

**INVESTIGATING SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL PARTIES' COMMUNICATION
STRATEGIES AND HOW THEY INFLUENCE VOTERS' DECISION-MAKING
PROCESS**

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Trevor Hlungwani

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SUPERVISOR: **Professor Siyasanga M Tyali**

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DECLARATION

Name: Trevor Hlungwani

Student number: 46922660

Degree: Master of Arts in Communication Science

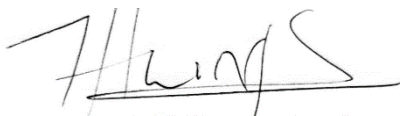
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DEDICATION

It's almost natural to know to whom one owes a dedication in a tale that's compounded by love and selflessness. For that reason, this study is dedicated to the memory of my father MJ 'The Man' Hlungwani who passed on exactly a month before I could submit this dissertation. I can say a lot about your love Mzambhala. If indeed music inspires early brain development, then the first song I listened to and became cognisant of, is without doubt your song released exactly 30 years ago when my mother was pregnant with me. *'Minga tshiketi xikolo nwhi vana va mina, miswi tsundzuka leswaku munduku tiku ri fumiwa hi nwina.'* The song commends the importance of education, and I've never doubted that. Tshika Misava you have done so much for all of us as your children by ensuring that we access education despite not so favourable conditions. You conversed to us the significance of unity and the values you imparted will last us a lifetime. Words will never fully express my gratitude for your love, steadfast support, and always cheering us to be the best that we can be. Nankhensa wena Xidumu, mfa ka N'wa Khondli na Mpfumu.

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I am not by nature; a superstitious person and I have never believed in luck. Well, I have made a few wishes and worked hard to achieve them. The lyrical content of the song that my late grandfather sang to me was punctuated by a message that affirmed the correlation between hard work and achieving one's dreams. These lyrics have directed my steps to success and I believe more will still be achieved.

The grace of God is not only revealed in our greatness or excellence but more so in our weaknesses, failures and emptiness. In 2017, I contemplated going back to school after what seemed like a career slump. I was frustrated and needed to do something to stay sane and motivated. I was not entirely sure what to do, so I ran the idea past my then manager, Dr Nandi Dabula, who convinced me to register for a Master's Degree. At the time, Dr Dabula had just completed hers. I spoke to a few of my close friends, and they advised that I go for it. In 2018, I sacrificed some savings, registered and had my proposal approved in the same year. At the time, I worked full-time as a Journalist for Power FM and had to juggle the newsroom's affairs and academic demands. This thesis has been a culmination of sacrifices and hard work made possible by the many people who have supported and cheered me on. I am immensely blessed to have been surrounded by people who love, inspire, challenge, support and see greatness in me, even when I didn't see it in myself.

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To quote the late Ray Phiri in one of Stimela's hit song; '*Singa Jindi Majita*' and I say, '*Shoes or no Shoes, Siyaya Phambili.....*'

ABSTRACT

This study was an investigation of the effect of political communication strategies on voting behaviour. The area of study was Diepsloot in the north of Johannesburg. Various questions were explored such as; what kind of communication strategies have the top three South African political parties (ANC, DA & EFF) used in the past South African general elections in 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019, do political parties pre-election communication strategies influence Diepsloot voters voting decision and lastly how do Diepsloot voters relate to domestic political parties' communications and messages during elections period? The study followed a qualitative research paradigm with the use of interviews to gather information. At an aggregate level, it is often said that what political organisations do, say or do not say have a bearing on their supporters when election time arrives. Voting behaviour theories were also utilised as a theoretical foundation for understanding voters' psychic. Broadly, this study aimed to investigate the effects of political communications on voters' decision-making process. The focus was on the top three political parties in South Africa being the African National Congress, The Democratic Alliance and the Economic Freedom Fighters. Using thematic analysis, this study identified a variety of issues that influence voting behaviour. Among other findings, the study revealed that while political communication affects voters' choice, some voters continuously vote for a political party that has some historical importance. Other findings suggest that political communication alone is not enough to lure voters; voters are looking for material benefits when considering who to vote for. The study also revealed that the young generation of voters, mostly referred to as 'born-frees,' are much more engaging before choosing a party of their choice. This is compared to the old block of voters who consider historic achievements when voting; they vote based on what a party is delivering at a particular epoch.

NKOMISO

Ndzavisiso lowu wu lavisisa mbuyelo wa tindlela leti mavandla ya tipoliki ya titirhisaka ku gangisa no wonga nseketelo wa vahlawuri. Ndzavisiso lowu wu endliwile endhawini ya Diepsloot, n'walungu wa Joni. Swivutiso swo hambana-hambana swi xopaxopiwile leswi katsaka leswi; Hi tihindlela to gangisa tivhoti leti mavandla ya tipolitiki yanharhu lamakulu laha Afrika-Dzonga (ANC, DA & EFF) ya ti tirhiseke ku gangisa tivhoti eka mihlawulo ya mani na mani leyi hundzeke laha Afrika-Dzonga, xana magangiselo ya tivhoti ya mavandla ya tipoliti loko nhlawulo wu nga se fike ya kucetela swiboho swa vahlawuri, xo hetelela, xana vahlawuri va le Diepsloot va khumbeka njhani hi magangiselo ya mavandla ya tipolitiki ya la kaya na marungula ya wona hi nkarhi wa nhlawulo? Ndzavisiso lowu wu landzelele maendlelo ma nxopaxopo wa vundzeni bya hungu kumbe ku kuma vuxokoxoko bya ndzavisiso, leswi vuriwaka 'qualitative research' ku ri nkarhi ku tirhisiwa nkambelovutivi ku hlengelela vuxokoxoko. Ku tala ku vuriwa leswaku leswi mavandla ya tipolitiki va swiendlaka, ku swi vula kumbe va nga swi vuli swi na nkucetelo swinene eka vaseketeri va vona loko nkarhi wa nhlawulo wu fika. Tithiyori ta matikhomelo ya nhlawulo na tona ti tirhisiwile tanihi hi ndlela yo sungula yo twisisa mianakanyo ya vahlawuri. Hi ku angarhela, ndzavisiso lowu wu kongomisiwe eka ku xopaxopa nkucetelo lowu mimbhurisano ya mavandla ya tipolitiki ya va ka na wona eku tekeni ka swiboho hi vahlawuri. Ku langusiwile ngopfu mavandla yanharhu ya tipolitiki eAfrika-Dzonga ku nga African National Congress, The Democratic Alliance and the Economic Freedom Fighters. Hi ku tirhisa vuhleri bya thematetiki, ndzavisiso lowu wu kumile swilo swo hambanahambana leswi kucetelaka matikhomelo ya vahlawuri. Eka swin'wana swa leswi wu nga swikuma, ndzavisiso wu humesele handle leswaku loko migangiso yi khumba swiboho swa vahlawuri, van'wana vahlawuri va ya emahlweni va hlawula vandla leri ri nga na matimu ya nkoka. Swin'wana leswi wu swi kumeke wu bumabumerile leswaku migangiso ya mavandla yi ri yoxe a yi enelanga ku wonga nseketelo wa vahlawuri, vahlawuri va lava na swa le mandleni loko va fanele va vona ku va hlawula vandla rihi. Ndzavisiso lowu wu tlhele wu boxa leswaku vantshwa, vo tala va vona lava vitaniwaka ti "born-frees" va njhekajhekisa loko va nga se hlawula vandla leri va ri lavaka. Leswi swi hambanile na vanhulavankulu lava va langutaka matimu na leswi vandla ri nga swi fikelela loko vahlawula; va hlawula ku ya hi leswi vandla ri nga eku swiendleni nkarhi lowo leha.

KEY TERMS

Campaigning: Mobilising public concern to achieve a social, political or commercial aim. It is a series of activities intended to influence the policies and practices of public or private bodies

Democracy: This is a system of governance by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, normally through elected representatives.

Developing Countries: A developing country is a country with a less developed industrial base and a low Human Development Index relative to other countries.

Mass media means technology that is envisioned to reach a mass audience. It is the primary means of communication used to reach most of the general public

Politics: The activities associated with a country's governance or area, particularly the debate between parties having power.

Political Communication: The field of political communication incorporates the production, distribution, receiving, and encoding of messages that can have a significant direct or indirect impact on politics.

Rhetoric: Language designed to have a persuasive or impressive effect, but which is often viewed as lacking in sincerity or meaningful content.

Strategic Communication: This refers to the purposeful use of communication by an organisation to fulfil its mission.

Voting Behaviour: Voting behaviour relates to the actions or inactions of citizens in respect of participating in the elections that take place for members of their local, regional, or national governments.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANC- African National Congress

ANCYL - African National Congress Youth League

COPE – Congress of the People

DA - Democratic Alliance

DP-Democratic Party

EFF – Economic Freedom Fighters

ID – Independent Democrats

IFP- Inkatha Freedom party

NP - National Party

NFP – National Freedom Party

TPB – Theory Planned Behaviour

UDM- United Democratic Movement

SABC – South African Broadcasting Corporation

STATS SA – Statistics South Africa

USA – United States of America

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Many studies on political communication and voting behaviour have investigated how the former impacts the latter and the process of that thereof (Stieglitz, Brookmann & Dang-Xuan, 2012). Some were based on how knowledge of party policies, candidates' credibility and the broader understanding of political formations influence voters' decisions. According to Caprara and Zimbardo (2004), in modern politics, citizens are provided with large amounts of information to seduce them to vote for a particular party or candidate. These forms of communication ranging, from propaganda, negative campaigning and strategised political communication, are carried out in political campaigns and media outlets (Tyali & Mukhudwana, 2020).

Political communication has been part of national governance globally and used by political leaders to convince or sway their followers to buy into their message or vision. There are many instances where political communication has succeeded and sometimes failed. De Wet (2007) asserts that communication in propaganda aims to channel the audience's behaviour to the communicator's advantage. According to Jowett and O'Donnell (1992), between 50 B.C and A.D 50, the Roman Empire used systematic propaganda that employed all available forms of communication to create an image of Imperial Rome that still exists today. In Germany, through mass media channels such as magazines and newspapers, Adolf Hitler used propaganda to popularise successes of Nazi and left out criticism of his regime (De Wet, 2007). Herman and Chomsky (2009) argue that it's the nature of countries where the government hold monopolistic control over the media that censorship will prevail.

However, for democratic establishments to thrive, political organisations and governments must provide the electorates with information around political agendas, party policies, and vision (Ojekwe, 2015). This, according to Ojekwe (2015), enables the voters to make an informed electoral choice which is essential for balanced democratic governance.

The first general elections in South Africa were held on 27 April 1994 following the unbanning of political organisations and the release of some political convicts such as Nelson Mandela, Johnson Mlambo, Dennis Goldberg, Ahmed Kathrada, Jafta Masemola and Walter Sisulu. That release of key political figures gave birth to a new South Africa which preceded the apartheid setup. Over 19,5 million South Africans cast their votes in 1994, and the ANC won the elections with a 62 percent lead (Southall, Daniel & Szeftel 1999).

In 1999, the party led with 66,4 percent, 65,9 percent in 2009 and 62,15 percent in 2014 (IEC, 2015). Southall, Daniel and Szeftel (1999) says the elections were necessary to legitimise the democratic transition. The 1994 elections offered all South Africans an opportunity to choose between the apartheid past and a new South Africa (Southall, Daniel & Szeftel, 1999). The ANC has enjoyed tremendous electoral support since 1994. De Jager and Parkin (2017) attributes that to its identification with the country's liberation from the then apartheid regime and Nelson Mandela's respected leadership. Southall, Daniel and Szeftel (1999) also suggest that the first democratic elections' results confirmed the ANC's stature among all South Africans and Mandela's status as an icon of national unity.

However, De Jager and Parkin (2017) warns that these historical milestones are non-recurring and the historic block of voter's fades with generations. According to Butler (2014), the ANC is currently faced with unprecedented political challenges, and the national elections of 2014 are a testimony to that. Butler (2014) attributes the challenge to the organisation's money-fuelled politics, candidate selection processes, poor communications and failure to advance credible and coherent economic developmental policies. The 2014 national elections were highly contested (Everatt, 2016). New political formations, increasing public demonstrations and breakaway parties have affected the ANC's social base support (De Jager & Parkin, 2017). In the 2014 general elections, the ANC's electoral support dropped to 62, 15 percent from the 2009's 65, 9 while the DA scored 22, 23 percent from the 2009's, and the new EFF which was formed in 2013 with 6, 35 percent (Everatt, 2016). In the latest general elections of 2019, the ANC claimed 57,5 percent of the count, its worst performance since the dawn of democracy (Khambule, Nomdo, Siswana, & Fokou, 2019). The DA came second with 20,8 percent and the EFF with 10,8 percent of the vote.

There are other new formations such as The Good Party (Good), the African Transformation Movement (ATM) and the old UDM, IFP, FF Plus which gathered enough to have representations in parliament (Ferree, Gibson & Hoffman, 2019). Before the popularity of mass media, for many centuries, African political leaders used methods such as Lekgotla, which is a traditional form of communication, to engage their constituency and ultimately garner support (Hartslief, 2001). As Hartslief (2001) observes, the South African government under former president Thabo Mbeki, reintroduced the concept as Imbizo to win the hearts of voters. Historically, the African traditional leadership system depended on Lekgotla to communicate with the subjects (Mathagu, 2010). Today, the mass media is an important channel through which political communication occurs (Farell & Schmitt-Back (2002). According to Savigny (2002), the mass media allows for more public opinion presentations by presenting opinion polls or generally the expression of public opinion.

Although contemporary mass media encompasses the public sphere, the space is characterised by the challenge of meeting commercial needs and providing information (Savigny, 2002). In recent times, online communication and the new media have revolutionised political communication and made that interaction even better (Moraru & Rusu, 2017). While social media is broadly used as a platform to share opinions, experiences and knowledge among individuals Stieglitz, Brookmann and Dang-Xuan (2012) posit that in a politically charged environment it can also enable political participation and increase democratic involvement. Considering the importance of interpersonal interactions, Himmelboim, Lariscy, Tinkham and Sweetser (2012) suggest that using online media as a method for political communication could bear instant feedback on the messages' efficiency. This, they say, can easily predict sentiment towards online political activities and attitudes. In South Africa, social media campaigns are controlled by political parties through their websites (Tyali & Mukhudwana, 2020). Research also indicates that users' perception and liking for a candidate goes up after inspecting their website (Hansen & Benoit, 2005).

In 2008, America's Democratic candidate Barack Obama proved the effectiveness of campaigning using social media to mobilise voters (Behrle, 2017). Obama's campaign comprised the regular physical campaigning and the use of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter (Institute for Security Studies, 2013).

Even before Obama, Roh Moo Hyun, ex-president of South Korea (2003 – 2008), explored Internet campaigning by doing so on the web instead of the traditional method (Westcott, 2007). This trend has spread across Africa and the whole world. Social media in political communication was also instrumental in the lead up to the 2013 Kenyan general elections (Institute for Security Studies, 2013).

The consistency of political communication and coverage intensifies during the election period (Tuwan, 2008). According to Tuwan (2008), the main aim of that communication is to campaign for elections. It is essential to study the effect of party-political communication voter attitude and voting decision-making process. This study investigated South African political parties' communication strategies and how they influence voters' voting decision-making processes. The focus was placed on the current top three political parties: the ANC, DA and the EFF. Various questions were explored such as; what kind of communication strategies has the three leading South African political parties (ANC, DA & EFF) used in the past general elections in South Africa, do political parties pre-election communication strategies influence Diepsloot voters voting decision and lastly how do Diepsloot voters relate to domestic political parties' communications and messages during elections period? The three were chosen since they currently have the support of the majority of South African voters.

1.2 Problem statement

Effective political communication is the most crucial aspect for any political party seeking to mobilise electoral support (Farell & Schmitt-Back, 2002). But in a fast-changing world of media, made up of fake news, and a diverse medium such as social media, it is no longer easy to craft a winning communication strategy that will easily win the target audience's emotions and intellect. Some argue that it is even harder to measure the effect of a political communication strategy, often success or failure of such is only seen at the end of a campaign when voters respond positively or negatively. In a developing democracy such as South Africa, political parties have a role in their electoral communication to not only canvas votes but also play a role to the sustainable development of democracy (Fourie & du Plessis, 2011).

According to Natrass & Seekings (2001) the first democratic elections of 1994 and those that followed ideally allowed the new government to reduce poverty, inequality, and unemployment but that seems to have been impossible. This failure to provide services is met with dissent from communities who usually take to the streets or even refuse to vote come the elections. One of those communities is Diepsloot in the north of Johannesburg. The area's historical and political developments have over the years become a drawcard for different researchers, and among other issues, locals are faced with social, economic, development and environmental problems (Bopape, 2017).

As it is in many communities, these protests call for the government to act on their service delivery promises (Mangava, 2018). The ANC has dominated all elections since the demise of the apartheid government in 1994, and many South Africans feel that little has been done to address their destitute surroundings (Pela, 2018). Like elsewhere in the country, residents in Diepsloot express the plight of low-income residents who engage in claim-making politics to provide service delivery and recognition (Dawson, 2014). Amid all political activities and the continuing democratic processes which include voting for new leadership after every five years, it is essential to understand how Diepsloot residents relate to domestic political parties' communication and messages during the election period and to understand to what extent do political parties pre-election communication strategies influence a Diepsloot voter voting decision?

