

Bukari, Zakari; Hamid, Abu Bakar Abdul; Som, Hishamuddin Md.; Agbemabiese, George Cudjoe; Quansah, Fidelis

## Article

# Does political issue matter in voting intention in Ghana? A political marketing perspective

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\*Corresponding author: Zakari Bukari,  
Marketing and Supply, Putra Business  
School, Ghana,  
E-mail: [zakaribu100@gmail.com](mailto:zakaribu100@gmail.com)

Reviewing editor:  
Ogechi Adeola, Department of  
Marketing, Lagos Business School,  
Nigeria

Additional information is available at  
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## MARKETING | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Does political issue matter in voting intention in Ghana? A political marketing perspective

Zakari Bukari<sup>1\*</sup>, Abu Bakar Abdul Hamid<sup>1</sup>, Hishamuddin Md. Som<sup>1</sup>,  
George Cudjoe Agbemabiese<sup>2</sup> and Fidelis Quansah<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** Voters' participation is considered fundamental in an electoral process. Yet almost half the countries in the world have voter turnouts of (60–79) percent. To be able to predict and influences voters' behavior, political parties and political consultants need to identify determinants of voters' behavior. This study is pursued to identify the motivation behind a sample of voters who cast a ballot in the 2012 and 2016 presidential elections. Structural equation model Amos was used with a sample of 493 voters. The objective of this is to conceptualized a strategic direction and propose a framework for voters' behavior determinants. The findings revealed that political issue directly influences voting intention. The findings further established that; Voters' trust and loyalty mediate and moderate the relationship. We therefore recommended that, Management of the various political parties should pay particular attention to these political issue variables in their quest to influences voters' voting intention.

**Subjects:** Political Behavior and Participation; Public Opinion; Asian Politics

**Keywords:** political Issues; Voting Intention; Trust; loyalty

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zakari Bukari had his PhD in marketing from the Putra Business School of Universiti Putra Malaysia. He obtained his MPhil in Marketing from the University of Ghana Business School and Bachelor of Science in Marketing from the University Professional Studies, Accra. He is also an adjunct lecturer at IPE School of management. His research interests include but not limited to; service marketing, corporate reputation, political marketing, green marketing, strategic marketing, marketing research and international marketing. The current research is part his ongoing project on voters' behavior. He has conducted several research work on politics and voters' behavior. He is a reviewer for academy of marketing science, academy of management and politics and policy. He is the lead researcher for this project.

## PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Participating in election process is the securest way to choose responsible leaders. However, the voter turnout across the world has been inconsistent over the years. This has been attributed to a number of political issue challenges. Political leaders are under pressure to put in place measures to ensure that voters turnout on the election day. The global average voting has fallen below expectation. This has attracted research attention over the past few decades and has now become a fundamental concern of all stakeholders as scholars try to push forward theory and practice in that sector. Despite this development, empirical evidence from previous studies have shown that the interaction between political issues and voting intention has not been given enough scholarly attention. Our current study examined how political issue factors of; employment, unemployment, inflation and exchange rate influences voters' voting intention. We found that political issue has a significant positive effect on voting intention. Our study further established that trust and loyalty can influence the relationship.

## 1 Introduction

Developing and improving economic, social and foreign policy issues are key determinants of an incumbent government's performance and improved voting intention (Newman, 2002). In fact, Elinder et al. (2015) argued that the performance difference among political parties during an election is explained by the voters' judgment of their performance on political issues. Political issues are the personal beliefs of the voters about the candidate's stand on economic, social, and foreign policy issues, which represents the rationale for the candidate's platform (B. I. Newman & Sheth, 1987). This can have a significant bearing on the incumbent government's vote share, if not given adequate attention, as voters have the capacity to assign responsibility for economic outcomes (Kramer, 1983; Bartel, 2003). Over the past few decades its effects on election outcome has received a lot of attention in the political marketing literature (Elinder, 2010; Lee, David, Moretti, Butler, & Matthew, 2004; Elinder et al., 2015). Despite its popularity in the literature, the political issues perspectives has been criticised for its ill-defined boundary and confounding discussion of the effect on voting intention (Newman, 2002). One key question that begs for an answer is: does improved political issues lead to an improved voting intention at all times? To contribute to the literature, the study assesses how political issues' dimensions, such as the rate of employment, exchange rate, the rate of inflation, the level of corruption and foreign policy can improve voters' voting intention. Three conditions in the form questions are specified and assessed: (1) Do the political issues influence voting intention? (2) Does voters' trust mediate the relationship between political issues and voting intention? (3) Does voters' loyalty moderate the relationship between political issues and voting intention?

The potential of political issues influencing voting intention is the key outcome variable in the rational choice theory (Downs, 1957; Fiorina, 1981). A voting intention is said to be improved when there is an increase in the overall turnout, leading to an increase in the vote share of the candidate and the political party in question (IDEA, 2016). Consistent with this conceptualization, an increase in voter turnout and vote share relative to the previous election serves as an empirical indicator of an improved voting intention (IDEA, 2016; Dabula, 2017). Political issues are conceptualized as the personal beliefs of the voters about the candidate's stand on economic, social, and foreign policy issues, which represents the rationale for the candidate's platform. This reflects the political parties' performance on economic, social and foreign policy issues (Newman & Sheth, 1981; Newman, 2002) that makes parties adapt to economic demand and wellbeing of citizens to improve voting intention. Political issue variables of inflation, exchange rate, employment-related factors and foreign policy issues are considered fundamental to the welfare of the citizens and have consequences on their voting intention.

In the context of political marketing, it is further advocated that political issues are prerequisites of voting intention as voters are more rational than ever before an election and consider voting to be more than just choosing a political candidate or party (Strauss, 2009a). Hence, political parties that are able to implement and improve the political issue situation in a country stand a better chance of enjoying favourable voting intention. However, this study questions the long-held belief and asks whether, under all conditions, such direct relationships occur. We argue that under certain conditions, the relationship might be enhanced, and can be strengthened or weakened under varied conditions. Austin and Elinder (2010) admonished that investing into political issues will directly influence-voting intention. However, the effect of political issues on voting intention may not be direct, and trust and loyalty might erode the relationship with generational and unconditional effects. The relationship is therefore expected to be nonlinear. This effect is important and worth research attention. Linking political issues with voting intention helps to better understand conditions under which voters' behaviour could be predicted. The efficacy of voting intention is put to test under varying economic conditions (Incantalupo, 2018). This can be put into proper context through political marketing principles and applications.

However, since the introduction of political marketing in the early 1950s, the application of marketing principles and practices to achieve these political objectives has witnessed tremendous

growth (Lees-Marshment, 2009; Newman, 2002). Scholars have argued profoundly on the achievements of political marketing in influencing voters' behaviour in both the developed and developing country context (Morar et al., 2015; Newman, 2002; B. Newman & Sheth). Previous studies on political marketing applications have spread to cover a wide range of determinants of voters' behaviour, such as predictive models (2002), marketing after election (Lees-Marshment, 2009), brand architecture (Mensah, 2012), identity voting (Konlan, 2017), and political ground truth (Strauss, 2009a) with the neglect of political issues, which is a major political marketing strategy). Voting intention has become a primary issue of concern worldwide, more importantly when it comes to successful political elections (Morar & Chuchu, 2015). However, only a few people register to vote in elections, especially the youth, which blurs our understanding of the situation. It is, therefore, worth scholars' attention to get a better understanding of the main reasons behind these decisions as well as the factors that have influenced voting intentions (Morar & Chuchu, 2015). In fact, Morar and Chuchu (2015) argued that, notwithstanding the number of studies that have explored this area of research, it remains a topic of interest.

In recent times of high economic growth and development, political issues remain a major economic canker in many parts of the world (World Bank Annual Report, 2015). Ghana Government's projects and policies failed in meeting the projected timescale, cost, requirement and stakeholder satisfaction (Sakyi & Akwei, 2017). Due to the seriousness of political issues challenges in Ghana, the various Governments over the years have introduced a number of strategic social interventions to help the country to meet the Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty as at the year 2015.

Currently, the Government of Ghana has created a whole ministry responsible for monitoring and evaluation of Government projects, policies and activities because of poor implementation and failure of flamboyant Government project and policies over the years. As a measure to control the economic performance, the Government has revitalized the economic management team. In addition, the office of the special prosecutor has recently been established as a mechanism to help the fight against corruption. In the face of these developments, the situation regarding political issues is still a deadly challenge for Ghanaian youth, with every two out of five economically active Ghanaians being either unemployed or working but still living in poverty. It was reported that Ghana needs to create 300, 000 jobs annually by 2020 in order to be able to overcome the unemployment situation (World Bank Annual Report, 2015). In line with this, Ghanaian youth group have demanded the immediate passage of the Youth Employment Bill. Depreciation of the cedi against the major external currencies has reached a milestone where there is no sustainable solution at the moment; health-care system is not getting better; and avoidable flood is causing life threatening situations on a daily basis in our major cities.

