Political Marketing or 'Political Matcheting?': A Study of Negative Campaigning in Nigerian Political Discourse. 2006. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263654854_Political_Marketing_or_%27Political_Matcheting%27_A_Study_of_Negative_Campaigning_in_Nigerian_Political_Discourse
11. Olujide O, Adeyemi SL, Gbadeyan RA. Nigerian Electorates' Perception of Political Advertising and Election Campaign. 2011. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Rotimi-A-Gbadeyan2/publication/228470312_Nigerian_Electorates'_Perception_of_Political_Advertising_and_Election_Campaign/links/547e0b4c0cf2de80e7cc406e/Nigerian-Electorates-Perception-of-Political-Advertising-and-Election-Campaign.pdf
12. Geer JG. In Defense of Negativity: Attack Ads in Presidential campaigns. University of Chicago Press. 2006.
13. Kaid, Holtz-Bacha. Television advertising and democratic systems around the world: a comparison of videostyle content and effects: SAGE. 2006.
14. Martin D, Nai A. Deepening the rift: Negative campaigning fosters affective polarization in multiparty election: Elsevier. 2024.
15. Smajlovic H, Colahodzic F. How Does Media Coverage Affect the Outcomes of the Elections? *MAP Social Sciences*. 2023. 4: 109-123.
16. Bosch T. Twitter activism and youth in South Africa: The case of# RhodesMustFall: Information, communication & society. Taylor & Francis.2017.
17. Gyampo EV. Social media, traditional media and party politics in Ghana *Africa Review*. 2017. 9: 1-15.
18. Myjoyonline.com. NPP fact-finding report blames Akufo-Addo's leadership, party structure and others for 2024 defeat accessed. 2025.
19. NPP fact-finding report blames Akufo-Addo's leadership, party structure and others for 2024 defeat - MyJoyOnline. 2025.
20. Daily Guide. Stop Asking 'Stupid' Questions And Focus On Economy- Mahama Insults Bawumia. 2024. <https://news.ghheadlines.com/agency/daily-guide/20241030/166965269/stop-asking-stupid-questions->

- and-focus-on-economy-mahama-insults-bawumia Accessed March 23,
21. Graphic online. Bawumia taunts Mahama for "running away" from Presidential Debate. 2024. <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/politics/bawumia-taunts-mahama-for-running-away-from-presidential-debate.html>
 22. Myjoyonline. Why are you running away from debating Bawumia? – Akufo-Addo asks Mahama. 2024. <https://www.myjoyonline.com/why-are-you-running-away-from-debating-bawumia-akufo-addo-asks-mahama/>
 23. Myjoyonline. Debate: Bawumia taunts Mahama again, says he has run away because of fear. 2024. <https://www.myjoyonline.com/debate-bawumia-taunts-mahama-again-says-he-has-run-away-because-of-fear/>
 24. Myjoyonline. Mahama is a failed president; give Bawumia a chance – Akufo-Addo to Ghanaians. 2024. <https://www.myjoyonline.com/mahama-is-a-failed-president-give-bawumia-a-chance-akufo-addo-to-ghanaians/Accessed>
 25. Myjoyonline. Mahama's experience is one of failure – Akufo-Addo. 2024. <https://www.myjoyonline.com/mahas-experience-is-one-of-failure-akufo-addo/>
 26. Myjoyonline . A vote for Bawumia is a third term for Akufo-Addo – Mahama.2024. A vote for Bawumia is a third term for Akufo-Addo – Mahama - MyJoyOnline
 27. Myjoyonlin.com. 68% of voters say Akufo-Addo caused NPP defeat – Global Info Analytics: 2025. <https://www.myjoyonline.com/68-of-voters-say-akufo-addo-caused-npp-defeat-global-info-analytics/>
 28. Myjoyonline . NDC calls me a liar, at least I am not Government Official 1 – Bawumia.2025. <https://www.myjoyonline.com/ndc-calls-me-a-liar-at-least-i-am-not-government-official-1-bawumia/>
 29. NDC T.V. 2024NDC TV on Facebook. Bawumia as a muslim eats pork, lets focus on policy Malik Basintale responds to Atta kyea. 2024.
 30. https://web.facebook.com/100045180956301/videos/bawumia-as-a-muslim-eats-pork-lets-focus-on-policy-malik-basintale-responds-to-a/494837056484242/?_rdc=1&_rdr
 31. NPP Project Bureau. 'You are stupid; answer my questions'- drunkard John Mahama insults Dr. Bawumia. 2024. <https://web.facebook.com/NPPPProjectsBureau/videos/you-are-stupid-answer-my-questions-drunkard-john-mahama-insults-dr-bawumia/955365509708867/>
 32. Adams J, Merrill S, Zur R. How much does issue salience matter? A model with applications to the UK elections. *European Journal of Political Research*. 2023. 62: 798-809.
 33. Ghanaweb.com. Poor Governance, Akufo-Addo Ties with Bawumia, E-Levy: Mussa Dankwah on why NPP lost 2024 Election. 2025. Poor Governance, Akufo-Addo Ties with Bawumia, E-Levy: Mussa Dankwah on why NPP lost 2024 Election.
 34. Opeibi T. Political Marketing or 'Political Matcheting': A Study of Negative Campaigning in Nigerian Political Discourse. 2006.
 35. Samuel Lartey. Cedi depreciation and its ripple effects. 2025. <https://thebftonline.com/2025/02/05/cedi-depreciation-and-its-ripple-effects/>