Political actors who fail to impress voters through political rhetoric during the election period are likely to lose their interest (Trent & Friedenber, 1983). So a question is how and why some political parties' political communication succeeds and why others fail. This study answers questions such as; what kind of communication strategies has the three top South African political parties (ANC, DA & EFF) used in the past general elections in South Africa? To what extent do political parties' pre-election communication strategies influence a Diepsloot voter voting decision and how do Diepsloot voters relate to domestic political parties' communication and messages during elections?

1.3 Aim of the study

In developing countries like South Africa, liberation movements such as the ANC, communicate their involvement on the struggle for freedom, showing images of their leaders as heroes and televising the atrocities inflicted by the oppressor of the previous governments (De Jager & Parkin, 2017). This kind of communication achieves emotional relevance with the voters and empathy with the external world. However, as the memory and effect of historical events fade in the new generation's minds, different types of communication strategies, accompanied by relevant imageries, are required to appeal to the new generation of voters. This study aimed to investigate the top three South African political parties' communication strategies and their impact on Diepsloot voters' attitudes and voting decision-making process. These parties are the African National Congress (ANC), the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). This study also assessed if Diepsloot residents understand political communication, especially during the elections period. Furthermore, that assessment sought to improve the understanding of what political communication seeks to achieve. Political principals and communicators can use the findings to enhance their communication strategies.

1.4 Research questions

1.4.1 Main research question

- How do political parties' pre-election communication strategies influence a Diepsloot voter voting decision?

1.4.2 Sub-questions

- Do Diepsloot voters vote for a party based on its communication strategies and messaging?
- What kind of communication strategies has the three top South African political parties (ANC, DA & EFF) used in the past (1999-2019) general elections in South Africa?

- Do Diepsloot voters relate to domestic political parties' communications and messages during elections period?

1.5 Research objectives

- To review the previous (1999-2019) general elections communication strategies used by South African political parties.
- To determine whether political parties' prior general elections communication strategies affected the decision-making process of Diepsloot voters.
- To determine the kind of effect that post-elections communication strategies have on Diepsloot voters' next elections voting decision
- To understand whether Diepsloot voters relate to a party based on its communication strategies and messaging.

1.6 Significance of the study

Much research has been done around political communication and how it influences voting behaviour, but a great deal of that work is based on American and European politics (Behrle, 2017). There is a big void of political communication research in South Africa (Oyedemi & Mahlatji, 2016). This study's findings will be relevant to any person researching political communication and campaigns or interested in political communication strategies. Further significance of this work in the academic arena would be to assist many students interested in investigating the importance of political communication in a developing democracy such as South Africa.

For communications teams of political organisations attempting to increase their party's brand equity using political communication, this study's findings will serve as a blueprint for the correct implementation of party political communication. The findings can be used to discover a systematic design in the application of political communication to allow campaigners to tailor messages to influence voting behaviour to their advantage. The study will also contribute to understanding the vital role of political communications in developing democracies.

The researcher hopes that this study will provide insights into South African politics for those interested and that these findings can be used to ignite more constructive dialogue that can move South Africa to a better nation.

1.7 Dissertation Layout

Chapter one introduces the study focusing on the research problem, its aim, and its objectives. Chapter Two comprises the literature review, which goes deeper into political communication. It also contextualises the theoretical framework through which voting behaviour can be understood and focuses on the theories' philosophical tenants. For this study, the theories in use are explored to bring clarity on the topic under discussion. Then Chapter Three details the research methodology that put into context the research techniques employed to gather data. That discussion also contextualizes the method for data analysis and the ethical background thereof. What follows is Chapter Four which presents the findings and analysis of the data collected. Lastly, Chapter Five gets into further discussion on the findings of the study. That chapter also presents the recommendations based on the interpretation of the data provided in Chapter Five.

1.8 Conclusion

Chapter one introduced the study, its aims, objectives and a broader background of the phenomenon on enquiry. It also provided some information about the area of research, Diepsloot, and the rationale of why it was chosen as a case study. It was essential to establish that background on the subject, its history and development as that literature created a framework to understand the research problem. That discussion was used as a backdrop to create insight on the issue under research. The chapter that follows, Chapter Two, will go deep into the theoretical framework of this study and the literature which was used as a primary point of understanding the research problem.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

A literature review helps an author demonstrate their understanding of the field of their interest, key theories, and a framework to discuss and compare new findings of a study to previous ones (Randolph, 2009). According to Webster and Watson (2002), a literature review is an important feature of any academic assignment because it creates a firm foundation to find new knowledge and help facilitate theory development and fill in gaps where it is necessary. Hart (2018) argues that without a review of the relevant literature, an author might fail to understand the subject under research, how it has been approached before and furthermore how new insights can be developed. This literature review chapter commences by discussing a brief history of the political landscape in South Africa.

Keeping the purpose of this chapter in mind, in this chapter, the researcher will give a broad definition of what political communications entail to provide a clear direction of the issues under discussion. From this point forward, the chapter will look at political communication in South Africa from 1994 to date, followed by a review of previous studies related to the topic under investigation. That will be followed by a selected look at the history of political communication in South Africa, in the rest of the African continent and across the world. That examination will help the study identify how other scholars have approached political communication and its influence on voter decisions. This literature review provided a grounded analysis of political communication and then turns to its role in a democratic society. Worth noting is that not enough contemporary research has been conducted around political communications and its effects on voters' decisions. Much of the research that has already been done is dated and not local (South African). Significantly it does not assist in understanding the importance of political communication in the South African context. Therefore, this research will fill the vacuum that has existed because of the country's void in political communication research.

The literature review is then finalised with a theoretical framework that looked at voting behaviour theories to establish a theoretical underpinning of political communication effects on voter behaviour.

2.2 Brief History of the South African political landscape from 1994 to 2019

The first general elections in South Africa took place on 27 April 1994 following political organisations' unbanning. The release of political prisoners such as Nelson Mandela, Jafta Masemola, Dennis Goldberg, Johnson Mlambo, Ahmed Kathrada and Walter Sisulu and the elections offered all South Africans an opportunity to choose between the apartheid past and a new South Africa (Southall, Daniel & Szeftel, 1999). The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) under Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi had boycotted¹ the elections, but after negotiations, the party agreed to partake on the eve of the elections (Lodge, 1995). Research literature suggests that the ANC has enjoyed tremendous electoral support since the fall of apartheid. Over 19,5 million South Africans cast their votes in 1994 with the party winning with a margin of 62 percent (Southall, Daniel & Szeftel, 1999).

Southall, Daniel and Szeftel (1999) also suggest that the first democratic elections' results confirmed the ANC's stature among all South Africans and Mandela's status as an icon of national unity. Again in 1999, the party led with 66,4 percent; 69,69 percent in 2004; 65,9 percent in 2009, 62,15 percent in 2014 and 57,5 percent in 2019 (IEC, 2019). De Jager and Parkin (2017) attributes that to the party's identification with the country's liberation from the then apartheid regime and Nelson Mandela's respected leadership.

¹ The IFP had boycotted the elections in protest for a control of the KwaZulu-Natal province and further constitutional guarantees for the Zulu Monarchy under King Goodwill Zwelithini (Szeftel,1994). A week before the elections then party leader Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi announced the party's intention to stand for elections due to the secret transfer of the 1.2 hectares of the Ingonyama Trust land to the trusteeship of King Zwelithini by the then National Party government (Guelke, 1994). Moreover, Chief Buthelezi was convinced by an opinion poll which showed that his party would do well and achieve above 10 % of the national vote if it participate in the elections (Southall, 1994). Stickers were then attached to the bottom of the ballot papers to accommodate the party and its candidates in the historic April 27 elections.

According to Kersting (2012), the party's electoral power can be attributed to the fact that newly-graduates are enticed into voting for the party for employment prospects, especially in the public sector. Historically, other prominent political formations that have featured in the political setup in the country included the New National Party (NP), the then Independent Democrats (ID), Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), most recently the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) under then ANC youth league President Julius Malema.

While the ANC has always positioned itself as a mass movement that aims to be a home for all South Africans, the then Independent Democrats under Patricia De Lille focused on the Coloured population, with the UDM putting its focus on the Eastern Cape, the White-dominated Democratic Alliance focused on negative campaigning and demonising the ANC's governance most recently under former president Jacob Zuma (Africa, 2010). According to Africa (2010), the ANC currently faces unprecedented political challenges, and the national elections of 2014 are a testimony to that. It is also interesting to look at how things turned out with Zuma's victory over Kgalema Motlhante and his running-mate Cyril Ramaphosa against Tokyo Sexwale and Mathews Phosa (Southall, 2014).

Southall (2014) attributes the ANC's challenges to, among other things, its money-fuelled politics, candidate selection processes, poor communications and failure to advance credible and coherent economic developmental policies. New political formations, increasing public demonstrations and breakaway parties have affected the ANC's social base support (De Jager & Parkin, 2017). In 2014, the ANC's electoral support dropped to 62,15 percent from the 2009's 62,65, while the DA scored 22,23 percent, the new Economic Freedom Fighters under expelled former ANC Youth League president Julius Malema with 6,35 percent, while the IFP 2,40 percent its breakaway party the National Freedom Party with 1,57 percent (Everatt, 2016).

Despite the degree of disappointment, the ANC remains firmly in power and widespread corrupt practices in government and state-owned enterprises seem not to rob the party of its power in government (Khambule, Nomdo, Siswana, & Fokou, 2019).

In the latest 2019 general election, the ANC claimed 57.5 percent of the count even though this has been its worst performance since the dawn of democracy (Khambule, Nomdo, Siswana, & Fokou, 2019). The DA came second with 20,8 percent and the EFF with 10,8 percent of the vote. At the same time, other parties which gathered enough to have representations in parliament are the UDM, IFP, FF Plus and the newly-formed The GOOD Party and the African Transformation Movement (Ferree, Gibson & Hoffman, 2019).

The ANC's continued electoral victory, although with a decline, may mean that South Africans still believe that the party is capable of bettering their lives. However, De Jager and Parkin (2017) warns that the ANC's historical landmarks such as freeing South Africans from the apartheid regime are non-recurring and the 'historic block' of voters fades with generations. Following the watershed 2007 Polokwane conference, an internal rift within the ANC led to its second post-apartheid president, Thabo Mbeki's forceful resignation in 2008 (Glenn & Mattes, 2011). In 2005, Mbeki had fired² his deputy Jacob Zuma for corruption (Glenn & Mattes, 2011). Mbeki's forced resignation led to the formation of the Congress of the People, and it focused mainly on institutional reforms following ANC infightings that also led to the resignations of many cabinet members who served under Mbeki's administration (Kersting, 2009).

2.3 Defining communication

The word communication originates from the Latin word, *communis*, which means common (Lunenborg, 2010). According to Lunenborg (2010), it's clear from this explanation that unless a common ground or understanding is reached in exchanging information, there is no communication. Greeff (2012) defines communication as a dialogue meant to result in mutual understanding. From this definition, it is arguable that communication must be a collaborative exercise. Littlejohn and Foss (2010) assert that although communication is an everyday activity tied with human life, its complexity, pervasiveness and importance is overlooked.

² Mbeki was asked to step down as president by the ANC's National Executive Committee in 2008 after Judge Chris Nicholson's ruling which suggested that he might have interfered with the NPA's decision to charge his then deputy, Jacob Zuma (News24, 2008).

According to Greeff (2012), the nature of communications takes a two-way exchange with mutual feedback between a communicator and a recipient in reciprocal roles. Communication research is essential because every organisation's administrative function and activities have direct or indirect communication (Lunenburg, 2010). Schill (2009) says that a communication process should follow the sequence of Who Says What, In Which Channel, To Whom and With What Effect? Fourie (2007) further explains that communication aims to get feedback from the receiver and is carried out by a medium or a source that can be a newspaper, radio, television, internet, and orally. According to Schill (2009), this kind of communication is not individual-oriented but has to do with the production and distribution of information through television stations and newspapers.

A basic model of mass communication according to Fourie (2007) starts with the communicator who can be a politician who aims to transmit a message to a mass audience, and in a political context that would be a politician. The mass media acts as an information transmission belt, controlling how political messages are secured and distributed (DeVito & DeVito, 2007). Schill (2009) argues that politicians in political communication send the message to their constituency using mass media organisations to select the message they prefer disseminating. According to Ferguson (1999), the choice of the medium is mostly based on the message's immediacy. This means that currently in South Africa, the quickest medium political leaders can use could be social media because of its power to disseminate news quickly (Steenkamp & Hyde-Clarke, 2014).

More complex according to DeVito & DeVito (2007) is that even the receivers of such information are not single individuals known to the communicator but a large audience who in some cases cannot afford to respond to the communicator. The recipients or the audience will receive the communication from the media who happen not to be the original source of that message (Fourie, 2007). The response to that message follows a similar process where the audience responds to the initial communicator through the medium (Ferguson, 1999). According to Huckfeldt, Beck, Dalton, Levine and Morgan (1998), a great deal of political communications is embedded in ambiguity because of lack of clarity which leads to distortions on the sender, the nature of the receiver and the different political setup in which that

communication is interpreted. This arises because of individual environmental effects due to expectations on the receiver's part and ambiguous representation by the sender (Huckfeldt, Beck, Dalton, Levine & Morgan, 1998). The following section will discuss interpersonal, political communication as it forms an integral part of how political communication unfolds in any society.

2.3.1 Interpersonal Political Communication

Interpersonal communication between candidates and prospective voters is vital in any political communication campaign (Trent, Friedenberg & Denton, (2018). Maarek (2011) identifies canvassing, a personal contact strategy as an ideal form of interpersonal, political communication. According to Trent, Friedenberg and Denton (2018), interpersonal communication is instrumental in cases where political parties do not receive enough media coverage. It affords political leaders to interact with their supporters. Maarek (2011) states that this method is preferred as it allows the leader to court his / her constituency and get feedback from them.

2.4 Defining Political Communication

Various authors around the subject of political communication have attempted to define what political communication entails. Denten and Kuypers (2007), McNair (2017) and (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008) define political communication as "the process by which language and symbols are employed by leaders, media or citizens, exerts intended or unintended effects on the political cognition, attitudes, or behaviours of individuals or on outcomes that bear on the public policy of a nation, state or community."

McNair (2017) refers to political communication as "the discursive process by which political information is shared and promotes awareness, ignorance, manipulation, consent, dissent, action, or passivity." From that description it is evident that political communicators are deliberate on manipulating the recipients with their messages. Norris (2004) defines political communication as a collaborative exercise regarding the transmission of information between politicians, the news media and the public. This definition reveals that that process includes the media as a carrier of the information.

According to Graber and Smith (2005), the field of political communication incorporates the production, distribution, receiving, and encoding of messages that have a potential to have a significant direct or indirect impact on politics. Such communications can be sent by journalists, members of interest groups, citizens, politicians and other role players in the political ecosystem.

The earliest forms of communication were done through face-to-face communication between voters, party members, and mass rallies organised by political formations (Rommele, 2003). That era was followed by that of newspapers, radio, television and later the most recent method of using a multi-dimensional approach that employs almost every means to send political messages across (Rommele, 2003). Political parties use political communication to mobilise and persuade different voter groups to increase their vote share and focus on the related themes of how their campaigns can connect them with voters, and how they organise and run their election campaigns (Strömbäck & Kioussis, 2014). Norris (2004) says that the process happens downward from governing institutions to the citizenry and horizontally in linkages.

However, the findings of this study show that there is a shift when it comes to the production of such messaging. With the growth in internet access, Trent, Friedenborg and Denton (2016) include social media applications where political leaders can publish messages to a mass audience and ask them to engage on ideas. The growing access to communication technologies also means that citizens can interact with the media and close the gate-keeping content development monopoly previously enjoyed by editors and become role-players in the process by becoming creators and disseminators of political information (Gurevitch, Coleman & Blumler, 2009).

According to Gurevitch, Coleman and Blumler (2009), politicians are also conscious of these changing roles and have shifted in their media usage by adapting to new content creation channels. The internet offers a new way of sending political messages through social media networks such as Twitter. Such was seen in the United States with how Obama used the medium to campaign ahead of the 2008 elections.

The need to get a worldwide perspective of political communication according to Strömbäck and Kiousis (2014) is that campaigns are shaped by a lot of factors such as the political and party system, the media system, campaign rules and regulations which varies from country to country. The following section will investigate political communication globally to understand how it is perceived in different localities and how it plays out in various political setups.

2.4.1 History and examples of party-political communication globally

Of course, political communication is not a recent phenomenon. It has been part of almost every political order to convince or sway followers to buy into whatever message or vision politicians have. According to Jowett and O'Donnell (1992), between 50 B.C and A.D 50, the Roman Empire used systematic propaganda that employed all available forms of communication to create an image of Imperial Rome that still exists today. Before the popularity of social media, for many centuries, African political leaders used Imbizo methods, a traditional form of communication, to engage their constituency and solidify their political power. According to Maarek (2011), kings and princes in Europe would call their subjects to gather before their palaces and deliver their messages. In Africa, the African traditional leadership system depended on Imbizo to communicate with the subjects (Mathagu, 2010). Although these gatherings were not aimed at winning the electorates' hearts, they allowed leaders to communicate their political messages.