Sustaining these projects and policies is extremely doubtful since different political leaders have different ideologies, which might affect the continuous implementation of policies and projects if it is not a priority of the leader and not in line with their party manifestoes. Political issues should be in line with sustainable national development agenda; not only through the incumbent Government's own volition to implement policies to satisfy certain cohorts of the population for political gains. This implies that in future, if the incumbent Government is out of office, his successors will be compelled to revert to his own political issues to satisfy different segment of the society.

In monetary terms, the challenges of political issues in Ghana cannot be overemphasized. Ghana lost GHS 892 million from 2014 to 2017 as a result of financial irregularities in the operations of various ministries and MDDAs. On the average, \$270 million worth of illegal contracts are awarded each year. IMANI Africa's (2017) report revealed that, averagely, between GHS 55,000 and GHS 250,000 can be used by the government to take care of telecoms monitoring and evaluation, yet \$1.5 million is spent monthly without any justification. Ghana Youth Entrepreneurship Empowerment Development Authority (GYEEDA), which is arguably supposed to help alleviate

unemployment and poverty, has now turned to exploit the very people who its mandate to help raised their standard of living. The situation is not getting better as the fraudulent, needless, dubious and fumigation contacts in 2017 in sanitation sector alone amounted to GHS1.2 billion (Auditor General Report, 2017). In addition, the Auditor General's report identified a monetary amount of GH¢ 3,929,682,524 irregularities in Ministries, Departments and Agencies in 2017. This has made the cost of political campaigns to the country very expensive; as at the end of every 4 years, multimillions of US dollars are spent by the Ghanaian politicians to lure voters to secure their votes. In effect, resources that could hitherto be directed towards the provision of social and public goods, which will be beneficial to the entire citizenry, are channelled to lure voters for their votes. This situation could be averted through good implementation of political issues. To achieve political election success with this development is extremely doubtful since different voters have different ideologies, which might affect their voting intention if the rationale behind their voting decision is not carefully examined and prioritized. Voting should be through the individuals' own volition rather than being lured with incentives to vote for a particular candidate (Newman, 2002). This implies that in future, if the incentive that compels individuals to act is no longer available, these individuals will revert to their rational voting behaviour.

A number of scholars (Hinson & Tweneboah-Koduah, 2010; Mensa, 2011; Gyima-Boadi, 2015; Yobo & Gyampo, 2015) have attempted to advance studies on politics and voting in Ghana. Irrespective of the number of studies on Ghana's political landscape, empirical evidence suggest that the integration of marketing principles into politics in Ghana is yet to receive adequate attention. Studies on specific political issues' dimension that contribute greatly to influencing voting intention is yet to receive adequate attention in the political marketing literature. Previous studies have failed to examine the logic behind Ghanaian voters' behaviour largely because most of them overlook the human behaviour aspect in an electoral process, which can bring about the unexpected outcome. This is because voter dynamics and political issues have behavioural causes and demand behavioural examination towards its understanding (Newman, 2002). For instance, Dendere argued that most individuals who live in deplorable conditions associate gifts during political campaign with their willingness to participate and has the potential to influence their voting decision. Therefore, addressing the political issues from voters' point of view, which is the main objective of political marketing, could be an effective approach to implement political marketing strategies in developing countries like Ghana. Political issues have the potential to influence voting intention. This study, however, argued that it is possible that a linear relationship may equally exist between political issues and voting intention, but the relationship may not be an ordered one at all cost. We further argue that this linear relationship may be redrafted under the conditions of trust and loyalty. Other scholars have similarly argued that political marketing interventions can be enhanced through political issues (Newman, 2002; Newman & Sheth, 1981).

The contribution this article makes is in empirically testing the relationship between the political issues and voting intention in an emerging democracy. This expands the theoretical boundaries of the discipline of political marketing and provides significant practical benefits and managerial implications for political parties and practitioners in an emerging democracy. This study argues that, under certain conditions, the effect of determinants of voters' behaviour may be redrafted and that some boundary conditions may therefore better explain how political issues improve voting intention. This study investigates the direct effect of political issues on voting intention and the possible mediating and moderating role of trust and loyalty, respectively, in Ghana. The study enriches the theorization of the effect of political issues by explaining some boundary conditions that improve voting intention in an emerging democracy. The general political atmosphere gives credence to the importance of political issues when taking decisions that affect the voter and the politicians (Strauss, 2009b; Newman, 2002). There is an increasing role for political issues in the overall election process (Elinder, 2010). As a matter of fact, Newman (2002) argued that efficient political issues deployment greatly impact a voting decision. This notion presupposes that the ability to implement political issues enables political parties to enhance voting intention (Bukari,



Hamid & Som, 2020). Research over the years has dealt with various aspects of the concept of political issues (e.g., Neuman, 2008; Lees-Marshment, 2019; Morar & Chuchu, 2015; Konlan, 2017). In the existing literature, however, two important issues appear not to have received sufficient attention. First, in the empirical research, few studies have investigated how political issues can efficiently and effectively influence voting intention. Newman (2002) posits that it is important to assess political issues in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of voting intention. This study accordingly seeks to examine the influence political issues have on voting intention. Although political issues influences voting intention, the varying outcome recorded in empirical findings (e.g., Newman, 2002; Pearsek et al., 2009) is a source of concern in terms of its rightful application. Although studies such as Elinder et al. (2015) and Newman (2002) have examined the antecedents and outcomes of political issues in political context, there may be boundary conditions that may shape the effect of political issues on voting intention under certain conditions. What has not been adequately explored in the literature are the possible mediating and moderating factors that may optimise the political issues-voting intention relationship. The last two objectives of this research is to extend this line of inquiry by investigating how political issues may serve as an antecedent to other higher-level constructs. Empirical findings from political marketing literature have suggested that the difference between successes and failures in trust and loyalty is in the level of political issues. Political issue is, therefore, seen as an important critical factor for trust and loyalty (Bukari et al., 2020; Dabula, 2017). In this study, political issues are seen as second-order issues whose effect on intention we propose is best explained through other first-order issues. According to Bukari et al. (2020), there is relatively little attention paid to the specific consequences of second-order issues such as political issues. First-order issues that are closely related to political issues are trust and loyalty (Ahmed et al., 2011; Dabula, 2017). This research examined the mediating and moderating role of trust and loyalty in the relationship between political issues and voting intention. The study applied political issues rationale in political marketing to understand the behaviour of Ghanaians towards voting decisions. The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The next section deals with a review of literature on political issues and voting intention. The subsequent section covers the research model and hypotheses development while the fourth section presents the methodology and analysis. The last section concentrates on discussing the findings and offers both theoretical and pragmatic implications as well as conclusions.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Political marketing

Marketing has been applied to commercial marketing activities in a wide variety of contexts such as consumable goods, non-consumable goods, destinations, countries and many others as well as events like sports, religious activities, institutions and people (Einstein, 2008). More recently, there has been a growing interest in applying marketing concepts to politics (Pich et al., 2016; Phipps, Brace-Govan & Jevons, 2010; Lee-Marshment, 2009; Smith, 2009; Moufahim & Lim, 2009; Lilleker, Jackson & Scullion, 2006; Reeves, de Chematony & Carrigan, 2006; White & de Chematony, 2002). Notwithstanding, Hardrop (1990) argued that governance is synonymous to service provision, which is intangible, complex in nature and people dependent. In fact, Henneberg and O'Shaugnessy (2007) confirmed this assertion and have agreed that policy as service offering the politician as the tangible offering and the party as the brand offering are nonetheless the service perspectives of political parties. Arguably, voters elect the party and candidate that they are of the firm belief have the potential to provide these services (Pich et al., 2016; Clarke et al., 2004). As posited by Lee-Marshment (2009), political parties position or reposition themselves through policy development to lure their audience. Worcester and Baines (2006) opine that this becomes more necessary with time to enable the party and its candidate to adapt to the political environmental or market trends; however, this is largely constrained by a number of factors like party history, ideology as well as their track record on promise delivery. This is the situation where the idea of political marketing becomes very important as it helps provide a useful framework to position and re-position their ideas, values and policies as well as effective and efficient strategy to

gain electoral success (Pich et al., 2016). Although this could be a very powerful device for a party and its candidate, the marketing communication department of the party needs to disseminate the information across various stakeholders throughout the complex political organization with a hierarchical structure, authorities and goals (Bale, 2008). Even with this, the turbulent nature of today's political environment, coupled with a huge trust gap between voters and politicians on their performance and delivery on campaign promises, has created a tension on development and consistency of political marketing (Pich et al., 2016). Delivering on campaign promises, and more importantly political issue variables, are fundamental and can affect voters' voting intention. Lee-Marshment (2005; 2009) argued that marketing cannot only be applied to commercial businesses but also to political parties, which is essential in shaping voters' perception about the party, its performance and the leadership of the party, which subsequently inform their voting decision. This paper will therefore attempt to unravel how the key political issues' dimensions can influence voters' voting decision: this may go a long way to explain why and how voters vote for some parties and for whom they vote.