Maarek (2011) argues that most modern manifestation of political marketing and campaigning can be traced back to the 1950s when the United States presidential campaign of Dwight D. Eisenhower employed political anecdotes. In Germany, through mass media channels such as magazines and newspapers, Adolf Hitler used propaganda to popularise successes of Nazi and left out criticism of his regime (O'Shaughnessy, 2019). Jowett and O'donnell Wet (2018) asserts that communication in propaganda aims to channel the audience's behaviour to the communicator's advantage. During the nineteenth century in France, Napoleon Bonaparte III used posters to publicise his parliamentary political campaign (Maarek, 2011). Perloff (2013) believes that political communication casts a wide net in America by including messages to influence such as debates, presidential speeches, and campaigns to

influence attitudes on topics ranging from voting, healthcare, and other matters. Voltmer (2006) mentions that many Americans view political communication as propaganda to manipulate and influence voters unethically. Political communication scholar, Africa (2010) argues that political communication in South Africa has to do with the exchange of messages and symbols that might influence how the political system works.

The need to get a worldwide perspective of political communication according to Strömbäck and Kiousis (2014) is that campaigns are shaped by a lot of factors such as the political and party system, the media system, campaign rules and regulations which varies from country to country. This means that how political communication may manifest and succeed in Country A may not be the same in Country B because of different political setups.

The increasing use of opinion polls, political marketing and television, the 1960s and 70s, has transformed democratic discourse (Moraru & Rusu, 2017). Perloff (2013) states that political communication has more to do with the transfer of symbolic meanings through emotional words that could agitate, arouse or disgust those receiving it. Elections are not won on the day of the elections, but effective campaigning is an essential part of growing electoral support (Kimmie, Booysen & Greben, 2010). Maarek (2001) states that that form of communication should make an impression by relaying a simple unforgettable political message. The opinions we receive from the media about political figures change our attitudes and beliefs about them (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2006).

This highlights the need also to study the media's role in political communication as a discipline. Four years before he ran for the presidency, former US president, Barack Obama aroused passion with his eloquent political rhetoric when he addressed Americans during the democratic convention in 2004. He employed eloquence by calling on benevolent rhetoric of unification (Perloff, 2013). During the speech, he said "those who are prepared to divide us" that "there's not a liberal America and a conservative America; there's the United States of America (Rowland & Jones, 2007). There's not a Black America and White America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America" (Perloff, 2013). However, McNair (2017) argues that the positive effects of political communication are not

made possible by the context of the message but by the historical context in which they happen.

Research on political communication mostly focuses on single election campaigns in a different country without much theory-driven research despite providing detailed descriptions of those cases (Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2014). According to Strömbäck & Kiousis (2014), most of the research is based on political communication in elections campaigns in the United States and a few European countries. It is, therefore, important that this study looks at political communication from an African perspective.

2.4.2 Political Communication in South Africa

The increasing use of opinion polls, political marketing and television, the 1960s and 70s, contributed to transforming the democratic discourse (Moraru & Rusu, 2017). In recent times voters and citizens, in general, gather political communication during election campaigns from mass media (Baek, 2009). On her research on the use of campaigning prior the 1994 general elections, Teer-Tomaselli (2005) found that most political parties used political advertising which included placards, street posters, door to door campaigning, town hall gatherings and other traditional methods to court voters. These campaigns are intended to express the planned programmes of action for the political organisation once they reach power (Phago, 2012). They are also used to detail what a particular party understands to be challenges their constituency faces and how those problems can be dealt with. According to Teer-Tomaselli (2005), the most significant talking point before the 1994 elections was a new South Africa.

Here in South Africa, the early political communication, also known as propaganda or rhetoric can be traced back to the apartheid era where the then National Party countered the worldwide negative perception of apartheid by controlling how the press reported propaganda and political action (Kolbe, 2005). The party had a propaganda group called Strategic Communications (Stratcom)³ tasked to hold smear campaigns and produce negative news against those opposing apartheid.

³ In South Africa during the apartheid regime, Stratcom was used to carry out disinformation campaigns such as fake news and propaganda against those who opposed the apartheid regime. (The South African, 2018).

After the death of Struggle icon, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, the works of Stratcom came into light. Former apartheid security branch operative, Vic McPherson, admitted having had numerous journalists who worked for him to tarnish the image of freedom fighters (The South African, 2018). Fourie and Froneman (2005) further argue that the government used negative messages to create a lasting bad image in the recipients' minds.

In 2018, former Stratcom Security Police Officer Paul Erasmus told Radio 702 that during the apartheid era they were tasked with neutralising Madikizela-Mandela (EWN, 2018).

With the knowledge of Stratcom operations, there were counter-messaging from parties opposing the then government. Negative political messaging goes far back before the first democratic elections and is meant to attack the opponent and typically focus on their weaknesses (Trent, Friedenbergr & Denton, 2018). In the 1994 presidential debate between Nelson Mandela and F.W De Klerk, Mandela repeatedly accused De Klerk's National Party as a racist and violent organisation (Glad & Banton, 1997). Before 1994, the SABC under the apartheid regime created a negative impression of the ANC by reinforcing a perception that it is a terrorist movement. With the new dispensation, the party received fair coverage from the state-owned SABC as a positive contributor to development (Steinberg, 2006).

In recent South Africa, an example of negative political messaging is how opposition parties paint the ruling ANC as a corrupt and uncaring organisation. According to Bankole, Chigona and Bankole (2012) ahead of the 2009 elections one of the buzzing from the opposition DA and COPE was corruption alleged to have been committed by the ruling ANC, with a promise to end the scourge should they come to power. While the ruling ANC emphasised transforming the state of education in its communication, opposition parties' such as the DA, COPE and IFP focused more on its perceived failures to transform South Africans' lives (Bankole, Chigona & Bankole, 2012).

More recently, South Africa has seen that replicating. An example of that was the "ANC *Ayisafani* TV advertisement by the DA before the 2014 general elections (Tyali & Mukhudwana, 2020).

The advertisement, anchored by its former leader Mmusi Maimane, depicted the ANC as a party that deserted the people who voted for it. The controversy led to the ANC calling for its banning on television. While the ANC capitalised on using Mandela as a struggle icon to attract voters, other smaller parties banked on the party's shortcomings. Even as early as the 1999 general elections, the ANC employed their flagship theme: 'Together fighting for change' to paint itself as a party that cared for its people.

The party also used the message across brochures, advertisements in newspapers and posters (Fourie & Froneman, 2005). In recent political campaigning, advertising has become a significant factor with both Obama and Romney using over 1 Billion U.S Dollars for political advertising ahead of their 2012 political campaigns (Trent, Friedenbergr & Denton, 2018). Moraru and Rusu (2017) distinguish between two main communication possibilities between politicians and citizens: direct and indirect.

The researchers state that direct communication happens when one uses a channel they have full control of. These include candidates' meetings with voters, brochures with information on the objectives of political parties, electoral publicity through posters and information posted on the websites of political actors (Moraru & Rusu, 2017). They assert that indirect or mediated political communication is executed by political leaders using mass media like print media, radio and television.

According to Steinberg (2006) political, social and economic developments in South Africa are covered by newspapers, radio and television stations and selected and interpreted by these media houses, consequently influencing how people receive and respond to those developments.

In 1998 ahead of the 1999 elections, the then-Democratic Party's ran a controversial campaign with one of their posters attacking then health minister, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma titled '*Onder Dr Zuma se administrasie is die gehalte van gesondheidsorg in hospitale erg skade aangedoen*' [*Under Dr Zuma's administration the health department and hospitals were badly hurt*]. Many of these communication campaigns implied that other political leaders' governance style was a danger to democracy (Fourie & Froneman, 2005). The poster was an attack on her style of governance. In the lead up to the 2004 elections, the ANC stressed its achievements but acknowledged where it had failed to deliver (Africa, 2010).

This message somehow pleaded with the voters to give the party a chance to improve its leadership by voting for it. Their then main message was their tagline “*A better life for all*” (Africa, 2010). The party also banked on its message that it was the only legitimate organisation prepared to better the lives of ordinary South Africans with that theme “*A better life for all.*” On the other hand, the DA was more robust with its “*South African deserves better*” theme (Africa, 2015).

Glenn and Mattes (2011) maintain that the ANC’s decision to start its own online site, *ANC Today*, enabled the then incumbent president Thabo Mbeki to spread its position and own governance issues such as service delivery and his controversial stance on HIV/AIDS. Going into the 2009 general elections, the ANC used Mandela in their television campaign: “*I wonder if Mandela and them ever thought they’d see a free South Africa; When Madiba was released that was the beginning of an existing road*” (Fourie & Du Plessis, 2011).

In the 2009 elections, the party put together a campaign strategy which combined its traditional door-to-door campaigning, community hall meetings and rallies. It maintained its lead with 65.9 % despite evidence of corruption in its governance, deepening inequality, and internal divisions that led to the formation of the Congress of The People (Walton & Donner, 2011). Another method employed by the ANC, DA, COPE and other parties was Mig33 groups.

This mobile application supports real-time interaction and instant messaging to engage supporters (Walton & Donner, 2011). With the formation of COPE which achieved only 7,4 % of the national vote in 2009, the ANC’s campaign strategy was based on registering new young voters, galvanising its traditional voters, mobilising traditional supporters, and making sure that people turn out in large numbers to give it support, while the Democratic Alliance which came second on 16.7 percent used what appeared to be a campaign adapted from what then American president Barack Obama employed as a party aimed at building one society (Walton & Donner, 2010). Despite the ANC’s electoral triumph over the years, it faces unprecedented challenges posed by old and newly formed political parties. They include the main opposition the DA and the ever-growing Economic Freedom Fighters, a party formed by expelled ANC’s former youth league leaders such as Julius Malema and Floyd Shivambu in July 2013.

Corruption troubled the ANC through the uproar surrounding the security upgrades on former president Jacob Zuma's private homestead in Nkandla estimated at R246 million, furthermore the ruling ANC's internal divisions relating to the resolution of COSATU's then-largest affiliate, the National Union of Metal (NUM) workers of South Africa not to endorse the party's 2014 electoral campaign and to explore the formation of a worker's party was terrible for its image (Runciman, Bekker & Maggott, 2019).

A study by Seekings (2019) on the support on the EFF, DA and ANC in the South African general elections highlighted that people voted for reasons such as jobs, good healthcare, housing, service delivery and social grants. In the lead to the 2014 elections, the ANC's campaign was around the 20th anniversary of Democracy in the country, with "*A good story to tell*" theme (Seekings, 2019). The newly-formed Economic Freedom Fighters was more confrontational with calling for land restitution, stating that "*The honeymoon is over for Whites*" (Everatt, 2016). The Democratic Alliance's courting of Mamphele Ramphele as the party's leader was the party's belief that a party's racial outlook was vital for attracting support across racial demographics (Everatt, 2016).

In America, although Obama's 2004 oratory four years before he ran for the presidency was more of a nation-building message it points out the power of political rhetoric and the fact that if well-constructed, political communication can affect those in the receiving end (Perloff, 2013). This is arguably the same method used by former Democratic Alliance leader, Mmusi Maimane when it comes to political communication, thus prompting people to call him Obama of Soweto (Mail & Khan, 2018). Many South Africans viewed Maimane as the DA's attempt to replicate Barack Obama's rise, the US's first black president (Makoro, 2018). His "*A broken man, presiding over a broken society*" speech in the national assembly on 1 February 2015 in response to former president Jacob Zuma's scandals was widely received and publicised (Makoro, 2018). According to Masilo and Seabo (2015), the web has become a political communication tool and enables political organisations to use it to canvass for political support. In recent times, South Africa has seen the maximum use of social media in the political environment, especially around canvassing for electoral support.

Although the actual effect of social media communication on voter decision and election outcomes hasn't been established, Masilo and Seabo (2015) argue that its power in bringing social change should not be taken for granted. The extraordinary use of social media and the traditional media in the 2015 election campaign in Nigeria highlighted the necessity of using the two in political campaigning (Ojekwe, 2016). Political communication happens between political organisations using the media or other mediums to convey the message to their audience (McNair, 2017). Political communication in times of elections is mostly focused only on communication to reach voters directly through controlled channels such as the mass media. Still, not much is researched on the media's deliberate move to drive that process (Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2014).

It is against this background that it's essential to also look at the power of mass media as a political communicator. Herrnson (2009) argues that political campaigns have shifted in recent times and now consider the image of the party leader standing for elections. An example of that in South Africa in recent politics is political taglines that South Africans witnessed in the 2017 ANC 54th National Congress such as CR17 for the incumbent President Cyril Ramaphosa and NDZ17 Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. Herrnson (2009) says that the candidate-centred campaigns are mostly led and funded by the leaders themselves and their associates than the party they stand for.

According to Herbamus (2006), political communication in the public sphere happens through two types of actors namely; politicians who occupy the epicentre of the political system and the media system led by journalists and news commentators. The media plays a link between political parties and voters and offers opportunities for direct communication. The relationship between media owners and politicians affects the framing of the political issues that are communicated. This is seen through how the media channels present political messages, the packaging of the messages, and the analysis of political events before published to the audience (Voltmer, 2006). The media's role in political communication is multidimensional – journalists do not only mediate information between political actors and the audience but also express their personal views, assess the political events and opinions, and influence citizens' attitudes and political actors (Eilders, 1997).

Because media houses depend on advertising, including political adverts for revenue, they sometimes find themselves in a compromised situation where they are bound to ally with political actors. With that in mind, Voltmer (2006) argues that the media are not only channels conveying the messages politicians want them to communicate to voters but political actors in their own rights. According to McCombs and Valenzuela (2020), the public's involvement in political issues is related to the amount of information they receive from those mass media channels. The mass media cannot be avoided for its power to provide the context in the transmission of political messages between those in power and those they govern (Baek, 2009). Herbamus (2006) argues that the media and political commentators are the co-authors of public discourse and that mediated political communication is carried on by an elite group. According to Baek (2009), citizens get access to most of their political information in election campaigns, from mass media.

Herbamus (2006) also identify the following role players in the space of political communication and the public sphere;

- (a) Lobbyists who represent special interest groups;
- (b) Advocates who either represent general interest groups or substitute for lack of representation of marginalised groups that are unable to voice their interests effectively;
- (c) Experts who are credited with professional or scientific knowledge in some specialised area and are invited to give advice;
- (d) Moral entrepreneurs who generate public attention for supposedly neglected issues;
- (e) Intellectuals who have gained, unlike advocates or moral entrepreneurs, a perceived personal reputation in some field (e.g., as writers or academics) and who engage, unlike experts and lobbyists, spontaneously in public discourse with the declared intention of promoting general interests.

From what is said above the mass media holds a lot of power in voter persuasion. According to Cohen, Tsfati and Sheafer (2008), people's perceptions of political parties and their leaders are shaped not only by what they think of them but how those considered to be opinion leaders portray the parties.

According to Strömbäck and Kiousis (2014), the mass media occupies a central position as an arena or the primary source of information and the channel through which these communications come to being. McNair (2017) observes that since political communication is mostly carried out through the electronic media and print, the media are as much political actors as the politicians because they somehow alter the message. Some of the aspects in a political system that mass communication can effect are who gets which message, how, why, and what effects and response (Mcquail, 2015). This selection of messages and environments determines the possible effects of transmitting information for the receivers (Mcquail, 2015).

In some cases, elections become salient due to media coverage and issues that personally concern voters, giving them a reason to vote (Edlin, Gelman Kaplan, 2007). Baek (2009) argues that citizens attain political information from the news media, which can potentially influence many aspects of political communication and possibly the overall quality of political discourse. Fourie (2007) asserts that effective communication is determined by the recipient's interpretation of the message. That assertion is reinforced by scholars such as Graber and Smith (2005). They found that those receiving messages interpret it based on similar information they received before and are stored in their long-term memory.

Buck and VanLear (2002) argue that after everything has been said in communication, the essential ending is feedback which from the receiver, which may be positive or negative depending on how the message was received. The consistency of political communication and coverage intensifies during the election period (Lilleker, Tenscher & Štětka, 2015). The main aim of that communication is to campaign for elections (Lilleker, Tenscher & Štětka, 2015). During those campaigns, candidates appear on television, radio talk shows, produce web content, engage in parades and rallies to convince voters (Trent, Friedenbergr & Denton, 2018). The candidates also shake hands with the electorate, kiss babies, and meet workers in factory gates, dress in campaign clothes and do community work to impress their constituency (Trent, Friedenbergr & Denton, 2018). In recent political dispensations, political communication and deliberations do not take place in a face to face nature but happen through the mass media with the inclusion of political actors, commentators, journalists, and the general population engaging in political conversations.

With these changes, access to political communication has broadened, and those who previously didn't afford to partake in large-scale political deliberations can now do that. In South African politics, those people include voters who seek electoral communications, interaction with those who serve them and share their views on their surroundings' political setup (Gurevitch, Coleman & Blumler, 2009). Research by Onumajuru and Chigona (2012) found that more South African political parties embrace the internet or social media to be specific as a medium for political communication and campaigning irrespective of the minimal access to the internet. As such, it is essential to study the effect of party-political communication and its impact on voter attitude and voting decision-making process. This study investigated South African political parties' communication strategies and how they influence the Diepsloot residents voting decision process. The focus was placed on the current top three political parties: the ANC, DA and the EFF. The three were chosen since they are currently the leading parties in electoral support.

2.4.3 The Internet as a method of Political Communication

For decades since the emergence of television as a communication tool in the twentieth century, political communication and campaigning took a top-down nature where citizens had little to say. The possibility for them to directly access politicians was virtually non-existent (Zamora-Medina & Zurutuza-Muñoz, 2014). In recent times, almost all political organisations have established their permanent websites which mostly bear the vision, mission and everything that has to do with the party (Maarek, 2011). There is growing literature on the impact and the necessity of the internet as a political communication method. According to Zamora-Medina and Zurutuza-Muñoz (2014), the mid-1990s saw the internet becoming a necessary additional means of political communication.

In a research study by Osunkunle and Mhlomi (2017) on social media's power as an effective method to engage the masses in campaigning during elections, most respondents conceded that their experience on the run-up to the 2014 South African general elections was that social media played a vital role. On the power of social media to communicate political messages, Moraru and Rusu, (2017) state that it has become a global communication method that gives political parties, leaders and

individuals the power to put their message across. A most recent example is how U.S former president Barack Obama emerged with his use of a new political communication method, fundraising, and mobilisation worldwide. Ever since there has been a global shift with how political leaders engage their constituencies using social media as a political communication channel. Today, the mass media is an important channel through which political communication occurs (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). Across the world, the employ of digital platforms in political campaigning is growing immensely and can allow voters to engage in political debates (Bankole, Chigona & Bankole, 2012).

With the introduction of the internet and social media channels, top-down communication structure has been altered and allows citizens to be equal partners in the communications ecosystem. The introduction of online communication and the new media has revolutionised political communication (Moraru & Rusu, 2017). Research also indicates that users' perception and liking for a candidate increases after viewing their website (Hansen & Benoit, 2005). In 2008, Barack Obama proved the effectiveness of campaigning to mobilise voters using social media (Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2015). Obama's campaign comprised the regular physical campaigning and use of social media sites like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube (Tracey, 2013). The wave of citizen-driven campaigns such as the Arab Spring and most recently the #FessMustFall Campaign in South Africa demonstrate the potential of civil society coupled with social media can result in power shift (Lemish & Caringer, 2012).

Those sporadic protests that dominated the Middle East highlighted the power of digital social media tools to mobilise and challenge political power (Stepanova, 2011). What started as a Facebook campaign by the opposition "April 6 Youth Movement," led to tens of thousands of responses to rally against government policies and ultimately led to government shutting down the internet (Stepanova, 2011). According to Lemish and Caringer (2012), the occurrences are essential as they strengthen civil society and democracy through mass involvements involving citizen whose voices in some cases are silenced because of lack of access to means of mass communication. According to Dabula (2016), the 2008 U.S elections demonstrated that a clear and strategic application of online political communication and campaigning sets one ahead.

Dabula (2016) argues that although both Obama and McCain used online campaigning, Obama's strategy had all the best hallmarks of what constitutes the best online campaign and how it was executed undoubtedly secured his victory as it applied more of the different tools such as email, blogs, and the candidate or party-specific sites. Young South Africans also use social network platforms like Twitter as a form of activism outside the political space (Osunkunle & Mhlomi, 2017). According to Osunkunle and Mhlomi (2017), an example of that is the protests that later became known as the 2015 #FeesMustFall campaign and the #RhodesMustFall movement popularised on social media.

Even before those protests that unfolded on social media, South African youth became involved in political resistance during the mid-1970s. Although there has been a shift in protesting from the conventional means of physical protests, the youth remains an active participant in the political discourse through more contemporary modes of engagement (Dabula, 2016). Those past forms of protests shaped the context for youth participation and how they would relate to institutions during the post-apartheid era (Osunkunle & Mhlomi, 2017).

In the past Obama, Roh Moo Hyun, ex-president of South Korea, explored Internet campaigning by including online methods in their communication strategies (Hara & Jo, 2007). This trend has spread across Africa and globally. The use of social media in political communication was also seen in the lead up to the 2013 Kenyan general elections. President Kenyatta's has approximately 500,000 followers on his Facebook page (Tracey, 2013). The growth of Internet usage has expanded the spread of political information which citizens can access, thus creating unmatched prospects for communicating with their peers about current events (Barberá, Jost, Nagler, Tucker & Bonneau, 2015). There is no doubt that social media platforms change the political communication landscape, and political actors have realised the medium's power (Svensson & Klinger, 2015).

Politicians prefer social media as a political communication method because it's easy to access the electorate and provide spontaneous information (Gucdemir, Mengu, Ertürk & Canan, 2015). According to Gucdemir, Mengu, Ertürk and Canan (2015) social media can allow politicians to strengthen their ties with the electorate which means social media forms part of the strongholds of campaigns during the elections

period. Political actors compete for media coverage because they believe that it influences the public and somehow puts them ahead for re-election (Cohen, Tsifti & Sheffer, 2008).

The internet is an important medium to carry out electoral communication and campaign even though its impact entirely depends on internet access in a country (Onumajuru & Chigona, 2012). Candidates today engage their constituencies through digital media, and this kind of communication is also used to challenge the status quo. Fominaya (2014) notes how a Colombian citizen, Oscar Morales, used Facebook for the guerrilla tactics of kidnapping in his country. Morales mobilisation of demonstrations throughout the world resulted in the release of a hostage. Another example is that of the Arab Spring, which saw Journalists, citizens and civil groups ensuring a change in government (Fominaya, 2014). Integrating social media into political communication strategies to reach young people is vital in electoral campaigning (Osunkunle & Mhlomi, 2017). In recent times, the mass media have become a relevant connection between the political system and citizens (Hanel & Schultze, 2014).⁴

2.4.4 The Role of Political Communication in a Democratic Society

Elections are an essential aspect that defines a multi-party democracy to provide a public order for a systematic peaceful institutional race for power and citizens' opportunity to observe, review or legitimise government using free will voting (Anyangwe, 2012). For democratic establishments to thrive, political organisations must provide the electorates with information around political agendas, party policies, and vision (Ojekwe, 2015). Political communication is mostly practised by politicians, government, the public, media, and advocacy groups to build political consensus on important issues relating to service delivery, government programmes, and to exercise political power (López-García, & Pavía (2019). This, according to Ojekwe (2015), enables the voters to make an informed electoral choice. Elections encourage people to participate in the selection of leaders actively, but that function of democracy happens with the help of political communication (Trent, Friedenber &

⁴ Although Steenkamp & Hyde-Clarke (2014) argues that the changes in communication has introduced new opportunities for political engagements that doesn't underplay the complications of movements having to adapt to new inclusive ways of communicating.

Denton, 2018). Political communication is much more vital in a young democracy than those already established (Fourie & and Froneman, 2005). According to Agunga (1998), this communication is essential to the people who are 'uneducated' and have to become role players in democratic processes. Most researchers argue that the concern with political communication in a democratic country is that voters need information before they can make informed voting decisions. Graber (2005) cites political communication as an essential tool to communicate electoral promises by public officials in democratic societies. Trent, Friedenbergr and Denton (2018) argues that elections provide the electorate with the opportunity to determine how their interest can best be served.

According to López-García and Pavía (2019), political communication also touches on efforts to influence voting in elections and discuss policy stance on public diplomacy and administration of a body. Kriesi (2011) argues that political communication is at the heart of the democratic process as it enables citizens to have an 'enlightened understanding' of the choices at stake. Ngomba (2012) explains that political campaigns are multifaceted and involve actors such as political parties, the media, interest groups, journalists and voters. Voting is the most common action of political communication in democratic dispensations. Low voter turnout threatens democracy which depends on maximum citizen participation to choose who is elected as government representation (Wang, 2013).

According to Kriesi (2012), an informed electorate is vital for a healthy democracy as political knowledge helps citizens make rational decisions. This means that political communication enables citizens to translate their opinions into meaningful forms of participation. Electoral communication is an essential part of a democratic state, especially during political campaigns. It has a bearing on who the electorate votes for determining who governs the state (Onumajuru & Chigona, 2012). Through opinion pieces, leaders openly express their opinions and comment on what's happening in the political arena but still present themselves as autonomous actors. In that ecosystem of communication, public opinion happens through the contributions of different actors who express their views and opinions using newspapers, social media and generally organised gatherings (Eildres, 2007).

With the power of the mass media to send information, the intended message itself is always altered. The effects of media on politics manifest through propagandistic techniques aiming to persuade and manipulate (Ejupi, Siljanovska & Iseni, 2014). The crucial role of the media in political communication is seen through the expressive nature of opinions.

Eildres (2007) argues that for as long as editorials are marked as opinions in media houses, the same media houses can justify their political agendas in influencing public opinions or public decisions. This supports Tyali (2017) assertions that there seems to be a long-held public perception that such editorials allow media owners to take a particular political position in society and support their preferred political formations. According to Baek (2009), media systems influence how much political communication is disseminated to the public. While traditional forms of interactive communication in direct encounters between campaigners and citizens continue to exist, present-day political communication could not occur without various media uses (Entman & Bennett, 2001).

Herrnson, Bederson, Lee, Francia, Sherman, Conrad, Traugott, and Niemi (2005) argue that rallies are not only a social gathering for voters and political leaders but serve as an effortless way to introduce political leaders to their supporters and build electoral support for candidates. Even as these elements remain the preferred method of ensuring that relations between political, leaders and their constituencies remain strong, there are new interactive ways the organisations employ (Maarek, 2011). The next section will take an in-depth focus on the impact of that communication on voter behaviour.

2.4.5 The Impact of Political Communication on Voters' decision

Political communication can reinforce candidates' attitudes, forcing voters to consider voting during elections (Perloff, 2013). McNair (2017) believes that political communication's impact on voters' decisions can be measured by observing voting behaviour patterns. According to a study done by Covington, Kroeger, Richardson, and Woodward (1993) in recent democratic country's election campaigns, three players are the voters, media and the campaigners.

This likely accounts for the attention given by political parties and candidates to engaging users on their websites in order to make a favourable impression on them. According to Williams (1998), the internet's electronic nature allows for a fast spread of political messages to a broad spectrum of the electorate. Bidwell, Casey and Glennerster (2015) concluded that voters attain political knowledge from political debates, influencing who they vote when the election period arrives. However, a study by Hoffman, Jones and Young (2012) found the opposite. The study revealed that those who are not regular consumers of mass media are entirely lured by these messages in their voting behaviour (Hoffman, Jones & Young, 2012).

While Holbrook (1996:12) states that political parties and candidates take political campaigns seriously, his work is inconclusive about whether it impacts voting behaviour. According to Paret (2016), the ANC's continued electoral victory can be attributed to the fact that the party is in government and still in charge of state resources, making desperate voters view it as the only practical electoral choice. Opposition parties have however found support from those that are estranged. As the governing party, the ANC can still bank on its success in government by displaying communication messages which simultaneously celebrates government programmes and displays ANC colours or symbols.

According to Paret (2016), another reason is the continued belief that state social grants are connected to party membership, creating a fear that they might lose this benefit should they vote a new political party. To explain voting behaviour, Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz and Hutchings (2011) argue that there must be a dynamic analysis scheme that encompasses all these theoretical underpinnings of voting behaviour. Ngomba (2012) maintains that political campaigns reveal the media system's influential power in community members' political action and the competition between political formations.

Fourie and Foreman (2005) observe that in a young democracy such as South Africa, the focus of political communication should be on how politicians merge emotional and cognitive messages to inform and attract voters' attention simultaneously. Citizens use their emotions as a cognitive guide in voting, affecting their political judgment and voting behaviour (Kuhne, Schemer, Matthes & Wirth, 2011).

According to Hoffman, Jones and Young (2012), the effect of those emotional cues by politicians may only be useful exclusively to those who are politically-active or informed. Similarly, Kuhne, Schemer, Matthes and Wirth (2011) contend that evoking emotions in political communication is used to win the public's attention and approval. The citizens use the same sentiments to make a judgment on the candidates. Going into the 2014 elections, opposition parties banked on former president Jacob Zuma's moral stance to win voters' emotions, but Sadie (2018) argues that although this moral referendum is important, it undermines the fact that basic needs must be fulfilled before morality becomes essential. Mbete (2015) also notes how the EFF's emotional solidarity with mineworkers and the blame it places on the ANC-led government for the Marikana Massacre was used to highlight the governing party's alleged 'ethical and moral degeneration'.

Wang (2013) argues that the role of emotions in political behaviour shows that there is indeed a link between the two when it comes to voting. The Democratic Alliance has focused on the ANC's government failures by promising to create new jobs, arguably to counter the ANC's inability to reduce unemployment. The EFF on the other side presented itself as a government-in-waiting by making promises such as increasing social grants, land redistribution and the expropriation of land without compensation, an utterance and policy partly responsible for Julius Malema and Floyd Shivambu's eviction from the ANC (Mbete, 2015).

According to McNair (2003:7), political parties' communication styles can include public relations and advertising. Political advertising is a form of marketing communication that allows political parties to package their messages to sell their parties and candidates to voters (Franz & Ridout, 2007). This is more useful and beneficial for new and less established parties that do not receive maximum media coverage compared to those already established. In advertising, the parties and their candidates leverage the persuasive potential of mass media. In public relations, the party uses tactics to ensure that they enjoy publicity from the press (Franz & Ridout, 2007). Trent, Friedenbergr and Denton (2018) add electronic media; print media, display media (billboards) and personal contact with voters as other campaigning methods. Maarek (2011) states that modern political communication focuses much on how good the candidate is in orating his messages.

According to Trent, Friedenbergr and Denton (2018), political leaders and their parties are always faced with the challenge of choosing the most convenient method of campaigning. This research sought to expand on the work already done by the above researchers. Since most of the literature around political communication is centred on foreign countries, this study will contribute to domestic (RSA) literature.

2.4.6 Political Communication Strategies Today

Political communication strategies changes with time. The earliest form of political communication and campaigning globally had very much to do with face to face interactions between party leaders and voters and was done through rallies (Rommele, 2003). Rommele (2003) argues that the weakening ties between the two parties and lack of trust have called for a maximum communicative framework to bolster electoral support. The numbers of independent voters have also grown while party affiliation has weakened due to an array of political parties' voters can choose from (Vorster, 1986). Herrnson, Bederson, Lee, Francia, Sherman, Conrad, Traugott, and Niemi (2005) also argue that these campaign communication and physical voter interactions can stimulate, strengthen, and even change some individuals' voting intentions. Today, political campaigns are waged with advertising in television and radios as medium (Trent, Friedenbergr & Denton, 2018). Most recently, in South Africa, political parties have also implemented automated calls and SMSes to call for electoral support from voters. Another method to disseminate political communication is through posters.

According to Maarek (2011), these are more effective because the political message in them remain in the public domain until Election Day. Trent, Friedenbergr and Denton, (2018) include bumper stickers, tweets, banner ads, brochures, newspaper advertisements and magazines advertisements as means for campaigning and political communication. No politician's agenda can triumph without journalists or the press as a channel of communicating political messages (Maarek, 2011). The media and journalists as collective are becoming actors in campaign assembling and have an essential impact on political communication (Ngomba, 2012). ANC previously employed a more personalised, driven approach where it used its constituency's testimony (Teer-Tomaselli, 2005).

According to Fourie and Froneman (2005) the need to communicate leaves communicators with a dilemma to engage with a voter who will either buy into their message or reject it based on their observation of what their party stands for. With the current changing political climate, political organisations and leaders develop new strategies to address and persuade their supporters. For instance, the ANC has always banked on its past successes, portraying itself as the messiah that led South Africans from the cruel apartheid regime to the new dispensation (Feinstein, 2010).

Schultz-Herzenberg (2013) state the increase in new voters from what is called the born-frees and came of age after 1994 threatens the "*We-Freed-You*" message. According to Walton and Donner (2010), although the ANC's message of a caring a liberation movement might not have resounded well with young voters compared to their elder generations, this continued support can be attributed to its promise of a party that is committed to addressing the problems of the poor. It is significant to note that since the 2009 elections, the expansion of political parties' communication strategies has risen. According to Schultz-Herzenberg (2013), a distinctive addition in those elections was the introduction of free campaign advertising on television to political parties.

In the lead to the 2009 general elections, the ANC's official campaign website encouraged supporters and other mobile users to engage leaders with a tab titled "*we are listening.*" However, users reported no admin response when questions and comments were posted (Walton & Donner, 2010). Since then, those competing to stand for public office have reached broader constituencies and afford voters information to help them choose the most relevant political party to vote for (Schultz-Herzenberg, 2013). Teer-Tomaselli (2005) argues that political communication's success depends primarily on a parties' ability to communicate with their constituencies. Maarek (2011) adds that paid commercials are great for political communication and maximising audience reach.