## **2.2. Theoretical underpinning**

The theoretical underpinning to this study is the reward punishment theory/rational choice theory. This theory assumes that voters are rational consumers and rational consumer will always maximise satisfaction out of utility that is utility outcome. Voters' therefore take a voting decision and choice based on critical examination and evaluations of issues and policies and how they are important to them by putting their self-interest first at the helm of affairs (Ball & Peters, 2005; Catt, 1996; Heywood, 2002; Karp & Banducci, 2007). The voters' participation in the election is their utility outcome and they will always weigh the alternative outcomes and choose the one that will maximise their utility over the later (Alderich, 1993). Consequently, voters' voting behaviour is adjusted based on their critical and conceptual analysis of issues, which may either lead to a reward or punishment to an incumbent, by holding the incumbent government accountable for the outcome (Alderich, 1993; Darmofal & Nardulli, 2010). A rational voting is, to a large extent, a function of cost-benefit analysis of the voters' decision; and as a result, a rational voting can be a reward or punishment to either the incumbent or the opposition party depending on the outcome (Sanders, 2003; Feldderson, 2004). Despite the above logical argument, the theory does not take into consideration, the socio-cultural environment in which the voting decision takes place, and this setback has made it very difficult in drawing a viable conclusion on this theory.

## **2.3. Voting intention**

Purchase intention entails subjective evaluation of a future behavior (Engel, 2014). Therefore, purchases intention typifies what consumers and customers will like to buy in future. It is the willingness to buy a product or visit a store offering (Chris, Bakerb, Judy & Wagner, 2009a). Purchase intention is a broad concept, which encompasses the multi-dimensional essential meanings, including; the consumers' "wiliiness" to consider buying a product or a service, what the consumers or customers "wants" to buy in future and their decision to buy from a company "again" in future. It can be viewed as a perceptual reaction taken towards one's attitude to an object. Hence, consumers/customers purchase intention can be developed because of their evaluation of a product or attitude towards a brand in conjunction with external stimulating factors. It is the possibility of consumers buying a product (Dodds et al., 1991). Trust imposes a direct influence on voters' voting intention under a turbulence political environment (Grazioli & Jarvenpaa, 2000; Koufaris & Hampton-Sosa, 2004). Meanwhile, trust further leads to purchase intention (Lin & Lu, 2010). Voting intention refers to a person's desire to vote for a particular candidate or party (Rachmat, 2010). Trust is an essential tool, as voters' will inevitably fortify their intention to vote for the candidate and party they trust. Trust and loyalty are the driving force of this decision and, hence, corresponding voting intention (Gefen, 2000). Trust is an antecedent of future intention and high level of trust leads to loyalty (Jones & Kim, 2010). Therefore, there is an inverse relationship between the level of trust and perceived risk in a relationship because as the level of trust increases, the level of perceived risk decreases and the outcome is behavioural intention (Kim et al., 2008). Consistent with this conceptualization, when voters develop a high



pedigree of trust for a particular party/candidate, they will automatically reward that person or party with their vote no matter the situation at hand.

#### **2.4. Political issues and voting intention**

The voter preference on political issues opinion has been linked with an improved voting intention. Researchers over the years have made a conscious effort to identify the priming issues deriving the effects of voting intention (Elinder, 2010; Gefen, 2000). Austin (2010) opine that although the concept is yet to become an important voting requirement; it has the potential to influence voters' voting decisions. This is explained by the fact that the political issue has become an integral part of voters' daily rational evaluation of political parties' performances (Lee et al., 2004; Veiga & Veiga, 2010). Political issues are very essential to both the politicians and the voters (Lee et al., 2004; Austin, 2010) such that Strauss (), for instance, found that voters are more satisfied with an incumbent government when the experience on political issues is better than expected. Newman (2002) found that political parties that are able to strengthened political issues effort produces positive effects on voters' evaluation of their performance, while Austin and Elinder (2010) found it to be positively associated with voting intention. This, therefore, suggests that political parties that are able to improve upon the political issues stance of a country in respect of voters' demand would create advantages that will enable them to outperform the competition and its associated voting intention. A political issue becomes an important economic issue that creates and delivers better value to voters, which is an important competitive advantage (Lee et al., 2004; Gyourko, 2007). Bargues and Esteve-Volar (2015) describe such development as facilitating the necessary building of voter politician relationships, which Hethrington and Husser (2010) define as the mechanisms through which the political parties are able to deploy appropriate mechanisms to instil trust and confidence in the mind of voters through the implementation of political issues.

Developments in trust are relationship based and are important in the practice of politics. They are usually based on factors such as creating employment, maintaining stable inflation, reducing the rate of currency depreciation, good foreign policies, foreign direct investment, and fighting corruption such that there is the potential for a political party to influence and develop an intimate relationship with voters to the point that they may be relatively rare and difficult for them to defect to the political opponent (Hethrington & Husser, 2010; Hthrigton & Rudolph, 2008). Hethrington (2005) and Hooghe, Mrien and Pauwels (2011) assert that they tend to establish a strong relationship with voters that is hard to forget, and maintain strong good goodwill with the voters. They serve as evidence that project the image of the party at all levels (Chiru & Gherghina, 2012; Engel, 2014). Political parties that are able to improve political issues stance of a nation enjoy a favourable voting outcome, as they will be relatively rare and difficult for voters to forget. Implementing political issues is the capacity of the political party to effectively and efficiently create the platform that lead to more job creation, corruption reduction, stable inflation, good foreign policies and reduction in unemployment (Elimder, 2010; Bargues et al., 2015). Political issues therefore enable the political party to fully instil trust and confidence in the mind of voters; an important voting decision to increase the party's performance in an election. Political issues capture and reflect how well a political party performs on the economy (Elimder, 2010; Bargues et al., 2015) and in designing and managing the relationship with the voters (Chiru & Gherghina, 2012; Narteh et al., 2017). Strauss (2009a), however, suggests that the political economy situation may lead to conditions in which voter participation and intention levels are reduced. Political parties that are able to develop strong political issues create better and stronger advantage from this development than those that do not. While implementation of political issues would lead to an improved voting intention, investment into it may further influence the direction of the voting (Pasek et al., 2009; Bargues et al., 2015). The literature on political marketing has hinted that a direct relationship may exist for political issues with the argument that low and high levels of it are associated with voting intention (Incatalupo, 2018; Elimder, 2010). The key point here is that investing into political issues deliver value to both the citizens and the politicians (Pasek et al., 2009; Strauss, 2009a), as the citizenry will perceive more value from politicians and will tend to be

more satisfied; thus, influences their voting decision (Burkman, 2009). However, findings on political issues have revealed a positive relationship with voting intention (see, Bauer, 2010). Improving on political issues of a country may mean the incumbent government is efficient and effective in improving the standard of living and welfare of the citizens (Elimder, 2010; Strumpf & Phillippe, 1999), which may subsequently lead to positive voting intention. Additionally, it has been found that political issues “may unequivocally create positive voting intention” (Pasek et al., 2009; Fiona, 1981). An increase in political issues may lead to an improved standard of living, and improved wellbeing of citizens, which may motivate the citizens to evaluate the political party positively and its associated voting decision (Catt, 1996; Ball & Peters, 2005; Karp & Neuman, 2002; Heywood, 2002). Voters’ decisions to vote, and their choice of a political party during a political election will improve, if more is invested into the country’s political issues. Finding the right balance for political issues and individual wellbeing will result in positive voting behavior, which subsequently would return favourable voting opportunities for political parties over political opponent. Strauss (2009b) posits that voters often adopt the issue opinions of their favoured candidate, which influences their vote choice. On one hand, the voter’s issues considerations from experience may help outweigh the candidate’s argument, but the candidate’s point may be of particular importance to the voter (Pasek et al., 2009). Experienced voters judge politicians on the issue for which they have experience and the result in change in vote preference is greater for those with personal experience than for those without. Candidate evaluation is a result of experienced voters learning from the candidates’ positions on an issue and, possibly, the issue becoming more salient, or primed, hence the voter’s stance and change in vote or switch in their vote choice toward or away from the party in question.

The voter preference on political issues opinion has been linked with an improved voting intention. Researchers over the years have made a conscious effort to identify the priming issues deriving effects of voting intention (Elinder, 2010; Gefen, 2000). Austin and Einder (2010) opine that although the concept is yet to become an important voting requirement, it has the potential to influence voters’ voting decisions. This is explained by the fact that the political issue has become an integral part of voters’ daily rational evaluation of political parties’ performances (Lee et al., 2004; Veiga & Veiga, 2010). Political issues are very essential to both the politicians and the voters (Lee et al., 2004; Austin, 2010) such that Strauss (2009a), for instance, found that voters are more satisfied with an incumbent government when the experience on political issues is better than expected. Newman (2002) found that political parties that are able to strengthened political issues effort produces positive effects on voters’ evaluation of their performance, while Austin and Elinder (2010) found it to be positively associated with voting intention. This, therefore, suggests that political parties that are able to improve upon the political issues stance of a country in respect of voters’ demand would create advantages that will enable them to outperform the competition and its associated voting intention. A political issue becomes an important economic issue that creates and delivers better value to voters, which is an important competitive advantage (Lee et al., 2004; Gyourko, 2007). Bargues and Esteve-Volar (2015) describe such development as facilitating the necessary building of voter–politician relationships, which Hethrington and Husser (2010) define as the mechanisms through which the political parties are able to deploy appropriate mechanisms to instil trust and confidence in the mind of voters through the implementation of political issues.

Developments of trust are relationship based and are important in the practice of politics. They are usually based on factors such as creating employment; maintaining stable inflation; reducing the rate of currency depreciation; good foreign policies and foreign direct investment; and fighting corruption such that there is the potential for political party to influence and develop an intimate relationship with voters to the point that they may be relatively rare and difficult for them to defect to the political opponent (Hethrington & Husser, 2010; Hethrington & Rudolph, 2008). Hethrington (2005) and Hooghe, Mrien and Pauwels (2011) assert that they tend to establish a strong relationship with voters, hard to forget and maintain a strong good goodwill with the voters. They serve as evidence that project the image of the party at all levels (Chiru & Gherghina, 2012; Engel, 2014).

Political parties that are able to improve political issue stance of a nation enjoy a favourable voting outcome, as they will be relatively rare and difficult for voters to forget. Implementing political issues is the capacity of the political party to effectively and efficiently create the platform that lead to more job creation, corruption reduction, stable inflation, good foreign policies and reduction in unemployment (Elimder, 2010; Bargues et al., 2015). Political issues therefore enable the political party to fully instil trust and confidence in the mind of voters, an important voting decision to increase the party's performance in an election. Political issues capture and reflect how well a political party performs on the economy (Elimder, 2010; Bargues et al., 2015) and in designing and managing their relationship with the voters (Chiru & Gherghina, 2012; Narteh et al., 2017). Strauss (2009a), however, suggests that the political economy situation may lead to conditions in which voter participation and intention levels are reduced. Political parties that are able to develop strong political issues create better and stronger advantage from this development than those that do not. While implementation of political issues would lead to an improved voting intention, investment into it may further influence the direction of the voting (Pasek et al., 2009; Bargues et al., 2015).

The literature on political marketing has hinted that a direct relationship may exist for political issues with the argument that low and high levels of it are associated with voting intention (Incatalupo, 2018; Elimder, 2010). The key point here is that investing into political issues deliver value to both the citizens and the politicians (Pasek et al., 2009; Strauss, 2009b), as the citizenry will perceive more value from politicians and will tend to be more satisfied, which influences their voting decision (Burkman, 2009). However, findings on political issues have revealed a positive relationship with voting intention (see, Bauer, 2010). Improving on political issues of a country may mean the incumbent government is efficient and effective in improving the standard of living and welfare of the citizens (Elimder, 2010; Strumpf & Phillippe, 1999), which may subsequently lead to positive voting intention. Additionally, it has been found that political issues "may unequivocally create positive voting intention" (Pasek et al., 2009; Fiona, 1981). An increase in political issues may lead to an improved standard of living, and improved wellbeing of citizens, which may motivate the citizens to evaluate the political party positively and its associated voting decision (Catt, 1996; Ball & Peters, 2005; Karp & Neuman, 2002; Heywood, 2002). Voters' decisions to vote and the choice of a political party during political election will improve if more is invested into the country's political issues. Finding the right balance for political issues and individual wellbeing will result in positive voting behavior, which subsequently would return favourable voting opportunities for political parties over their political opponent. Strauss (2009a) posits that voters often adopt the issue opinions of their favoured candidate, which influences their vote choice. On one hand, the voter's issues considerations from experience may help outweigh the candidate's argument, but the candidate's point may be of particular importance to the voter (Pasek et al., 2009). Experienced voters judge politicians on the issue for which they have experience and the result in change in vote preference is greater for those with personal experience than for those without. Candidate evaluation is a result of experienced voters learning the candidates' positions on an issue and possibly, the issue becoming more salient, or primed, hence the voter's stance and change in vote or switch their vote choice toward or away from the party in question.

### 3. Hypothesis development

#### 3.1. Relationship between political issues and voting intention

The relationship between economic conditions and voting intention has received considerable attention in the political marketing debate over the past few decades. In fact, Lee et al. (2004) argued that the intensity of the relationship is as a result of its role in policy implementation, and that voting for a political party is synonymous to believing in and voting for its policies. Arguably, voters' reaction to economic condition has a significant bearing on its political situation. Voters generally vote for political parties that, in their opinion, implement good policies (Lee et al., 2004). Others, however, found a significant relationship between economic conditions and incumbent Government's vote share in a presidential election; hence, politicians are accountable for their

actions and inactions for which voters hold them responsible by rewarding or punishing them in the polls (Strumpf & Philippe, 1999). Economic conditions such as unemployment, rate of inflation, exchange rate, foreign policy issues as well as political issue variables of corruption are regarded as empirical antecedents of voting decisions; however, to determine the level of effects is quite challenging (Elinder, 2010). In line with the above view, Elinder (2010) found an indirect relationship between an increase in unemployment and voting decisions and that a 1% increase in the rate of unemployment will lead to a reduction in an incumbent Government's vote share by a similar margin. A negative relationship is therefore established between a rise in unemployment and voting for an incumbent party. In a similar situation, the state of income growth and inflation rate has been found to have a direct bearing on election outcome, in such a way that a decrease in the rate of inflation and growth of individual income corresponds directly with a rise in the incumbent Government's vote share (Strumpt & Phillippe, 1999).

A significant relationship exists between economic variables of inflation and vote share as opined by Veiga and Veiga (2010). Bagues and Esteve-Volart (2015), using random exogenous economic variable (lottery) to study economic conditions and incumbent parties vote share, found a positive relationship between winners and incumbent's vote share. Therefore, voters are rational; they elect policies by voting for a particular candidate. This is consistent with the findings of Leet et al. (2010). Contrarily, Gyourko (2007) and Strumpt and Phillippe (1999) arrived at a conclusion that there is no partisan effect for policies in the same environment. Political dynamics may change in bad economic conditions as one implements the policies, which change voting pattern; hence, bad economic conditions have an effect on society in an unexpected manner. Petersson-Lidban (2008) established that different parties can influence economic policies and implementations in a different direction; the direction of influence has the tendency to influence voting decisions. Voters have diminishing marginal returns to money and therefore will improve their voting for an incumbent Government in times of good economic conditions and high rises in income (Durr, 1993). Therefore, all things being equal, the rich should be more radical voters than the poor; hence, voting decisions are affected by economic fluctuations as voters decide based on consumption and welfare. Others, however, argued that the economic situation has no direct effect on voters' voting decision; hence, it is not political parties, but voters who drive changes in policy demand due to economic fluctuations. Therefore, economic fluctuations have the tendency to influence political parties' programs but not for whom the voters cast their votes, and politicians change their programs as the economy changes with tax increases and an increase in spending. Elimbler (2010) shared an opposing view and agree that economic fluctuations and voting decisions are synonymous to each other, which directly induced political parties to alter their programs with the view of votes share maximization; hence, there is a direct relationship between voting behavior and economic policies.

*H1: There would be a positive and significant relationship between political issues and voting intention.*

### **3.2. Loyalty and voting intention**

Voter loyalty in the context of political marketing represents the voter's favourable attitude towards a party resulting in a repeat voting behaviour (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). It is, in fact, electoral in two consecutive elections (Chiru & Gherhina, 2012). Simply put, voters are regarded as loyal when they vote for the same political party in two consecutive or more continuous elections. In a similar situation, voters' loyalty is the consistency of maintaining an individual partisan identity, no matter how good or bad their party performs in office to the extent that actions and inactions of the party do not provide them any benefits (Bauer, 2010). Geographical and social location has been recognized as a major antecedent to voting decisions, as they are major determinants of voters' social interaction, which goes a long way to influence their line of thought, hence has a significant bearing on their party support (Darmofal & Nrdulli,

2010; Catt, 1996; Caryl, Rusbult, Foster & Agnew, 1996). As voters grow up among family members and others, they reason along the same line and therefore attached their mode of thought and tend to vote for parties that they (and family members as well) have been attached to, rather than election-specific influence.