On her research on the use of paid advertisements to canvass for elections, Teer-Tomaselli (2005) concludes that paid advertisements give political parties a much opportunity to reach potential voters by the organisation to orchestrate the most punching message it wishes to put across to its audience.

A recent example of this in South Africa is the billboard which the DA erected in Johannesburg. It suggested that the ANC is responsible for the 2012 Marikana massacre where police shot mineworkers. The DA's election campaign billboard titled, '*The ANC is Killing Us,*' carried in it the names of the people who died from the Life Esidimeni Tragedy, Marikana Massacre and kids who died in pit latrines across the country⁵.

According to Bennett and Iyengar (2008), mobile communication and the internet have altered the structure of political communication. There is a shift from the "top-down approach" to a polycentric communications system. Bennett and Iyengar (2008) say the internet have enabled the population to be equal partners in the communication structure. They can also write blogs to criticise political formations, further arguing that political communication by the people is greater today than the mere expression of will in polls. These findings are supported by Norris (2004). He notes that although the political communication process finds expression in a downward spiral where political actors send messages to the population, it also operates from an upward basis where the public expresses their opinions up to their authorities.

That is almost the case in South Africa today where we see citizens expressing their dissatisfaction on their political leaders through open letters, newspaper columns and on social networks. The same can be said about the media as the vehicle through which this communication is carried to the population. The crucial role of the media in political communication is seen through the expressive nature of opinions. Eildres (2007) argues that for as long as editorials are marked as opinions in media houses, the same media houses can justify their political agendas in influencing public opinions or public decisions. There's a need for political parties to tailor-make messages meant to entice supporters.

Although political parties' strategies are mostly centred-around those preaching their milestones, Fourie and Froneman (2005) say evidence shows that negative messages could be beneficial to parties since they attract voters' attention.

⁵The DA's strategy was met with opposition from the families of the Esidimeni Tragedy who complained that the then DA used the tragedy for political gains without consulting them. They removed the names of their family members in the billboard, citing that the party was unethical in its actions.

This kind of communication strategy is mostly used by opposition parties who communicate what they perceive could be the governing party's shortcomings to win political support. These messages are better remembered and could stimulate public debate surrounding policy issues (Fourie & Froneman, 2005). The authors, however, warn that the messages should be used with care. As the governing party, the ANC in its 2017 54th National Conference announced its intention to roll out compulsory political communication training to spread its views (IOL, 2017) effectively. The party's former communication subcommittee chairperson Jackson Mthembu told a media gathering in Johannesburg that communication should be professionalised in the party (IOL, 2017).

Perhaps that could be an admission on the importance of political communication and that party members' need not to speak in different voices. In its previous manifestos, the party played a defensive approach that acknowledged that it freed South Africans from apartheid (Phago, 2012). The party's manifestos are launched at a national level before various provincial leaders could take the message down to the provinces through provincial manifestos. This approach recollected the ANC's successes over the past several years and identified challenges that lay ahead. In the past, party leaders could also be seen mingling with citizens before the elections, giving them branded t-shirts and making electoral promises.

The past ten years has been an interesting era in the political setup in the country. The 2009 national and provincial elections in South Africa were undoubtedly one of the most competitive elections because of the formation of the People's breakaway Congress (Runciman, 2016). Most recently in 2019, South Africa also saw the most competitive elections with the ANC's 57, 5 percent achievement in comparison to the 62,15 percent in 2014, another electoral support decline since the dawn of democracy (IEC, 2019). A few years before that, a succession of developments presented into the political landscape a lot of changes that somehow brought challenges to the governing ANC in its electoral dominance (Schulz-Herzenberg, 2013). From that period, the DA arguably re-launched its new brand to attract non-traditional voters who are mainly black. Most of that was done through its communication to discredit the ANC and perhaps expand its hold in electoral support.

As the main opposition, The Democratic Alliance banks on the ANC's apparent failures to win electoral support. Its key messages in its communication are mostly reducing poverty through economic growth and job creation (Phago, 2012). However, the party doesn't specify how it will do that since it's not a governing party and can't drive the country's policy direction. Jacob Zuma's ascendency to the presidency of the ANC and later the country sparked the formation of a new opposition party, the Congress of the People (COPE), by dissidents who left the ruling ANC in solidarity to former president Thabo Mbeki who had just lost his hold on the party to Zuma.

The Economic Freedom Fighters was a game-changer in the political environment. The party came to existence and gained momentum because of two political events; Julius Malema's expulsion from the ANC and the killing of 44 mineworkers in Marikana by police. Although the party didn't have much to boast of luring voters before the 2014 general elections, the party used what Southall (2014) calls unrealistic pronouncements. Its messaging was about how much it was a people's party, and its radical nature won the hearts of young South Africans who felt left out in the cold by the ruling ANC. The party's insistence to lend the ANC votes in the National Assembly to secure a two-thirds majority to ensure a constitutional amendment regarding property rights to implement land reform was another theatric aimed to highlight how much of a radical party it is (Southall, 2014).

2.5 Theoretical framework background

The term theory describes a framework used as a general principle to explain a phenomenon, predicts future occurrences and make observation (Kawulich, 2009). The scientific value of a theory is that it teaches people how to describe, interpret, understand, evaluate and predict a phenomenon (Fourie, 2007). According to Fourie (2007), if theory teaches us the skills we need to describe, interpret, understand, evaluate, and predict a phenomenon, those skills are likely to form part of our cognisance and help us deal with our everyday interaction with reality. To understand the impact of political communication in voting behaviour, it's essential to study the channels through which that communication is carried out to the voters.

That investigation includes putting the channel into context, assembling messages, and how the recipients receive it. Over time, politicians have realised this personalised role of the media and the shift in disseminating news and now use social media as a channel to deliver their tailor-made communication (Gurevitch, Coleman & Blumler, 2009). The media and politics are interconnected and cannot exist outside one another because without the media political messages cannot happen and media houses also depend on political advertisements for revenue (Ejupi, Siljanovska & Iseni, 2014). According to Entman and Bennett (2001: 1), current political communication is driven by the media as a channel to communicate.

The mass media acts as an information transmission belt, building a relationship between mass communication and the political system controlling how political messages are secured and distributed, deciding which ones are secured and forwarded, and the thematic distribution of the messages used (Fourie, 2007). According to Tyali (2017), the media plays an agenda-setting role by augmenting specific issues, thus possibly contributing to political perspectives. This, Tyali (2017) argues, is because the recipients or citizens are at times unable to differentiate the facts and opinions and depend on the media in the interpretation of such occurrences. Fourie (2007) argues that a theory provides people with an outline of the development of a discipline, its relations with other disciplines and possible future developments.

After considering the main objectives of this study, it was clear that the most closely-related theory to understand the relation between the mass media and political communication would be one that has to do with impact or influence of communication as this research work was aimed at evaluating the effect of political communication strategies on voting behaviour. The Agenda-Setting Theory was thus adopted for this study. According to Smith and Graber (2005), the Agenda setting theory is a dominant theoretical approach in analysing media messages' impact on the audience. In this study, the theory was selected to inspect the media's role in political communication and its effect on consolidating certain parties' image to voters. According to Graber and Smith (2005), its significance led to massive research to identify how media owners deliberately select specific issues that they cover; the rationale thereof and explains the consequences that they allegedly produce.

Ferguson (1999) argues that if reports about certain political leaders remain on the media for a more extended period, those receiving the content are likely to perceive their leaders based on those issues. With the power of the mass media to send information, the intended message itself is always altered, and the effects of media on politics manifest through propagandistic techniques aiming at persuasion and manipulating (Ejupi, Siljanovska & Iseni, 2014). This also takes a form of thousands of websites that contain political commentary that challenges political policies which means that people perceived to be audiences are now able to partake in political conversations (Gurevitch, Coleman & Blumler, 2009).

McCombs and Guo (2015) study on the degree of news coverage during the 1969 US presidential election is one of the earliest agenda-setting tests (McCombs & Guo, 2005). Their research was based primarily on the relationship between news coverage for public issues and voter's perceptions of the most critical issues of any given day. Their seminal Chapel Hill study undertook the precise measurement, during the 1969 US presidential election, of the relationship between the patterns of news coverage for public issues and the voters' perceptions of what were the most critical issues of the day found that the over-concentration on an issue influence what the public saw as important (McCombs & Guo, 2005). Sears (1994) says the media's focus on a political party can have a political effect where the electorate may assume the over-coverage of that particular party might suggest that party's credibility. The agenda-setting theory in this study was used to determine if the media as a channel of communication plays a role in prioritising certain political parties and actors and if that way of coverage influences voters' perceptions.

In the context of political and electoral coverage, the mass media have the power to reflect what candidates are saying and determine the critical issues that are likely to set an agenda of that campaign (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The theory probed if the prioritisation of a particular party or candidate impacts the receivers of the information or voters. McCombs and Valenzuela (2007) state that political parties use agenda-setting to build a strong picture of their candidates during the election period. According to Eilders (1997), political communication is generally organised through the media.

This, according to McCombs and Shaw (1972), is done by attaching how much information that story should be embedded with and what issues are to be looked at. To explain the media's power in setting the agenda, Ferguson (1999) argues that the estate holds the potential to influence public and policy direction. Talking about agenda-setting in the news, Eilders (1997) argues that media houses use editorials and commentary to express their strong views on policies, certain political actors and specific issues to emphasise their opinions and sometimes push their agenda as far as the political environment is concerned. For that reason, the focus on agenda-setting theory in this study will probe whether that focus on issues have a bearing on who voters support.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) state that media houses play an important role in choosing the issues to be given precedence to portray reality. However, Sears and Kosterman (1994) maintain that coverage might not be a deliberate attempt to prioritise specific political organisations. The primary tenant of agenda-setting theory concerning the media is that the news media focus on a few topics and issues thus avoiding dozens of others, which leads to the public believing that these are important issues of that day (McCombs & 2005). According to Maggini (2016), these programs are vehicles for political news with their heavy political content. According to Eilders (1997) in the context of newspapers, that focus happens through presentation characteristics such as the size of a headline in an article, the length of such a story, how issues in that story are emphasised, and the continuous coverage of an issue. The next section discusses voting behaviour which is at the root of this study. It discusses the Rational Choice Theory, Psychological Model of Voting Behaviour and Psychosocial model to give a theoretical context of voting behaviour.

2.6 Voting Behaviour

Research on voting behaviour has its origin in 1940 at Columbia University, where a group of social scientists put together by Paul Lazarsfeld initiated survey research to investigate electoral behaviour (Bartels, 2008). The study was dependent on election results and census statistics as its principal data in its early stage. The first public polls in the 1930s made it possible to scrutinise voting behaviour and choice to individual voter level (Mahsud & Amin, 2020). Like many ground-breaking innovations, to this date, the use of individual polls and surveys has enabled more researchers to investigate the subject of voting behaviour (Mahsud & Amin, 2020).

One of citizens' roles in democratic governments and other political systems is to make decisions on political matters (Juma, 2010). According to Delton (2000) in democracies, this decision sometimes has to do with choosing which party or candidate has to be selected to hold office. According to Sheikh and Akhter (2014), voting as an action is a significant thing for those voting. As such, that makes the study of voting behaviour an essential aspect of contemporary political research and theory. Sheikh and Akhter (2014) assert that voting behaviour is not limited to the evaluation of electoral records and statistics but also has to do with an individual's perception, emotion and motivation and their attitude towards political actions and as well as institutional patterns like communication processes and their impact on elections. Thus, voting behaviour research needs to focus on the qualitative aspects of a voter's decision-making process.

Schultz-Herzenberg (2013) argues that in a country like South Africa, where apartheid was based on racial lines, it makes good ground to investigate what motivates a specific voting behaviour. Because of the legacy of racial segregation, South Africa remains a highly divided society where most voters live in politically homogenous social environments. While the right to vote is recognised in most advanced democracies throughout the world, electoral participation remains one of the most researched topics in political sciences (Denny & Doyle, 2008). According to Denny and Doyle (2008), not every citizen exercises their right to, adding that there's a relationship between voter turnout and the number of voters' profile such as their level of education, civil duty and political interest. Fourteen million South Africans who are eligible to vote abstained from participating in the 2014 elections. Most recently, in the 2019 general elections, about 9,8 million eligible voters did not register to vote (Runciman, Bekker & Maggot, 2019). According to Southall (2014), that was a suggestion that many South Africans have no confidence in the political parties which were running for the elections. Various theoretical models help interpret the phenomenon to make sense of political behaviour, particularly what influences voters to choose a party or candidate.

According to Antunes (2010), the study of voting behaviour is underpinned by many theoretical models. There are also many factors ranging from policy or ideology, language, communication and religious factors (Rule, 2004).

These factors find tenancy in the three theories: The Rational Choice Theory, Psychological Model of Voting Behaviour and Psychosocial model. The following literature explores those theories that were chosen based on the literature that has been reviewed. Because this research has to do with decision-making, the theory of planned behaviour is also relevant. Other theories related to this study are the Rational Choice Theory, Psychological Model of Voting Behaviour and Psychosocial model of Voting Behaviour, which will be discussed later. Juma (2010) states these theories portray how voters' attitudes and their behaviour towards government policies and decisions can determine their voting pattern. This study's main argument is to understand why voters choose a particular political party over the other because they look for certain benefits from their choice. However, that argument needs to be grounded into a theoretical framework. This includes putting voting behaviour into context and how political communication impacts political behaviour. In the sections that follow, the theoretical and empirical basis of voting behaviour is presented and discussed in context.

2.6.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is a much-used reasoned action model used to understand what motivates human behaviour. Tsai (2001) states that voting is a political behaviour influenced by political attitudes. Human beings are introspectively aware of the various feelings, and those thoughts motivate their decisions (Ajzen, 2011). According to the theory, any action by human beings, such as choosing which political party to vote for in the case of this research, happens because of the relevant information at their disposal (Ajzen, 2011). TPB has made a tremendous contribution to researchers' understanding of predicting intentions of behaviour. For that purpose, numerous studies have been employed to make sense of voting, drinking or smoking (Dabula, 2016).

When it comes to political communication and voting behaviour, it attempts to probe whether voter's action results from their intention of political communication. The theory postulates that people's intentions and behaviour are generally guided by their actions' expected consequences (Ajzen, 2011).

For this study, the theory's application is based on its applicability to make sense of what motivates voters to vote for a political party; is it political communication or their intention. Moreover, TPB implies that motives, norms, and ability may be related to an individual's experience. It can be construed that behaviour and social factors are interconnected. Therefore, the theory may be useful in explaining why those who cast their ballots do so and if that action is motivated by political communication. To predict human behaviour, a researcher should observe the person's intentions determined by people's evaluations of performing the behaviour and their perceptions of social pressure (Abraham & Sheeren, 2003).

According to Hansen and Jensen (2007), a voter's behaviour and ultimate action in this research are influenced by their social beliefs. To understand individual voting behaviour, a researcher must look beyond electoral outcomes and consider what motivates their electoral behaviour (Brennan & Hamlin, 1998). "The model predicts the personal decisions (intentions) of behaviour based on attitudes toward the act, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control" (Forward, 1996, p.6). According to the theory, voting behaviour depends on contextual factors such as culture and social structure, which means that issues like religion, economic status, and ethnicity affect who people vote for.

According to Visser (1999), the complexities of that analysis are that political science has no dominant theories that can be used to understand political behaviour. Forward (1996) argues that a person can have an attitude towards a specific action deemed wrong but still choose to act otherwise. "A person can have a negative attitude towards smoking and experience social pressure to quit but still not give it up" (Forward, 1996, p.6). The study of political communication is primarily underpinned by theoretical concepts borrowed from political science, communication and psychology (Graber & Smith, 2005). According to Smith and Graber (2005), the rationale of that combination of theories is that political communication has much to do with politics and human behaviour.

The following discussion on voting behaviour will look at what factors influence voters'. The researcher will also employ voting behaviour theories to establish a tried and tested argument about voting behaviour and its effect on voting behaviour.

With that interest to explain what affects individual choices, many theoretical advances have been at the centre of determining and explaining voter turnout over the years.

2.6.2 Rational Choice Theory

One of the influential theories in explaining voting behaviour is the rational choice theory which states that individuals' decisions are motivated by the perceived benefit of that action (Wang, 2013). The theory is used to understand human behaviour (Green, 2007). According to Quackenbush (2014), the Rational Choice Theory is ingrained in the assumption of what determines a choice and that a rational person is one who, when confronted with two or more options which is likely to give rise to results will choose the option whose outcomes is expected to benefit them. A study by Southall (2014) on the support of the EFF, DA and ANC in the 2014 South African general elections highlighted that people voted for jobs, good healthcare, housing, service delivery and social grants. This explains that voters decide which party to vote for looking at what they will benefit from that party should it come into governance.

Sarlamanov and Jovanoski (2014) found that in rational voting, the diversity and the quality of information based on which social actors decide who to give their vote in the elections. According to Trent, Friedenbergr and Denton (2018), political communication and campaigning are potential information that impacts voters' decision-making. Graber and Smith (2005) assert that communication includes tailoring, sending, receiving, and processing messages that can potentially impact politics. It is also important to note the interpretation role of editorial pages in newspapers that provide their take on political developments (Steinberg & Shin, 2006). According to Tsai (2001) during elections, individuals receive electoral and political information from those around them, which influences who they vote for. The rational choice theory provides a better understanding of voting behaviour by giving a clear theoretical conclusion that applies to the link between political communication and voter behaviour. The application of the political communication model suggests that decision-making is influenced by what political communicators say to voters and if that will benefit the voters.