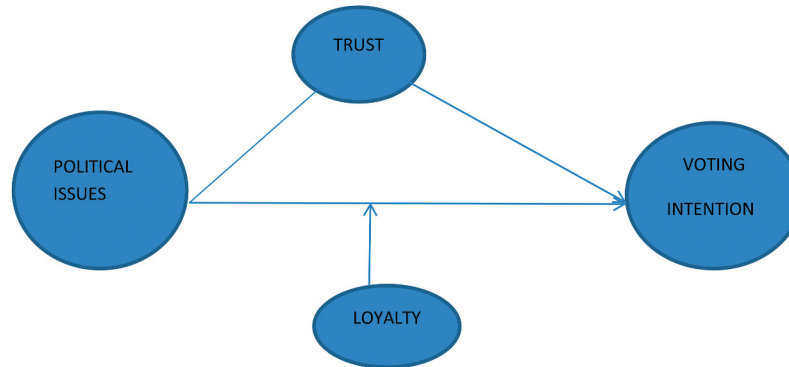
Scholars have argued along similar dimensions and have agreed that inheritance and parties' images are a major determinant of partisanship. Through early socialization, they develop partisan preference from childhood through parents and relatives, which influences how they view the party from a positive or negative perspective irrespective of their conditions (Elock, 1976, p. 220; Goldberg, 1966, p. 914; Achen, 2002; Darmfal & Narduli, 2010). The individuals' political attitude, psychological state, beliefs, expectations and values can redraft and redirect their rational thinking behaviour. This, invariably, will lead to a perpetual preference for a particular political party, and tends to overlook any political or economic crises (Darmfal & Narduli, 2002). This group of people will not recognize the consequences of national crises on their livelihood and therefore vote for their preferred party at the expense of a rational decision. Although electoral competition and the situation at hand may alter a voter's decision to redirect their attention towards other parties; nonetheless, issues such as party identifications and individual inclination towards short-term policy preferences and evaluations still play a pivotal role in influencing voters' voting decisions (Chiru & Gherghina, 2012). Individuals tend to support the political party they identified themselves with in an election under any condition. There is a direct relationship between party identification and voter loyalty, although voter loyalty is highly affected by the performance of the party (Chiru & Gherghina, 2012). In a previous study, Dabulah (2017) found an indirect relationship between loyalty and voting intention. Konlan (2016) likewise argued that poor understanding of how voter loyalty influences voting intention has been a major drawback in our political landscape. These studies nonetheless give credence to the fact that the relationship between political issues and voting intention is not an ordered one at all cost and may be redrafted under the condition of loyalty. Voters may therefore choose loyalty over political issues development. We therefore argue that;

*H2: Voters loyalty can moderate the relationship between political issues and voting intention.*

### **3.3. Trust and voting intention**

Trust has often been recognized as a strategic weapon in establishing, maintaining, instilling and developing the relationship among parties by reducing the risk of uncertainty (Elliot & Yannopoulou, 2007). In social and economic interaction involving a high level of uncertainty, interdependent and important related decisions, trust becomes an important factor in maintaining long-term relationships in a wider variety of contexts (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Gefen, 2000). When trust is established in a relationship, the parties involved develop a positive notion towards each other and have it in mind that their partner will not exploit them to their advantage (Casalo et al., 2007). That is, the confidence expectation of the brand reliability and intention (the party) in a risky situation for the consumer. This implies trust is the main aspect of voters' and politicians' interaction (Gefen, 2008). When trust is developed between a political party and voters, it may result in the voters' voting for the political party in future (Dabula, 2017). When voters have trust and confidence in the political party and candidate, they will reward them with their vote (Ahmed Lodhi & Shahzad, 2011; Hooghe et al., 2011; Rachmat, 2013). Contrariwise, when trust does not exist, the voters may either vote for the opposition or may simply choose not to vote. Trust discrepancy leads to a general disengagement by citizens from the political system, and have a direct bearing on the electoral system in general, such as a decline in voter turnout and punishment to the distrusted party by voting for their opponent in the form of reward (Ahmed et al., 2011; Hooghe et al., 2011; Rachmat, 2013). Empirical evidence has shown that trust is an important determinant of election outcome and that the absence of trust has a profound impact on voting behavior (Hetherington, 2005; Hetherington & Husser, 2012; Pauwels, 2011). In a similar situation, distrust of a political

**Figure 1. Source: Adapted from Neumann (2002)**



party will subsequently lead to a discontentment in the political party and its leader, which has a significant demeanour on an election outcome. Discontented citizens will exhibit their displeasure in the first place by not participating in institutionalized politics like voting, which will eventually results in low voter turnout. Furthermore, a discontent citizen/ voter will express his/ her dissatisfaction by voting for other parties.

*H3: Voters' trust can mediate the relationship between political issues and voting intention.*

### 3.3.1. Research model

The main arguments of this study are depicted in a conceptual model in Figure 1. The study argued that when a political party implements political issues successfully, it will have an influence on voting intention. This is based on the argument that improving upon the political issues by parties will influence voter's voting decision (Neuman, 2002; Bukari et al., 2020). However, this should be further seen as a strategic tool that enhances political parties' performance in order to positively influence the voter's voting decision. A successful implementation of political issues enables political parties to exploit voters to their advantage through trust and loyalty building that can subsequently lead to an improved voting intention. Trust and loyalty that is developed through expectation and experience from political issues implementation are therefore shown to be important mediators between political issues and voting intention.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Research approach

The paper seeks to examine the relationship between political issues and voting intention from the perspectives of voters; hence, building on and understanding voters' voting intention. Political issue research has received a lot attention from both qualitative and quantitative researchers' point of view (Newman & Seth, 1981; Newman, 2002). In fact Lee-Marshment (2009), Smith (2009) and Davies and Chun (2002) argued that a qualitative research is most relevant at early stages and relatively under research areas. Drawing on this argument, an area like this required a quantitative approach. The methodology therefore aims to take a deductive approach to the quantitative enquiry on political issues (Sambassivan et al., 2019). By understanding the stakeholders' (voters') perception of the political issues and how it influences their voting intention, it makes it possible to unearth areas where problems are likely to arise and determine how to overcome them. Consistent with this view, this paper adopted a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire to solicit the views of the stakeholders (voters) of elections in order to understand the voting intention from their perspectives (Lee-Marshment, 2019; Sambassivan et al., 2019). A deductive approach to scientific enquiry often gives a wider spread of opinion about the issue under consideration; hence, generalization of findings is guaranteed (Hair et al., 2001). Quantitative



research technique was adopted with the use of a questionnaire to collect data from eligible voters in Ghana who have voted in at least two consecutive elections for the purpose of providing answers to the research questions while addressing the research objectives and at the same time generalizing the findings. This approach was deemed appropriate as the study employed standard procedures and replication of findings is assumed. Using the quantitative approach helped the researchers to avoid several issues that would have been encountered if a qualitative approach was used; more specifically, validity, generalizability, access and consent, reflexivity, voice and transparency (Butler-Kisher, 2010, p. 13). The validity of this paper is nonetheless a function of the quality of the data collected and the interpretation of findings in relation to the extant literature.

Employing purposive sampling procedure, the study targeted only registered voters in Ghana who have voted two or more times with the view of determining how their loyalty influences the relationship between political issues and voting intention. This is because voter loyalty is conceptualized as voting for the same party or candidate in two or more consecutive elections. Eligible voters in Ghana are adults of 18 years or more and who will exhibit maturity in providing responses to the issues under consideration. Specifically, the data was collected from 23 constituencies in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. This was based on the fact that Accra is a cosmopolitan city in Ghana and comprises people from all parts of the country. The region has also been regarded as one of the swing regions in Ghana's general elections, since 1992 (Electoral Commission of Ghana, 2016). The questionnaires were delivered personally to 444 registered voters who have voted in not less than two continuous elections. However, those considered cleaned and valid after the data cleaning for the analysis amounted to 379. The researchers' use of a sample size table was proposed by Kriechje and Morgan (1970) and Bartlett, Kotlik and Higgins (2001), who stated that a population between 250,000 and 300,000 can have a sample size of 384 and above. This is supported by A-PRIORI sample size calculator for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) by Soper (2015) and a sample size formula proposed by Yamane (1967). The items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The data was analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) AMOS. The use of AMOS became necessary as the questionnaires were adopted from the literature; therefore, employing CFA to ensure the suitability of the instrument was crucial. It was further advocated that it is essential to interact all the variables used in the study into one model and SEM was deemed appropriate rather than regression.

#### **4.2. Analysis**

Three hundred and seventy-nine (379) valid questionnaires were used for the analysis out of 444 administered questionnaires: this accounted for 85.36%. The data on gender revealed 234 males (61.74%) and 145 females (38.26%). The age distribution of the respondents showed that those who were between 22 and 30 years old accounted for 211 (55.67%) and respondents above 30 years of age were 168 (44.33%). The analysis on educational background of the respondents revealed that 14 (3.69%) were PhD holders, Master's degree holders accounted for 58 (15.30%) of the respondents, undergraduates (first degree) holders represented 97 (25.59%) and Diploma holders recorded 37 (9.76%), High-School leavers 183 (48.28%), and 88 (23.22%) had no former education. The statistics on the respondents' occupational background established that 97 (25.59%) were either doing their own business or were self-employed, 45 (11.87%) were public servant, 58 (15.30%) work in the private sector, 177 (46.70%) were either not working or they were unemployed, and two (0.52%) did not indicate their occupational background. Regarding the voting experience, 78 (20.58%) have voted in two or three continuous election. In addition, 301 (79.42%) have voted in more than three continuous elections.