According to Hobolt (2005), when the intensity of the communication is high, the voters who receive such messages are more likely to make reasoned political decisions based on the information being received. According to Wang (2013), the rational choice theory also assumes that individual political actions result from expected utility calculations, especially compared to what they are likely to receive when choosing another party. This could mean that the rationale for voting for a party would be the voter's expectation on the selected party. This is supported by Adams and Agomor (2015). Their study found out that voters derive the most utility from the candidate standing for elections or the party closest to them in policy and ideological direction (Adams & Agomor, 2015).

According to Baek (2009), the mass media cannot be avoided for its power to provide the context in the transmission of political messages between those in power and those they govern where citizens get access to most of their political information in election campaigns, from mass media. Trent, Friedenbergr and Denton (2018) argue that the role players who play the part of "opinion leaders" in societies who offer interpretations, information and analysis about the political environment have a bearing on who people vote for.

Through the media, we also watch, hear and read about different political actors. However, Steinberg and Shin (2006) state that interpretation by such commentators and experts is valid and creates a passive receiver of biased sentiments. Voting ensures that a democratic political system is complete because it enables citizens to choose their preferred political leaders and express their opinion using their ballot papers (Baek, 2009). This argument is supported by Juma (2011), who argues that citizens choose a party or candidate who they feel mirrors who they are and what they desire. In the Rational Choice Theory voters decide who to vote for thinking about what they will benefit (Juma, 2011). That demonstrates that people's perception of political actors plays an important determinant in who they vote for, but that decision results from their awareness of politics in general.

Quackenbush (2014) further argues that when conducting research relating to electoral behaviour, such as this one, the researcher should also focus on various socioeconomic factors such as gender, religious preferences and party identification to determine voters' choice.

All these factors directly impact whom the voters end up voting for (Quackenbush, 2014). This theory's primary motivation is voting behaviour –voters consider their needs when faced with deciding who to vote for (Green, 2007). Wang (2013) asserts that choice cannot be entirely dependent on that because voters cannot attain all the competing parties' information in the election period. It is also not practically possible to digest such information to arrive at a decision.

In practical terms as set out by Attunes (2010), the Rational Choice Theory explains the simple analogy of seeking returns from your investment. This possibly could mean that irrespective of what a particular political party may communicate, voters are more interested in what they stand to gain from voting not necessarily the hype created by the charismatic communication by those standing for office. While explaining the tenants of the theory Attunes (2010) compares that as companies seek to maximise profits, so are voters who vote to intend to maximise electoral gains obtained from their ballots. According to the theory, those voting expect something in return as they mark their ballots. Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz and Hutchings (2011) bring a different perspective, arguing that an individual's choice to participate in elections varies from elections to elections and must be studied in the context of the elections and what they offer.

Caprara and Zimbardo (2004) state that in modern political setups, the information presented by political players and media outlets impacts who voters choose in elections. With its focus on material benefit as a motivation for voting for a political party, the rational choice theory explains that voters' behaviour is likely to result from their intended benefits. It is against this background that this theory is employed in this study to help the researcher understand why voters vote.

According to Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz and Hutchings (2011), some voters may choose not to partake in elections despite the needs and the short-term promises from candidates. Voting is a critical activity in a democratic government, but one of the most central questions political psychologists face is what motivates citizens to vote (Harder & Krosnick, 2008). Many studies emphasise the role and power of political information in effecting the attitudes for political behaviour.

People who are aware of political happenings in their communities tend to derive the appropriate voting behaviour in their political choice come election time (Hobolt, 2005). In the event of hard-fought election races where there is a wide range of campaigning and political communication, the most successful candidate will be the one who pushes to their side (Iyengar & Simon, 2000). According to Hobolt (2005), voters' awareness of voting grows with increasing media coverage of the elections at hand. This proves that political communication does have an impact on voting behaviour. Dabula (2016) argues that from the communication made by the party to the voter trust then develops, which result in the voter choosing that specific party or candidate. The rational choice theory demonstrates that the process of voters falling for the party based on its promises. According to Gill and Gaius (2002), rational voters are also purposeful in their voting that their actions are directed at obtaining some benefits.

The model also points out that voting's motivation has much to do with self-interest or that of a bigger group (Tsai, 2001). However, Quackenbush (2004) states that rational choosers are not only focused on economic gains but in general, what they benefit from their choice. "Rational choice theory suggests that electoral participation may be influenced by first, the cost of voting, in terms of processing information, forming decisions and the opportunity costs of going to the polls" (Denny & Dayle, 2009, p.293). Denny and Dayle (2009) further argue that those variables may be measured against voting benefits from the electoral outcome.

To conclude, the rational theory aims to set forth a debate that voters derive the most utility from the party that has ideological and policy relevance to them (Adams & Agomor, 2013). The theory also looks at the role of certain political factors such as the candidates' identity and what they promise in the campaign shapes voters' electoral decisions (Mayer & Perrinea, 1992). According to Chhibber, Jensenius, and Suryanarayan (2014), citizens go to the polls for different reasons, such as civic duty or self-interest in politics. There has been a great deal of interest in who voters choose and why they do that. The rational choice theory explains voting behaviour as a contentious issue, citing that citizens' rational choice is motivated by material benefit. On the other hand, Jakee and Sun (2006) argue that voters' voting behaviour is an expressive action.

➤ **Relevance to the study**

The philosophies that relate to voting behaviour in political communication can be likened to consumer behaviour. A myriad of dynamics drives voting behaviour decisions, including the promises made by political parties (Dabula, 2016). As such, voters can be said to be consumers of promises through political communication where a party makes service delivery promises. Arguably, due to political communication, elections can be viewed as a purchase process. In this case of an idea or promise, the voters being the buyer and the product is the political party. However, as the rational theory stipulates, there must be some convincing to make that rational choice, which is political communication. This is supported by (Feddersen, 2004) who argues that most potential voters could be people who belong to a social group of like-minded people like a union or community-based organisation where members share standard policies. The theory ties in well with the political setup in South Africa where the pool of political parties allows voters to make a rational choice on who they want to vote for. Arguably, the theory stipulates that while politicians wish to bank on that vote from the electorate, the very same voters want material benefit from their ballot.

2.6.3 Psychological model of voting behaviour

The Psychological Model of Voting Behaviour has its roots in the studies conducted at the University of Michigan during the 1948 U.S presidential election by the Survey Research Centre (Antunes, 2010). According to Antunes (2010) that ground-breaking findings became a basis for most research done around electoral studies in the U.S. According to Adams and Agomor (2014), this model relates to the need of individuals to belong to, and be identified with a group or the collective, which is a political party in the case of this report.

Mayer and Perrinea (1992) asserts that the model underscores party identification as a determinant to which party voters choose. Antunes (2010) states that the psychological model of voting behaviour is rooted in Partisanship's concept portraying a lasting relationship with a political party irrespective of whether that party delivers its promises. According to Kersting (2009), voting behaviour analysis puts party identification first, and issues of personal factors are secondary.

That argument is supported by Bartels (2000), who argues that partisanship influence electoral behaviour. This is supported by Wang (2013), who states that partisan ideology weighs stronger than individual emotional preference over candidates when choosing who to vote for. Schultz-Herzenberg (2013) argues that voters are fed with / receive repetitive partisan messages from different sources to influence their voting behaviour during an election campaign. As a result, it can be said that individual voters are embedded in social contexts that take on partisan characteristics. Graber and Smith (2005) state that political communication includes creating, sending, receiving, and processing communication that directly or indirectly impacts politics.

The creators of these messages may vary from political actors, journalists, civil society groups, and society (Graber & Smith, 2005). A study by Wang (2013) on why Americans vote found that although emotions have a role in pushing voters to go to the polls, the charisma of political candidates and communication also generate emotional responses to competing candidates increases people's willingness to vote. Edlin, Gelman and Kaplan (2007) suggests that electoral decisions are mostly based on social benefits and the expected utility benefits but states that some electorates are motivated by some mix of personal appeals and encouragement by the media.

➤ **Relevance to the study**

Outside political attitudes, Wang (2013) argues that the psychological model proposes that civic duty is relevant to explain better why people vote. This means that voters can be rational and aim to practice their constitutional right when voting. This theory will test if really party identification is a determining factor to political behaviour with its tenants. The theory argues that voters adjust their support to a political party because of their evaluation when elections come and consider the economic conditions and the party's approach. In general, the theory states that there's an emotional link between a voter choice and the political environment in which voters find themselves in (Antunes, 2010).

2.6.4 Sociological Theory of Voting Behaviour

Sociological theory is rooted in the premise that ethical values, social pressures and sociological factors are the determinants of voting behaviour (Juma, 2011).

It also focuses on the impact of political parties' social structure and emphasises the values and interests (Juma, 2011). However, Attunes (2010) argues that although The Sociological Theory explains social factors as determining factor to voting, it is not conclusive in explaining the variations that take place in the poll because of economic factors specific to each election. Social factors have the potential to clarify the constant stability of voting behaviour. Still, they cannot explain the disparities in voters' choice when it comes to different elections (Attunes, 2010). Times have changed, and societies have advanced since these paradigms have once contributed to explaining what communication is (Bennett & Iyenga, 2008).

Among other issues to be considered in interpreting the powers of political communication is how people respond to media messages the way they used to (Bennett & Iyenga, 2008). Graber and Smith (2005) argue that voters behave based on established thoughts and evaluations on candidates that could have been embedded in their memories. That, according to Graber and Smith (2005) also means these voters are likely to judge candidates using the memories of past promises and policies in which these candidates were involved. The sociological model also underscores the power of social groups as a determinant for voting behaviour. Citizens descend much of their political information and interest from those in their circles, and that flow of political discussions tends to shape their perceptions and consciousness (Schulz-Herzenberg, 2013).

On the effectiveness of political communication and campaigning to win voters, Herrnson (2005) states that issues such as the political agenda in which the elections are held, voters' mood, and the efforts of those standing for elections have an impact on the outcome. The same can arguably be said in the 2019 general elections in South Africa. President Cyril Ramaphosa's led ANC won with a marginal 57,3 %, a drop from the 62,5 % the party achieved in 2014, despite him being regarded as one of the most influential ANC leaders. According to Schulz-Herzenberg (2013) that has a bearing on their political consciousness and attitudes like partisanship and voting behaviour. Another conclusive shortcoming of voting behaviour models is that they cast out the possibility that citizens vote as a civic duty but do so for beneficiary purposes (Edlin, Gelman & Kaplan, 2007).

A study by Young and Blais (1999) on why people vote found that at times that the decision by voters to vote or not to is merely based on considerations that at times have nothing to do with rational choice, citing that a certain level of reported political interest is a significant determinant of voting. Generally, it is argued that people's ability to understand political information impacts who they vote for as they play a part in their thought opinion formation process. Therefore, to fully explain voting behaviour in South Africa, this study also tested if there are other factors outside the theories responsible for shaping voting behaviour. In the context of elections, for voters to make their mark, they must have adequate information about the candidates standing in for elections, made possible by political communication (Dabula, 2016).

As Hobolt (2016) argues, political campaigns provide voters with a certain level of political information which forms part of their thought formulation and decision-making process. Some of the social factors that may lead to voting might not be personal motivations, but individuals' surroundings such as friends, colleagues and family members who supports the notion of voting (Dubula, 2016). That in its own is inter-personal political communication which Trent, Friedenbergr and Denton (2018) says can happen between prospective voters in a vertical mode. According to Himelboim, Lariscy, Tinkham and Sweetser (2012), these interpersonal, political communication forms impact voters' interest in political discourse.

In conclusion, the assumption that most people vote based on their political predisposition is questionable because if that were the case, election results would remain unchanged for a long time. In South Africa, we have recently seen a change in electoral support, meaning that stable sociological factors do not solely determine voter behaviour. From the previous argument, it can be said that the sociological model looks on the influence of social actors, while the psychosocial assumes party identification as the key factor and lastly rational theory on choice and rationality. However, it is notable that those traits of the theories are at times not found in the building blocks that form part of the choice of voters when it comes to voting. This study aimed to investigate if political communication has a bearing on voter behaviour.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter investigated the origins of political communications globally and South Africa, where this study is placed. It also looked at how political communication has advanced from employing traditional methods to send political messages to voters and allow for a more interactive communication process. From the discussion above, it's arguable that none of the theories can fully explain the complicated nature of voting behaviour in South Africa, hypothetically each of the theories might be correct under different circumstances and as they all seek to explain the complex nature of voting behaviour.

Although there is an institutional and research-based analysis on political communication and its effect on political behaviour, there is not enough empirical evidence on how political communication systems can affect behaviour across different nations. To explain voting behaviour, Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz and Hutchings (2011) argue that there must be a dynamic analysis scheme that encompasses all these theoretical underpinnings. As Lock and Harris (1996) points out, voters may not immediately benefit materially from casting their ballots and will have to live with their choice of a party or candidate despite any expectations. By deliberating on these theories as a variable in voting behaviour, the intention is to inspect if they can help understand voter choice. The next chapter will present the methodology that the study took to collect data and make meaning out of the researcher's discussions with respondents.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the research methods and approaches used to collect, analyse, and present the findings. The Chapter outlines the research design, population, sampling technique used, and the data collection instrument adopted by the researcher, and ethical consideration pertaining to the study. The study aimed to examine the top three South African political parties' communications strategies and their effect on Diepsloot voters' attitudes and voting decision-making process. However, before any research is conducted, the researcher is expected to outline what approach or method will be followed as a blueprint to reach the desired results (Dikko, 2016). This chapter aims to do that.

There are different viewpoints from different researchers on what methodology entails, but all are centred on the concept as a strategy to define the process of data collection. According to Bellamy and Perri (2012), a methodology is the set of techniques recognised by most social scientists as appropriate for the creation, collection, coding, organisation and analysis of data. Brynard and Hanekom (2006) point out that research methodology is the how of collecting data and the processing thereof within the research process framework.

That said, Brynard and Hanekom (2006) argue that the process has to do with collecting data and the processing thereof within the research process framework. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) differentiate between the three methods of data collection; quantitative research which has to do with numerical data and analysis, the qualitative methodology which is mostly interested in narrative data and analysis, and lastly the mixed method which is an amalgamation of the qualitative and quantitative approaches. This study used the qualitative method. Brynard and Hanekom (2006) assert that qualitative methodology produces descriptive data mostly collected through in-depth interviews case studies, participant observation and questionnaires. Thus, in the following sections, the research strategy of this study is outlined.

3.2 Research design

Schwandt (2001) defines a research design as a shared world view representing the beliefs and values in a discipline and guides how problems are explained. According to du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014), the choice on a design will impact the study's direction, the research questions, and what steps need to be taken to get answers to such questions. Researchers engage in research to explore issues which they have limited knowledge on to broaden their understanding in spaces where they want to examine what has already been discovered (Creswell, 2014). For this study, the researcher used the exploratory design, which is designed to gain a broader understanding of a research problem or a phenomenon (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006).

This study investigated political communication and its effect on voting behaviour and was primarily interested in understanding whether voters relate to a party based on its communication strategies. According to Reiter (2017), exploratory research provides new explanations that have in the past been overlooked and have the potential to give new meanings to a phenomenon. While the design has the potential to unearth new knowledge, Reiter (2017) argues that that exercise must be flexible in looking for data, and the researcher must be open-minded about where to find such data. In the case of this study, exploration was backed with the use of the empirical findings from the data gathered through interviews. That exercise was meant to explore and unearth new knowledge of political communication effects on voting behaviour.

De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2005) argue that the exploratory design is concerned with understanding a phenomenon using naturalistic observation to explore reality from the respondent's perspective. Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006) differentiate between two alternatives in the design of exploratory research namely; case studies which are detailed and often require investigation of few cases and the surveys which have to do with the collection of information on a wide range of cases which are dealt with individually. Here, the focus was on investigating if political parties' prior general elections communication strategies (1999-2019) affected voters' decision-making process.

With the use of exploratory design, the finding from the research conducted became an instrument of the expansion of new knowledge (Reiter, 2017). In conclusion, exploratory research is conducted to gain a broader understanding of a research problem or a phenomenon (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006).

3.3 Target population and sampling process

3.3.1 Population

A population is defined as the objects, subjects, events, phenomena or cases which a scholar wishes to probe to find new knowledge (Brynard & Hanekom, 2006). In research, the grouping of such objects, groups, or events is called a population (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995). The targeted population could comprise people, problems, or institutions to which a study is applied (Fink, 2015). From the population of over 126,000 in Diepsloot, a sample of 35 people, broken down into 30 residents of Diepsloot who have voted before and five politicians involved in political communication was chosen. Diepsloot was selected for the study because political activities such as service delivery protests and reports of residents abstaining from voting exercises are rife in the area (Mangava, 2018). The township became a convenient space for the researcher to conduct the study as he does not reside far from the site. He believed that the area's politics could make for a good study (Please see section 3.3.3 for more information about Diepsloot as a study location).