### **5. Findings and discussions**

#### **5.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)**

Since the survey-scale measures were adopted from literature, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted on the variables. The variables were checked for their loadings and reliabilities. The

**Table 1. Items measured for the constructs**

Items	Factor Loadings
Reduction in the rate of unemployment	<b>0.75</b>
Reduction in the rate of inflation over the years	<b>0.745</b>
Appreciation of our currency significantly towards the foreign currencies	<b>0.35</b>
Reduction in government spending	<b>0.641</b>
Implementation of more social intervention within the past few years	<b>0.825</b>
More government programs in recent years	<b>0.749</b>
Improvement in general business conditions	<b>0.722</b>
More foreign direct investments	<b>0.612</b>
Free Trade policy	<b>0.757</b>
Putting measures in place towards poverty eradication	<b>0.701</b>
Putting measures in place to provide scholarship for students	<b>0.675</b>
All the above issues have improved significantly over past few years	<b>0.499</b>

reliability and validity of the measures represent the constructs being examined and evaluate the psychometric properties of scaled measures (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). On the basis of this, six variables (PI 9, PI 10, EV 4, SI 1, S1 2 and CP1) were dropped during the CFA because their loadings were less than the threshold value of 0.5. Table 1

## 5.2. Hypothesis testing using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

To help understand and evaluate the various hypotheses made earlier in this study, the study employed a structural equation modelling (SEM) approach. Two structural paths were estimated to test the hypotheses between the constructs. The first structural model dealt with the framework without Level of education while the second structural model controlled for Level of education. Table 2

In Model 1 of the study model results, a chi-square of 71.713 (df = 27,  $p < .01$ ) was found, indicating a normed chi-square fit value of 2.65. The root-mean-square-error of approximation (RMSEA) value is 0.069; and goodness-of-fit index (GFI) is 0.964 with an AGFI of 0.912. Regarding the incremental fit measures, the comparative fit index (CFI) value was 0.969. In the second model results, a chi-square of 74.178 (df = 31,  $p < .01$ ) was ..., indicating a normed chi-square fit value of 2.39. The root-mean-square-error of approximation (RMSEA) value is 0.064; and goodness-of-fit index (GFI) is 0.966 with an AGFI of 0.914. For the incremental fit measures, the comparative fit index (CFI) value was 0.974. These results from the structural model assessment statistics above reveal that the models appear to have established an acceptable fit and therefore accomplished a satisfactory level of validity. In Model 1, only the controls were estimated. However, in Model 2, the hypothesized relationships were included. In Model 1, it was found that regarding the relationship between Political issues and voting intentions only Unemployment ( $\beta = 0.274$ ,  $t$ -value = 4.764,  $p < .001$ ) and Rate of Inflation ( $\beta = 0.360$ ,  $t$ -value = 5.478,  $p < .001$ ) had a positive and significant relationship. This could be as a result of the economic hardship that the people are facing due to these two indicators. The unemployment situation, for instance, is increasingly gaining attention as a result of the Ghana Government's decision to enter into a loan agreement with IMF to halt public sector employment in 2012. A possible reason for the positive relationship between the rate of inflation and voting intention could be as a result of the rise in cost of living against the standard of living for the past decade. There is the possibility that the Ghanaian voters have failed to recognize the effect of corruption and the exchange rate on their standard of living. Their inability to acknowledge the fact that the level of corruption, and constant depreciation of our local currency against the major external currencies,

**Table 2. Descriptives, Correlations and AVEs**

Constructs	Mean	s.d	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Unemployment	3.35	0.73	<b>(.506)</b>							
Inflation	3.47	0.75	.641**	<b>(.535)</b>						
Foreign policy	3.26	0.73	.568**	.712**	<b>(.515)</b>					
Exchange Rate	3.11	0.77	.523**	.550**	.654**	<b>(.510)</b>				
Corruption	3.10	0.85	.508**	.524**	.633**	.762**	<b>(.542)</b>			
Trust	3.77	1.06	.546**	.584**	.475**	.402**	.382**	.623**	<b>(.825)</b>	
Loyalty	3.54	0.98	.234**	.348**	.300**	.368**	.337**	.351**	.507**	<b>(.624)</b>

**Table 3. Fit Indices of Models**

Fit index	Recommended value	Model 1	Model 2
Chi-square/df	$\leq 3$	(71.713/27) = 2.65	(74.178/31) = 2.39
GFI	$\geq 0.90$	.964	.966
AGFI	$\geq 0.80$	.912	.914
CFI	$\geq 0.90$	.969	.974
RMSEA	$\leq 0.08$	.069	.064

among others, are factors causing the rise in unemployment and the rise in inflation rate could be the reason why there was no relationship between political issues and voting intention. Hypothesis H1 was supported. In the relationships between political issues and voters' trust, rate of inflation ( $\beta = 0.169$ ,  $t$ -value = 2.691,  $p < .05$ ) and unemployment ( $\beta = 0.192$ ,  $t$ -value = 2.602,  $p < .05$ ) have positive and statistically significant relationships. There was also a strong positive and statistical relationship between political issues, voters' loyalty and voting intention ( $\beta = 0.467$ ,  $t$ -value = 8.179,  $p < .001$ ) in the first model devoid of level of education. Hypothesis H2 was supported in this regard.

In Model 2, it was found that the relationship between political issues and voting intention, level of education ( $\beta = 0.389$ ,  $t$ -value = 7.948,  $p < .001$ ), unemployment ( $\beta = 0.213$ ,  $t$ -value = 3.373,  $p < .001$ ) and rate of inflation ( $\beta = 0.160$ ,  $t$ -value = 2.918,  $p < .05$ ) had a positive and statistically significant relationship. In the association between political issues and loyalty, rate of inflation ( $\beta = 0.183$ ,  $t$ -value = 2.875,  $p < .05$ ) and unemployment ( $\beta = 0.190$ ,  $t$ -value = 2.584,  $p < .05$ ) had a positive and statistically significant relationships. Hypothesis H1 was supported. There was also a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between political issues voters trust and voting intention ( $\beta = 0.431$ ,  $t$ -value = 6.967,  $p < .001$ ) in the second model in which level of education was controlled for. Thus, Hypotheses H2 is supported in this study. [Table 3](#), [Table 4](#)

### 5.3. Mediating role of trust

We hypothesize that voters' trust mediates the relationship between political issues and voting intention. When the level of trust increases, there is a corresponding increase in voting intention. In order to test the mediation effects, we made use of the Bootstrapping procedure by Andrews and Hayres (2003). Based on the results of the test; Indirect Effects of the Process: Effect Size = 0.578, Lower confident limit = 0.785, Upper confidence limit = 0.568,  $Z$ -value = 4.4027,  $P$ -value = 0.002. Hence, the indirect effects is significant, therefore voters' trust mediates the relationship between political issues and voting intention. Direct effects of the process revealed: Effect size = 0.2722,  $t$  = 1.825,  $P$ -value = 0.0953, Lower confidence Interval = -0.773, Upper confidence limit = 0.8638, as a result the direct effect of the process is not significant; hence, voters' trust is a full mediator of the relationship between political issues and voting intention.

### 5.4. Moderating role of loyalty

We hypothesized that loyalty moderate the relationship between political issues and voting intention in such a way that when loyalty increases, voting intention increases. In order to test the above hypothesis, we made use of the approach suggested by Akene and West (1991). The results is presented in [Table 5](#) [Table 6](#) below

The result indicates that voters' loyalty moderates the relationship between political issues and voting intention ( $B$ -Value = .235,  $t$ -Value = .478,  $P$ -V = 0.001).

### 5.5. Discussion of findings

The relationship facet in determinants of voters' behavior and voting intention is described as the relationship between the politician and the voter, and between the determinants and the stakeholders of election (Lee-Marshment, 2009). Notwithstanding the fact that a number of studies have concentrated on political issues and voting intention, the main variables in political issues

**Table 4. Structural Model Assessment Results**

Controls			Model 1		Model 2	
			$\theta$ (t-value)	P	$\theta$ (t-value)	P
Gender			.041 (.921)	0.357	.040 (.909)	0.363
Age			.007 (.132)	0.895	.008 (.160)	0.873
Income			-.094 (-1.867)	0.062	-.094 (-1.877)	0.061
Education			-.030 (-.585)	0.558	-.036 (-.700)	0.484
<b>Hypothesized Paths</b>						
Voting Intention	<---	Rate of Inflation	.274 (4.764)	.000	.160 (2.918)	0.004
Voting Intention	<---	Unemployment	.360 (5.478)	.000	.213 (3.373)	0.000
Voting Intention	<---	Corruption	.039 (.566)	0.572	.012 (.190)	0.849
Voting Intention	<---	Exchange Rate	.031 (.445)	0.656	.021 (.328)	0.743
Voting Intention	<---	Foreign Policy	.007 (.096)	0.923	.051 (.812)	0.417
Loyalty	<---	Foreign policy	.110 (1.531)	0.126	.120 (1.671)	0.095

**Table 5. Structural Model Assessment Results (continued)**

			Model 1		Model 2	
Controls			$\theta$ (t-value)	P	$\theta$ (t-value)	P
V. Intention	<---	P. Issues	.467 (8.179)	.000	.431 (6.967)	0.000
V. Intention	<---	Unemployment	.192 (2.602)	0.009	.190 (2.584)	0.001
V. Intention	<---	Corruption	-.046 (-.636)	0.525	-.051 (-.706)	0.48
V. Intention	<---	Foreign policy	.056 (.771)	0.441	.035 (.478)	0.632
V. Intention	<---	Inflation	.169 (2.691)	0.007	.183 (2.875)	0.004
P. Issues	<---	Education			.389 (7.948)	0.000
V. Intention	<---	Education			.087 (1.427)	0.153
V. Intention	<---	Foreign policy	-.046 (-.636)	0.525	-.051 (-.706)	0.48
V. Intention	<---	Corruption	.056 (.771)	0.441	.035 (.478)	0.632
Loyalty	<---	Inflation	.169 (2.691)	0.007	.183 (2.875)	0.004
P. Issues	<---	Education			.389 (7.948)	0.000
V. Intention	<---	Education			.087 (1.427)	0.153



**Table 6. Moderating Effects of Voters' Loyalty**

			Model 1		Model 2	
			$\beta$ (t-value)	P	$\beta$ (t-value)	P
P. Issues			.467 (8.179)	0.000	.431 (6.967)	0.09
Loyalty			.192 (2.602)	0.009	.190 (2.584)	0.002
P. Issues x V. Intention					.235 (.478)	0.001
Change in R2/P-Value					1.838	0.001
F-Value/ P-Value			2.875	0.007	.389	0.000
R2			0.635		0.937	

Significant at 0.05 Level

that contribute more in influencing voting intention has not received adequate attention in the political marketing literature till date (Elimbler, 2010). This flaw, consequently, has raised a plethora of questions about how important the previous findings on political issues and voting intention are to voters (Elimbler, 2010). Consistent with this development, our study sought to examine the specific political issues variables that have a greater impact on voting intention in Ghana. Our empirical analysis established that the various antecedents of political issues that have a greater impact on intention to vote in Ghana are unemployment, the rate of inflation, exchange rate and corruption. This means that these determinants enable voters to take an informed voting decision. The above findings imply that a political party that pays attention to the variables in political issues in their development agenda have the tendency to gain voters' trust and loyalty, which will eventually lead to favourable voting intention. The current findings correlate the findings of Incatalupo (2018), Elinder (2010), Gefen (2000), Rachmat, Ahmed et al. (2011) and Hooghe et al. (2013). The current study also confirmed the findings of previous studies on voting intention (e.g., Dabula, 2017; Hetherington, 2005; Hetherington & Husser, 2012; Rachmat, 2013; Pauwels, 2010). Nonetheless, the current findings clearly indicate that the determinants of voters' behavior does not have one clear directional influences on voting intention, as situational factors within the turbulence political environment may play a significant role. It is worthy to note that political issues are increasingly gaining attention in Ghana; and, more importantly, unemployment, inflation, exchange rate, and the level of corruption, among others. The results are therefore not unexpected as a significant concern is created by the political issues as a result of the above development, and subsequently influencing the voters' behavior and their voting intention. Therefore, there is a great need to respond to stakeholders' concerns in order to overcome the political issues challenges at local and national level; although giving more concern to the voters and public opinion may weaken the power of the political leaders and undermine their ability to take a firm decision. This situation is not new, as Strauss () argued exactly along this line of thought when he discussed this in his study "the marketing after election".

The outcome of the study further implies that political parties in Ghana, who place emphasis on creating more jobs for the citizens, maintain a fairly stable inflation rate, fight corruption, maintain a favourable exchange rate while developing the economy, can win voters' trust and loyalty; hence, a favourable voting decision. This explains the crucial role played by stakeholders' (voters') satisfaction and electoral success as opined by Elinder et al. (2015). The crucial aspect of building on, improving and implementing the determinants of voters' behavior is that it must contain core values that resonate with the stakeholders' (voters') satisfaction. This finding reaffirms the findings of Konlan (2016), who argued that voter loyalty is very crucial to political survival and the electoral success of a political party, therefore the politicians must be aware of their citizens' wellbeing. The

inability of our political leaders to give credence to this important aspect has been a major drawback in our political landscape. This finding, however, contradicts the findings of Dendery (2013), who argued that the Africa electorate today is completely different from the electorates of a number of decades ago. They are not easily influenced by pessimistic rational choice behavior during elections. The findings further revealed that an incumbent government's performance on political issues variables (unemployment, the rate of inflation, exchange rate, foreign policy issues and the level of corruption) promote voters' loyalty, which invariably strengthened voting intention. The current finding lends support to the argument made by Bagues and Esteve-Volart (2015). The outcome of the study further demonstrated that favourable political issues have the tendency of establishing strong trust among voters and political parties in Ghana. Therefore, political parties in Ghana are encouraged to embark upon more political issues to strengthened voters' trust as it leads to an improved voting intention (Bagues & Esteve-Volart, 2015; Veiga & Veiga, 2010). The second hypothesis of the study sought to determine the mediating role of voters' trust in the relationship between political issues and voting intention in Ghana. The result shows that voters' trust mediates the relationship. Similarly, the third hypothesis of the study sought to examine the moderating role of voters' loyalty. The findings indicate that voters' loyalty moderates the relationship. The recent findings correlate the previous findings (Hetherington, 2005; Hetherington & Husser, 2012; Pauwels, 2010; Dabula, 2017). It is very important for the political leaders to note that, at this stage, position and repositioning of political issues through peripheral values that are consistent with core values of the voter audience in a manner that can help build trust and loyalty between the politician and the electorate is equally important, as was posited by Pitch et al. (2016), Newman (2002) and Lee-Marshment (2009). The result signifies that good political issues have a positive impact on voters' livelihood. It could also mean that voters perceived the political leaders as responsible, accountable and have citizens' centred philosophy, by embarking on policies and projects that satisfies their desires and needs. Again, it could mean that voters evaluate the benefits they gain from policies and projects implemented by the politicians in a ratio to them giving out their votes. This confirms the rational choice theory that consumers are rational and will always maximize utility out of satisfaction.

### **5.6. Practical contributions**

The empirical testing of the rational choice model/reward punishment theory from different disciplines promotes theoretical boundaries of the marketing discipline and provides significant managerial implications for political marketers and the various groups interested in politics. Subsequently, the analyses of different economic, social and geographic contexts have deepened our understanding of the complexity of the political marketing context in terms of theory and practice. This study, in that respect, has specifically validated the paradigm of determinants of voters' behaviour by enriching the current theorization with appropriate boundary conditions. The study tested scales and theories developed in the context of western developed countries for its applicability to and generalizability in emerging economies as the case of voters' voting intention in Ghana and have proven worthwhile. In a similar situation, the current study has contributed to political marketing management by investigating political issues from customers/voters' perspectives, which has not received adequate attention in the literature. The emphasis has largely been voters attitude (Marike & Chuchu, 2015), the role of media and other factors on voting (Dabula, 2017). Little attention has been paid to political party and their leaders efficiently and effectively creating the platform for the customers/voters to engage in the decision that affects the election outcome. The focus has mostly been on encouraging voters to get involved in the voting process (Pasek et al., 2009). This study, thus, demonstrated how management of political parties should optimize the political issues to influence purchasing/voting intention in the complex ecosystem of politics. To add to the above, the study demonstrated how political leaders should deploy political issues in its holistic sense, whilst establishing long-term relationship with their target audience to win their trust and loyalty. This is important because practicing some of the dimensions in isolation may not yield the needed impact in driving purchasing/voting intention. The study admonishes that political leaders in their attempt to implement political issues, should concentrate on how such political issue implementation

will instil trust and confidence in customers/voters as it is that level of trust and confidence that will subsequently be a major driver of purchasing/voting intention.

The implications of this for political parties and their leaders are that during resource allocation a greater proportion must be channelled for the political issues development and implementation. This is an indication that political parties must not just implement political issues for the sake of it, but rather the focus should largely be on its impacts on the livelihood of its customer/citizens, they must understand the general customer/citizens expectations and requirement; then implement policies and programmes to meet them; for instance, job creation, effort to bring down the cost of living, free health care and many others. By this, Ghanaian politicians will be able to improve on their policy implementations, as poor policy implementation and misplaced priorities, among others, are the major drawback facing Ghanaian politicians in recent times as demonstrated by the empirical results. Undoubtedly, the current study has serious practical implications for political leaders, policy makers and practitioners to initiate political issues strategies, which has the potential to improve trust and their loyalty as well as its associated purchasing/voting intention in the Ghanaian political landscape. By this, political leaders can organize frequent opinion polls to solicit public opinion on all-important decisions that affects them. They will feel more important and secure. This will invariably help the political leaders to prioritize their needs and handle the salient ones out of the scarce resources.