3.3.2 Sampling technique

Brynard and Hanekom (2006: 54) define sampling as “a technique employed to select a small group with a purpose of determining the characteristics of a larger group.” When collecting data, researchers must choose the best instrumentation to reinforce the validity and reliability of the data sourced. It is challenging to study the whole population; for that reason, a precise method of selecting what needs to be studied needs to be devised. According to Mason (2017), it is necessary to sample because it is almost impossible to study the broader census of the population in which the research is based on. There are two types of sampling: probability and nonprobability and this study used convenience sampling, which falls under non-probability sampling (du Plooy-Colliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

As in most qualitative sampling procedures, selecting a sample is motivated by the agenda of that particular study (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Marie Bezuidenhout, 2014). For this reason, the researcher employed convenience sampling to get respondents' understanding of political communication and its effects on voting behaviour. Only respondents who were available at the researcher's convenience were then sampled in the study for responses. Also known as haphazard or accidental sampling, convenience sampling is a nonprobability method that selects participants based on availability, accessibility and geographical proximity (Etikan, Musa, Rukkaya & Alkassim, 2016).

Bless, and Higson-Smith (1995) say the purpose of any sampling method is to extract a sample from the broader population to generalise the results back to the sample frame. It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic almost disrupted this study with the lockdown regulations that stopped people from moving around. The researcher had to go for the most convenient respondents (see further discussion on COVID-19 impact on the study and other challenges in section 3.9). According to Morse (2010), another benefit of sampling is that it enables the researcher to explore groups of organisations, people, and events that are not entirely accessible in their totality. Thus, sampling is essential as it makes research affordable and credible. According to Bless and Higson-Smith (1995), a well-designed sample must have properties which encompass almost every representative of the entire population. This is purely based on cost and time continence for the researcher. The race of the respondents and the majority of residents in Diepsloot is Black and Mangava (2018) due to the apartheid spatial planning that passed laws that Blacks settle in the outskirts of cities, and that setup is still prevalent to date.

Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006) explain the advantages of sampling in research;

- a) Sampling makes data collection cheap because if the information is to be gathered for the broader population, the cost would be very high. Since it requires a small portion of the whole population, the cost will be much lower than when the entire population was sampled.

- b) Sampling enables the research to use less time in data gathering. If a researcher's population, for instance, is made up of 2,000 residents, it might take him/her 2,000 hours to interview all of them if he/she needs an hour per student. However, a sample of 300 students would instead take the researcher 200 hours to interview a sampled population.
- c) It is almost impossible to collect data when the population is massive, making the data collection difficult. The study of all the population elements practically impossible, sampling, in this case, will be a solution in generalisation.
- d) If a sample is well-defined and represents the population from where it was drawn, it can produce the highest accuracy without studying the whole greater population.

In sampling, a method is used to rationalise the collection of information and draw a conclusion. Still, if that smaller group is selected thoroughly and carefully, the sample results will reflect the larger group's same traits (Brynard & Hanekom, 2006). This method provided a framework for investigating the participants' experiences and sense-making processes through conversations with one another and with the researcher about their understanding of political communication and its effects on voting behaviour. It's impossible to study the whole population due to size and the nature of qualitative research, and for that reason, the researcher selected a sample from the population. Leech (2002) notes that an appropriate selection of the right sample design from the population affects the conclusion that a researcher can draw later. The selection criteria for the research participants from residents of Diepsloot were that the respondents had to be residents of the area and be at an appropriate age (18 years) to vote and provide their own consent without an adult's supervision.

3.3.3 Location of the study: A case study of Diepsloot

At the T-Junction that enters Diepsloot from the R55 road sits female vendors who have lined up on the roads' sides. Every morning, they lay their informal food stalls to entice the men and women stuck in traffic on their way to work on a taxi. Behind them is a fire station that caters for the whole community of about 400,000 people (Stats SA, 2020). A stone-throw away from that station are shack dwellings, a common sight in many settlements across the country.

If you look north from the fire station, you could see a taxi rank, one of many used by taxi drivers to line up to ferry locals to different places of employment. Just like many informal settlements across the country, there are not many facilities in the neighbourhood. Locals lament that the last time they saw a City of Johannesburg Municipality garbage collecting truck was probably in June 2020 (two months before my visit) forcing residents to throw garbage wherever they deem fit. But Diepsloot problems are compounded by many issues that could take many decades to solve (Bopape, 2017). The literature below details the origin of Diepsloot. According to an online site, Diepsloot.com, the area is demarcated into two municipal wards; ward 95 and ward 113.

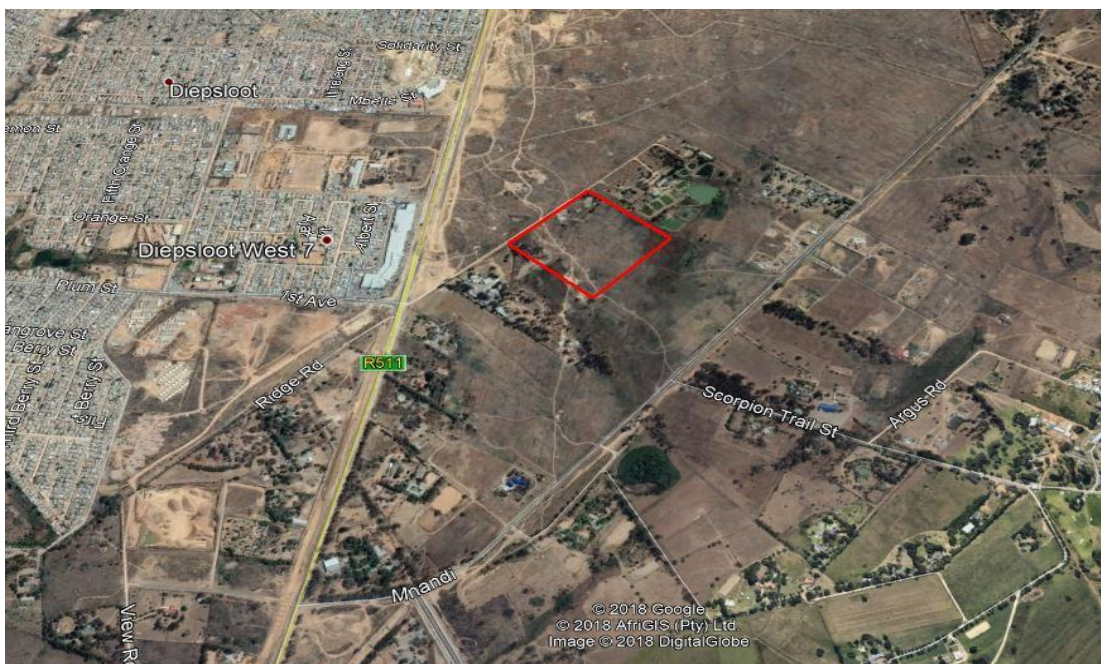


Figure 1: Diepsloot map (Source: Pula Prop)

3.3.3.1 Origins of Diepsloot

As the apartheid⁶ era drew to an end, the rise of informal settlements across the country offered Black people who could not live in the cities due to the regime's laws an opportunity to fight for their rights to settle near big cities and seek better employment and housing opportunities (Mangava, 2018).

⁶ In South Africa informal settlements are a product of the establishment of the apartheid setup where majority of Black people were forced to live in the outskirts of cities and could access the cities for migrant labour. Population growth and lack of affordable housing has also meant that less paid workers settle near their places of employment.

According to Mangava (2018), an informal settlement can be described as an unplanned urban area where people erect temporary housing mainly made up of corrugated iron sheets. A study by Siphumeze (2014) on leadership and service delivery in informal settlements found that the need for sanitation, electricity, housing and improved service delivery has been identified as one that needs critical attention in South Africa. One of those settlements is what today is known as Diepsloot in the Johannesburg area. It is situated about 40 kilometres in the north of Johannesburg in South Africa. It is densely populated, made up of government-subsidised housing, brick houses built by landowners, and shacks. Since the fall of apartheid, the government has been battling to address the triple challenges of inequality, poverty and unemployment and a study by the World Bank (2014) suggests that informal settlements are a manifestation of the pace of urbanisation, acting as the first entry points into the cities for many rural migrants. Arguably, this, as a result, reveals a gap in urban development.

Developed in 1995, it consisted of Diepsloot West, Diepsloot West Extensions 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12 and 13. It was established as a temporary camp of 1,124 plots for some residents who moved from an unregulated dwelling on a private farm called Zevenfontein (Carruthers, 2008). Before 1990, the area was a farm owned by White families but was later converted to a human settlement when those residents from the Zevenfontein settlement had reached about 8,000 in numbers (Mangava, 2018). That pushed the then Rand Provincial Administration to move half of those residents to the area known as Diepsloot now (Mangava, 2018). To date, the settlement has an estimated 400,000 residents, the majority of whom had put together their own temporal shacks in expectation of the government's provision of better housing (SowetanLive, 2019). In 1999 the area formally became part of the City of Johannesburg and has since seen some development, such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses (Ngwenya, 2015).

Soon after that, people started flocking into the area and settled in informal dwellings made from scrap metal, cardboard, plastics and woods (Carruthers, 2008). According to a 2002 study by Urban Forum, violence has always existed in the settlement mainly caused by development plans as people express themselves for recognition by the government. Those divisions make government intervention complex and almost impossible.

Much of the service delivery problems can be referenced to the growing population and destitution of battling people to find employment opportunities and participate in the country's economic activities.

3.3.3.2 Socio-economic issues

The provision of basic services such as housing remains a significant issue in post-apartheid South Africa when one looks at the make of informal settlements. Diepsloot is an interesting case for a number of reasons. The area battles a high rate of violence, service delivery protests and crime (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2002). This violence is arguably a result of a history of lack of government intervention in the community regarding service delivery. In 2008, xenophobic attacks engulfed the area, and much of the violence was directed at Zimbabweans who lost their belongings such as shacks and spaza shops while fleeing the violence. A key distinguishing characteristic of the area is its relative proximity to some of the country's economic hubs, which shows that it's likely to attract many job seekers.

However, the unemployment rate is measured at 51% of the Diepsloot community (StatsSA, 2020). As a result of unemployment and congestion, residents say the area has become a preying ground for criminal elements. Like many other informal settlements in the country, the area has always served as a resettlement area for squatters from the north of the Greater Johannesburg area. It thus brings together different groups from different settlements neighbouring it (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2002). The inhabitants are South Africans and from countries such as Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Somalia, Pakistan, Mozambique, Malawi, Angola and other African countries (Ngwenya, 2015). Although that has never been proven and not much research on this is available, some believe that majority of those residents are undocumented migrants⁷. One-fifth of the residents are said to be from Zimbabwe and Mozambique while others are spread across South Africans and other neighbouring countries (World Bank, 2014).

⁷ These are anecdotal conclusions and there is no conclusive evidence to back this rumours.

3.3.3.3 Politics and leadership

It is impossible to explore the neighbourhood as a complex political community without planting yourself in the area's political sphere. To achieve that, a relational and power analysis of the settlement was done, and that exercise is essential in a context where a community is politically and socially diverse. Political leadership is perceived to be a significant role-player in ensuring that service delivery such as electricity, sewer systems, housing, sanitation and water is possible in communities (Siphumeze, 2014). In general, residents vote politicians into power for them to ensure that these essential services are delivered. When they fail to deliver on such promises, residents become disappointed. According to Siphumeze (2014), disappointment leads to lack of trust and becomes why residents protest for service delivery.

Furthermore, these violent unrests have often been seen as a way of communicating frustrations to a government which only understands violence as a language (Hough, 200). In most cases, the more immediate message that residents want to communicate has much to do with a failure to keep promises on service delivery and lack of essential communication on delivery timelines. Due to the country's history that has remnants of past injustices, service delivery would entail transformation and the redistribution of assets to recipients (Sindane & Nambalirwa, 2012). Hough (2008) also identifies the increase in population, unemployment and the lack of trust and confidence in government structures as potential causes for such violence.

The nature of politics that local government leaders, much as it is the same in the national government, set out their own agendas using the community's name. Katsaura (2014) notes that these spaces are used as a launching pad for political careers, leaving residents in desperate corners. There is a feeling of being cheated on the side of residents by the government. Katsaura (2014) asserts that these spaces are characterised by selfish agendas and contentious politics, where those seeking power advance their interest rather than those for the greater population's benefit.

Respondent 6 complains that political parties have a culture of lying when they need electoral support, further citing that residents have lost trust in their governance;

“Everyone during election seasons makes big promises just to get votes, so it is important to take all campaign messages with a pinch of salt and analyse it against what the party has done up to thus far. One measure is the party’s ability to provide service delivery and its willingness to be held accountable by citizens and own up to its shortcomings.”

Hough (2008) brings an insightful analysis of residents’ dissatisfaction that those that believe they are poor are not necessarily the poorest in the country but compare themselves and their livelihoods with that of local politicians and the surrounding areas which leads to them feeling frustrated and resort to attacking their leaders and their belongings.

That perceived unavailability of governmental intervention plays out through housing backlogs; lack of electricity and sanitation in locals’ eyes equals lack of political will (Siphumeze, 2014). Sindane and Nambalirwa (2012) argue that discourse on what constitutes good leadership due to the lack of universally agreed on understanding of good leadership traits. The ANC had led The City of Johannesburg which Diepsloot forms part of since the fall of apartheid in 1994 until 2016 when the DA took over. According to Mangava (2018), although locals view politics as the driver of development, their perception of ward councillors and local leaders is negative. They perceive them as ‘dodgy and corrupt.’ As it looks, the government seems to battle to meet the area’s needs as the number of residents is steadily growing.

According to Mataboge (2014), successive post-independent governments have tailored and implemented different economic development models to address some of the residents’ issues with no success. The DA won the municipality which governs Diepsloot in 2016 to lose it again to the ANC in 2020. The ANC’s continued political power in the area is believed to be due to the South African National Civics Organisation (SANCO). This grassroots structure mostly advocates for residents’ rights and needs and an ANC alliance (Mangava, 2018). The problem with this system has to do with the belief that the political system in local government which advocates for maximum participation is faced with poor mobilisation of communities, the lack of public education on how systems of government works and general lack of political will from those in the corridors of power (Katsaura,2011).

Ramashamole (2013) states that the legacy of apartheid has resulted in inequalities where racial segregation in housing and settlement shows in the country.

This, according to Ramashamole (2013), is perpetuated by the pattern of racial divides. Most of the residents of Diepsloot are also low-income, and some do not pay for municipality services, making it difficult for the government to collect revenue. This is worsened by the lack of access to municipal services and land opportunities for the poor in highly populated environments (Ramashamole, 2013). While some people blame the current government for underdevelopment, some believe that informal settlements result from the historical apartheid political setup where the black majorities were set to live outside big cities. Mangava (2018) asserts that places like Diepsloot are closely linked to the apartheid spatial setting where government policies separated citizens in housing, job opportunities and education based on their race. The Group Areas Act of 1913 legislated that black people only settle on big cities' fringes as most worked there (Newton & Schuermans, 2013). The historical class and race inequalities still show in residential settlements in Diepsloot and elsewhere in the country (Newton & Schuermans, 2013).

3.3.3.4 Why did the study focus on Diepsloot?

The area's historical and political developments have over the years become a drawcard for different researchers. Among other issues, locals are faced with social, economic, development and environmental problems (Bopape, 2017). General elections occur every five years in South Africa. They have always been a source of interest majoritively because Blacks, Coloureds, and Indians South Africans only got their right to vote in 1994. The decision to study/research this area came after a couple of factors, the primary being that many political activities such as service delivery protests and abstaining from voting happen in the area (Madienyane, 2013). It was essential to understand residents' interpretation and meaning of the political discourse in South Africa. Such is generally mediated through political communication, either as a bridge for the lack of prior engagement on service delivery issues or as a form of discourse. It would be beneficial to understand whether political communication shapes residents' perceptions and voting behaviour.

Secondly, it's the residents of Diepsloot who, come elections times, challenge authority, blockade the roads and desert their right to vote (Madienyane, 2013).

Some of these problems are compounded by the fact that the area is congested; unemployment is rife, making the settlement a crime magnet as resident's battle to find a platform to voice their dissatisfaction (Madienyane, 2013). Despite its large population, the area hardly makes it into the national agenda in the news. When it does, it mostly perpetuates its negative image as a place of crime, violence, and service delivery demonstrations (World Bank, 2014). Some cite perceptions that governments only understand violence and that they do not act when communities are peaceful in approach (Hough, 2008). Elsewhere this is done to show the government that residents are unhappy about the status quo and service delivery disparities (Sindane & Nambalirwa, 2012). Thirdly, Diepsloot was a convenient space to research as the researcher lives in the West of Pretoria, and there was relatively easy access to the neighbourhood and participants.

3.4 Data collection method

According to Burns (2000), data collection is a way of collecting information essential to compile the research project. For this study, the data was collected using open-ended telephonic interviews with voters and political leaders. The rationale of choosing interviews was to provide a rounded understanding of a phenomenon based on rich, contextual and detailed data (Mason, 1996). Interviews are among the most used techniques by researchers and can be conducted on a face-to-face basis, telephonic, and video conferencing tools such as Skype.