### **5.7. Theoretical contributions**

The study makes theoretical contribution to the field of political marketing by offering a new integrative position on the empirical relationships between political issues, voters' trust, voters' loyalty and voting intention in Ghana in political election. The findings from the current study has hinted that developing customer/voter loyalty programmes, building and maintaining long term customer/voter-relationship, developing policies and programmes that will yield organization/political party-customer/voter mutual beneficial relationship is essential in the political market place as it is in the commercial market place. The study revealed that the relationship between the political issues and voting intention is not static, such that the level of effect changes with different political environmental conditions like the commercial marketing environment. Therefore, politicians must be aware of this commercial marketing turbulence that has penetrated the political market place. Integrating the existing views the study has established that trust and loyalty mediate and moderate the relationship between political issues and voting intention, respectively, implying that the association between the construct is weaker under low levels of voters' trust and loyalty for the party and its candidate, but relatively stronger when they are high. Subsequently, this study offers an empirical contribution by testing this relationship effect. Furthermore, from a theoretical point of view, the current study has partly addressed the limited attention given to empirical research on the relationships between political issues and voting intention in Sub-Saharan Africa political landscape using the experience of Ghanaian voters.

The current study established that theories and models developed on political issues in western developed democracies could likewise influence purchasing/voting intention in Ghana. However, this finding is inconsistent with the views of some scholars in the literature, who argued that due to culture and other factors, dependent characteristics theories that have been developed in western developed democracies for examining political issues and purchase/voting intention may not be replicated in developing democracies like Ghana (Gyimah-Boadi, 2016). This study, being one of the pioneer efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa (specifically Ghana) to empirically examine these political issues components has extended our understanding of how these components influence purchasing/voting intention, trust and loyalty in a developing country such as Ghana. Voters' trust was found to mediate the relationship between political issues and voting intention in the Ghanaian political landscape. Hence, the current study addresses the missing link in the literature by providing empirical result supporting the views held by Newman (2002) and Elinda et al. (2013) that the effects of political issues on voting intention may be redrafted under certain conditions. In another case, the study provides a significant contribution to the literature on

voters' trust as an antecedent to purchasing/voting intention in the political arena by providing empirical evidence that political issues directly influence voters' trust, which subsequently influences voting intention. This shows that customer/voters' relationship building in the political market place is equally important as the commercial market place. This provides support for the literature that voters' trust should be the next frontier for politicians in determinants of voters' behaviour and voting intention implementation. The current study empirically shows that voters are more rational consumers than ever before and they carefully evaluate every option available to them (Ball & Peters, 2005; Heywood, 2002; Karp & Banducci, 2007). This means that politicians must now be aware of this insight and develop the notion that deploying the resources in a manner that yields customer/voter-politician mutual beneficial relationship is a priority. Finally, the current study has contributed to unearth a research gap in political marketing literature by demonstrating the moderating effects of voters' loyalty in the relationship between determinants of voters' behaviour and voting intention. This emphasized the importance of customer loyalty in the political landscape. Hence, the recent study lends its support to the previous scholars (Konlan, 2016) who found that a poor understanding of how voter loyalty can influence voting intention has been a major drawback and, as such, a serious threat facing Ghanaian politicians.

### **5.8. Conclusion and recommendations**

Voter participation and intention is considered fundamental in an electoral process, as it has consequences on a political party's performance and strengthening of a democratic state. Yet almost half the countries in the world have voter turnouts of 60%–79% whilst only 20% of the countries have voter turnout above 80% (International IDEA, 2002, pp. 2014, 2016). When a significantly large proportion of the voting population shows apathetic attitudes towards the process that enables participation of the public in democracy, it questions the extent to which our democracy can be consolidated (Gyampo et al., 2016). Consequently, these have generated an interesting debate, about how political parties and political consultants can deploy strategies that can help them determine, predict and influences voters' voting decision. As a result, this study investigated the influence of political issues on voting intention in Ghana as well as the mediating and moderating role of voters' trust and loyalty, respectively, in the relationship. Hypotheses were formulated and tested. The results indicate that the political issues variables that influence voting intention are unemployment; the rate of inflation; exchange rate; and level of the corruption. The above-mentioned factors, positively and significantly predicted voting intention. It further indicates that voters' trust and loyalty mediate and moderate the relationship between political issues and voting intention, respectively. The findings from the study have implications for practice, policy and research. In the first place, the outcome implies that politicians in Ghana must incorporate in their policy and development agenda, strategic political issues as these will lead to voters' trust, voters' loyalty and its associated favourable voting behaviour. To achieve this milestone, politicians and political consultants must develop a culture that emboldens all the above mentioned factors, where political issues will be among their top priorities on the agenda. This can help in developing trust and loyalty with voters, which in turn can lead to favourable voting intention.

More so, for Ghanaian politicians to ensure smooth implementation and operation of these policies there is the need for consistent efforts. To be precise, they must periodically monitor and evaluate these policies with the focus on examine how well the economy is performing with respect to the salient factors (that is, unemployment, the rate of inflation, the level of corruption and exchange rate) that can impact significantly on voting intention. This will help them understand and predict voters' expectation and behavior to influence favourable voting intention. To add to the above is that politicians should have a marketing department responsible for building and sustaining voters' trust and loyalty.

Finally, the findings of the study have supported the application of rational choice and reward punishment theory to the study of political issues and voting intention. This has therefore led to a call on management of political parties to ensure voters get value for their vote. This will not only make them develop trust for the party and its policies, but also has the potential to create a strong loyalty

with the voters. The application of the findings should not be taken into account, without taken into a consideration the following limitations: In the first place, the geographical context of the research participants may limit the findings, as the environment in which they live have a strong bearing on their mode of thought; and the employment of the non-probability sampling could be another possible limitation to the research findings and recommendations. In addition, the data was collected from the voters in Ghana and may be limited to generalization to other countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa. These research limitations therefore provide opportunities for further studies in other countries within the Sub-region. Irrespective of the limitations stated above, this study has made a significant contribution to knowledge and practice in voters' behavior in general, and more importantly in the Ghanaian context, as management of the various political parties are constantly deploying strategic options to outsmart each other in the turbulence political environment. Furthermore, a new model of voters' political issues and its influence on voting intention has been developed to guide future research direction and practical management of voters' behavior. The model highlighted that reduction in the rate of unemployment, stable inflation, corruption eradication and stable exchange rate can help developed trust and loyalty in voters and influence voting decisions positively; consequently, increase the incumbent party's vote share.

The study has contributed in no small measure to knowledge addition for practitioners in this turbulence political environment, and to the research and body of theoretical knowledge in general. The study has made a theoretical contribution to the literature by offering a new integrative position on the empirical relationships between political issues, trust, loyalty and voting intention in political elections; more importantly, from Sub-Saharan Africa. A research gap on political issues and voting intention has been addressed by providing useful findings that shows that political issues directly drive voting intention among voters. The study proposes that the relationship between political issues and voting intention is not static, such that the level of effect changes with different political environments. By integrating the existing views, the study proposes trust and loyalty mediating and moderating effects, respectively, implying that the association between political issues and voting intention is weaker under a low level of voters' trust and loyalty for a party and its candidates, but strong when they are high. Subsequently, this study offers an empirical contribution by testing this relationship effect. By this attempt, this study makes a significant contribution to the paucity of empirical studies on the consequences of voter dynamics in terms of political election outcomes.

The empirical testing of the Rational Choice Model/Reward Punishment Theory from a different discipline promotes theoretical boundaries of the marketing discipline, and provides significant managerial implications for political marketers and the various groups interested in politics. In addition to the above, is that the analyses of different economic, social and geographic contexts will helps deepen our understanding of the complexity of a political context in terms of theory and practice. This study, in that respect, will specifically validate the paradigm of voters' behaviour by enriching current theorization with appropriate boundary conditions.

The study tested scales and theories developed in Western contexts for its applicable to and generalizability in emerging economies. This will help provide insight with respect to the influence of political issues and voting intention within Sub Saharan Africa. This, in effect, will help bridge the knowledge gap by providing empirical evidence on the mechanisms through which political issues affect voting intention. A great contribution has been made to political marketing management by investigating political issues and voting intention from voters' perspectives, which has not received adequate attention in the literature. This empirical study demonstrates how management of political parties should optimised political issues to influence voting intention in the complex ecosystem of politics. The management of political parties will be guided on how resources must be efficiently allocated towards developing and improving political issues strategies, which will provide top management of political parties a clear guidance on which specific variables within the voters' political needs requires more attention to achieve favourable voting intention.



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## Author details

Zakari Bukari<sup>1</sup>  
 E-mail: [zakaribu100@gmail.com](mailto:zakaribu100@gmail.com)  
 Abu Bakar Abdul Hamid<sup>1</sup>  
 Hishamuddin Md. Som<sup>1</sup>  
 George Cudjoe Agbemabiese<sup>2</sup>  
 Fidelis Quansah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Marketing and Supply Chain Management, Putra Business School, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Marketing and Customer Management, University of Professional Studies Accra, Ghana.

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