The interviews were meant to be held physically in Diepsloot, but due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic globally, the researcher had to find other ways of collecting data which were telephonic. Lockdown regulations had restrictions on movements, and the researcher sent messages to the respondents who had agreed to partake to book them for the interviews. After an agreement was reached, appointments for the respective interviews were made. Some of those respondents are unemployed, and for those who are employed and could only manage to participate after work, draft questions were sent to save time when interviews were held.

Interviews in qualitative data collection provide a deeper understanding of behaviour as indicated by responses and a further detailed inspection of patterns of responses which were later converted to themes (Driscoll, Appiah-Yeboah, Salib & Rupert, 2007). The researcher was interested in understanding the effect that political communication has on voting behaviour. The qualitative method allows for understanding how human beings think and attach meanings and interpretations of social contexts (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2005). In closure, Brynard and Hanekom (2006) assert that qualitative methodology produces descriptive data mostly collected through in-depth interviews, case studies, participant observation and questionnaires. They form part of the qualitative method, which in a study like this has to do with the pluralisation of human behaviour which the study aimed to understand (Flick, 2002).

3.4.1 Interview design and layout

Interviews are one of the best data collection methods in qualitative research because they also help explore sensitive topics where respondents may not be comfortable speaking in focus group setups (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). Although interviews are generally focused on the issue under discussion, they shouldn't be one-sided and could start with discussions meant to put interviewees at ease (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2005).

Before the interviews took place, respondents were informed about the study details, such as its aims and objectives. Each interviewee signed a consent form to be interviewed for ethical considerations, including permission for the interview to be recorded. Those consent forms were sent to the researcher a few days before the interviews. A copy of that can be found in appendix B.

The researcher and the respondents also discussed the ethical consideration and respondents were assured about the ethical principles such as anonymity and confidentiality. This is essential as it gives participants an idea of what to expect from the interview, increases the probability of honesty and forms an essential aspect of the informed consent process. Another rationale for using the qualitative method in this study is that it allowed direct interaction with the people or subjects under investigation.

For that reason, the research embraces the reality of social life and gives the researcher a deeper understanding of the subjects that are being studied. However, as stated, the phase of data gathering with community members was carried out telephonically. A mix of respondents spoke in English and others in IsiZulu, SePedi and Xitsonga, representing the diverse nature of Diepsloot.

I would go back to the respondents for clarity. All this was done to ensure that the findings of the study are credible. Because the interviews were held telephonically, in some instances, the researcher would brief the respondents beforehand when booking them for the interviews. This ensured that they familiarize themselves with the content of the interview guide and as well save time. A good relationship was made with residents while the researcher was doing a case study in the area, but some 13 respondents⁸ refused to partake in the study. They cited some of the reasons they did not want to get involved in politics upon hearing the line '*political communication*' and did not care about voting. This study aimed to examine the top three South African political parties' communication strategies and their effect on voters' attitudes and voting decision making. The engagements also helped the researcher understand the nuances that relate to voters' comprehension of political communication.

Information in qualitative research was obtained through the study of opinions and attitudes in the context of those examined (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Marie Bezuidenhout, 2014). Although interviews can generate in-depth verbal data, the extraction of such required data depends on the research design and the research question that the researcher sought to address (Davidon & Halcomb, 2006). In-depth interviews were used, and they were semi-structured. Those semi-structured interviews allowed the research to tap into other questions to draw out the required data. According to Noor (2008), semi-structured interviews offer enough flexibility for the researcher and ensures that follow-up questions can be made to capture what respondents can leave out. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005) advise using voice recorders to back up the interviews. For this study, a voice recorder was utilised to make sure that the discussions were kept for future perusal and analysis.

⁸The 13 respondents who refused to participate are in addition to the total 35 who participated.

A total of about 35 respondents were interviewed, and when interviewing the 28th respondent, the researcher started to see a pattern of similar responses which signalled data saturation. This concept applies in the thematic analysis, where the goal is to extract themes and codes. When writing about data saturation, Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) demonstrate that even a smaller sample might give a bigger picture of a phenomenon without going overboard with a big sample. Reaching data saturation in this study signalled validity in research methods and confidence that going ahead might produce similar findings to answer the research objectives (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). Still, in the interest of the possibility of extracting more themes and codes, the researcher continued with the exercise. In semi-structured interviews, a sample's size is often justified because of interviewing respondents until reaching data saturation (Francis, Johnston, Robertson, Glidewell, Entwistle, Eccles & Grimshaw, 2010).

3.4.2 Recording and Transcribing

De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2005) advise that for credibility, which is needed in qualitative research, interviews should be transcribed and analysed while still fresh in the researcher's mind. While the qualitative content analysis can be employed on various types of data, it must be transformed into a written format before that process can unfold (Golafshani, 2003). This study's data was collected through telephonic interviews, recorded using an audiotape then transcribed for analysis. Transcription refers to reproducing spoken words into written text (Davidson & Halcomb, 2006). Although the interviews were conducted remotely, telephonically, the interviewee would ask the respondent to find a quiet area to ensure that all the responses are recorded clearly. This ensured that even the recording of the interviews happens as smoothly as possible without disruptions and noise.

As soon as the interview started, the interviewer ensured that he stuck to the questions on the record, and the conversations were recorded on the audiotape to allow for later transcribing. The interviews were about two hours long. Some of the benefits of audio recording are that as soon as the gadget is on, the interviewer can focus on asking the questions with ease without worrying about writing responses, ensuring that content can be retrieved after a long period (Kvale, 2011).

Such recordings can also be sent directly to a computer where they can be replayed for analysis. Because of its strength to extract in-depth interpretations from respondents, the qualitative method enabled a profoundly personal understanding of the meanings and implications of political messages on voting behaviour to the people of Diepsloot through the interviews conducted. While it's essential to set guidelines on how to go about collecting data, clearance on how the same data should be tracked and stored after collection is necessary (McLellan, MacQueen & Neidig, 2003).

Transcription of collected data is an essential part of a research process that can either clear or obscure important information (Poland, 2002). Because raw data cannot be summarised, the researcher manually transcribed the interviews word for word. That exercise would take about 90 minutes per interview. The benefits of that are that throughout that exercise, the researcher would pick up recurring responses which would later be coded into themes. In this research, which was telephonic, the consideration was around whether to include vocal expression which the researcher did. Some researchers prefer typing out only the verbal component of the interview. However, the transcriptions of the situational elements such as facial expressions may also help put context into nuances of the interview and further provide interpretations (Poland, 2002).

More considerations include non-linguistic observations such as body language, speech pattern and facial expressions in the text when transcribing the interviews (McLellan, MacQueen & Neidig, 2003). To extract rich responses, the researcher must have participants willing to share their ideas on the topic under probe. In this study, the respondents had extreme political viewpoints that assisted in having strong responses.

3.5 Data analysis methods and processes

Researchers find themselves with a vast amount of information after the data collection process, and that information needs to be converted into meaningful findings (Buzeidenhout & Cronje, 2014). Buzeidenhout and Cronje (2014) identify discourse analysis and thematic analysis as some methods to analyse the data, and this specific study used thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis is a way of finding the commonalities in how a topic is understood by different respondents and making sense of familiarities in perception (Braun & Clarke, 2012). After conducting the one-on-one interviews, the researcher transcribed the responses to analyse them.

3.5.1 Thematic analysis

The thematic analysis process includes identifying, organising and contextualising the responses into patterns of meaning from all the data gathered (Maubane, 2007). With its emphasis on themes, not everything from the reactions can be classified as a theme. Joffe (2012) states that a clear distinction should be made on what constitutes a theme and what does not to avoid the analysis's subjectivity. This part of the study takes a closer look at identifying research themes, transcribing the recorded response and tying responses with identified themes together, investigating the possible relationships between theory and the data collected, making interpretations, and drawing conclusions from all that. It was also essential that the researcher categorise answers and remarks that are similar. It's not enough to transcribe the responses because they need to be coded to produce meaningful themes. Braun and Clarke (2013) have identified six phases of thematic analysis: familiarising with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. They are discussed below concerning the steps the researcher followed in doing thematic analysis.

Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with the data

The thematic analysis process's success depended on the researcher's familiarisation with the data and the ability to make sense of the respondents' patterns of answering (Buzeidenhout & Cronje, 2014). The researcher repeatedly read the data after transcribing to immerse himself with the responses to understand the meanings and patterns of responses. The benefit of conducting interviews is that while the researcher was engaging respondents that process marked the initial step of data analysis as the recurring responses were recorded in my mind.

Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) postulate that as the researcher documents the thoughts, he/she may note initial analysis and interpretations through the questioning. The researcher came to this phase already familiar with the data.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

After the researcher has familiarised herself/himself with the data, a list of ideas about what could become codes is likely to come out. After familiarising himself with the data, the researcher started to note codes from the data. According to Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017), qualitative research yields meaningful and useful results. At this phase, the researcher needs to ensure that the analysis has been done consistently by recording and systemising it (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). To ensure consistency, the researcher followed the chronological steps of recording data, transcribing the data, familiarising with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and at the end producing the report.

Phase 3: Searching for themes

The most fundamental task in qualitative research is theme identification. This phase starts when all the raw data has been coded and collated, and various themes are identified (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). The good part about transcribing qualitative data is that as you transcribe, you come across recurring responses that are likely to become themes. Here codes were evaluated to determine what could lead to themes. Because the data was collected through interviews, the researcher already came to the analysis process with some prior knowledge of the data and possibly some initial analytic direction. For instance, the researcher already understood that although voters consider political communication while voting, they want that communication to be paired with a commitment for service delivery. The researcher could tell that service delivery is likely to become a theme.

According to Braun and Clarke (2012), those codes could form main themes and other subthemes if coded correctly. The benefits of using thematic analysis are that it provides an opportunity to analyse qualitative data systematically (Braun & Clarke, 2012). To achieve that the data was eventually recorded, coded and analysed into meaningful information.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

Data within themes should largely cohere together, while recognisable and straightforward distinctions between themes should be made (Alhojailan, 2012). That exercise helped the researcher identify some of the themes on respondents' feelings on the effect of political communication on voting behaviour. From the themes that were identified, some had no data to back and had to fall off. According to Braun and Clarke (2012), this is essential as not everything that looks like a theme can be a theme. The researchers also advise that the researcher define what themes are and what cannot make themes at the end of this phase.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

On what can be identified as a theme, Joffe (2012) argues that these should be patterns that have explicit and implicit content. In a study such as this that probed the effect of political communication on voting behaviour, thematic analysis facilitated the extraction of new knowledge of the population's meaning on the phenomenon studied through their thinking, behaviour and perceptions (Joffe, 2012). All the similar responses that fall under a specific pattern were then identified as themes and placed together to form an inclusive picture of the collective respondents. Some of those themes included *False hopes*, *Political rhetoric* and *Service delivery*. The researcher then made valid arguments with the literature and the theoretical framework underpinning the study on those issues under discussion.

According to Johanson and Brooks (2010) in theme development, the researcher should examine the responses to make the data a cohesive narrative.

Phase 6: Presenting the report

After all, is done, the researcher here needs to present the findings (see in chapter 4). That will also include discussing the data in response to the research questions, aim and objectives. Thematic analysis assisted the researcher in identifying the themes on the effects of political communication on voting behaviour. A researcher must reduce the transcriptions and focus on specific patterns that somehow merge and then categorise them into themes (Maubane, 2007). To draw meaning from the raw data, the information was looked at as closely as possible to find the themes. Since the analysis of the responses was concerned with understanding the effects of political communication in voting behaviour, respondents' viewpoints were analysed in relation to how they perceive the communication in general and their effects.

3.6 Piloting

According to Brynard and Hanekom (2006), pilot research helps to point out the possible glitches that could emerge during the primary investigation and further reveal if the study will contribute to new knowledge or not. This strategy also referred to as piloting, is necessary to contextualise the concepts to be measured and the researcher's methods to perform the task (Dikko, 2016). The pilot research was used to test the reliability and validity of the data collection instruments. According to McKevitt, Fudge and Wolfe (2009), a pilot study's importance is to help the researcher lessen mistakes in their primary research exercise. Ten interviews were conducted a few days before the country went on lockdown to test if the instrument will achieve its purpose—the sample respondents comprised the people who fall in the defined population.

The pilot was carried out using convenience sampling per the eligibility argued in the methodology for the broader study. Johanson and Brooks (2010) also warn of using already published literature as a method of estimating findings, further emphasising the importance of piloting. To ensure that the examination produced credible and reliable findings, an introductory message was read out to the respondents before the interview.

The message contextualised the aim and objective of the pilot project. According to Sampson (2004), the investigation is necessary to test the research tools before going into the field and reveal the challenges or better opportunities awaiting the researcher. The data were systematically recorded, then analysed to determine if the instrument can extract enough responses to answer the research questions, satisfy the study's objectives, and further enhance the data's credibility. As McKeivitt, Fudge and Wolfe (2009) put it, a thorough and successful pilot exercise can increase the validity of the research results and amount to a research project in its own and help lay out a foundation of how an effective study can be conducted. The pilot proved that the data gathering instrument would produce desired and credible findings.

3.7 Quality criteria

According to Bryman, Becker and Sempik (2007), qualitative researchers should at the end of the study, persuade those reading their findings that such findings are credible and can contribute to the body of knowledge. One of the critical requirements of any research undertaking is the authenticity of the data collected and its findings (Zohrabi, 2013). Unlike in quantitative methodologies, where researchers need to ensure that the methods produce valid and reliable data, qualitative researchers are tested to produce credible and dependable findings.

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility has to do with the accuracy with which the researcher interpreted the data that was gathered from the participants (Shenton, 2004). The data collected from the interviews must be quality and credible to ensure that it is not questioned (Maubane 2007). In this study, the researcher ran a pilot exercise to test the data collection instrument and determine if it will bear credible results when data collection starts. Researchers must demonstrate that a real picture of the phenomenon under inquiry is presented (Shenton, 2004). The researcher collected the data with prior knowledge of the research problem by familiarising himself with the literature review to better understand the phenomenon. This ensured that when data collection started, the researcher is aware of similar literature from the interviews.

To ensure that the information gathered is credible; Babbie, Mouton and Stridom (2011) suggest that the researcher must recheck if the respondents' information is accurate by assessing their intentions. The researcher also spent enough time doing the interviews to ensure that the data collection process is not rushed and could produce credible findings. The researcher also focused on making sure that the data gathered could respond to the research questions and address the study's overall objectives. Cope (2014) concludes that to support credibility when presenting a qualitative study, the researcher needs to show clear engagement and observation methods.

3.7.2 Dependability

This refers to the quality of integrating the data collection method, data analysis, and the theory generated from the data. Same as in quantitative inquiries where researchers are expected to ensure that the process of data collection is reliable, qualitative researchers need to prove that the same methods they used can produce almost similar results if they were to be employed by a different researcher using the same participants (Shenton, 2004). According to Maree (2007), dependability is concerned with the consistency of an instrument in research. He states that this is obtained when the same instrument produces almost the same results when overused.

As such, the researcher's pilot exercise sampled people with virtually the same characteristics to those who were later used as the sample for the main study. The respondents' age makeup ranged from 18-35; they were also employed, self-employed, and unemployed. Both the exercises revealed similar findings.

To ensure dependability, the researcher made sure that all the aspects of the methodology process speak to each other. That exercise would ensure that if a similar study were to be done using the same method, technique, and interview questions, that study's findings would almost reflect those of the initial research.

3.7.3 Confirmability

Qualitative research findings should project respondents' viewpoints from the data gathered and not those of the researcher. That process dictates that the inquiry findings result from its focus and not the researcher's bias (Babbie, Mouton & Strydom 2011). The Confirmability of this study was established through the synch of the literature review and the overall findings of the study, which are almost in uniform. This proves that the study's findings, not the researcher's thoughts extracted from the data collected from respondents. In addition to that, confirmability in this inquiry was further strengthened by providing rich and in-depth quotes from the respondents, which became a source of emerging themes. According to Cope (2014), researchers need to demonstrate that by describing the steps taken on how interpretations and conclusions were made. Confirmability also refers to how well the data collected supports the findings and interpretation of the research itself. In this research, it's easy to find responses that reflect on the already gathered literature review. In this study, Confirmability addresses the objectivity of the study. For Confirmability in this study, the researcher followed due processes that the methodology entailed.

3.7.4 Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the results and analysis can be applied beyond a specific research project (Cope, 2014). Although the study's findings could be understood within the context of the area, it is still possible to get similar results if the study is carried out elsewhere using the same methods. In this study, transferability was reinforced by employing convenience sampling and the semi-structured interviews that extracted in-depth responses. Because the sampling technique for this study is clear it's the findings can be transferred to other studies, the use of convenience sampling aided transferability as it encouraged an in-depth understanding of the topic. Content analysis and coding also ensured that the study's findings are transferrable to other studies. To achieve a credible arrival, the researcher clearly explained the questions to the respondents and explained the interviews' objectives.

3.8 Ethical consideration

Research ethics help researchers avoid research abuses and understand their scholars' responsibilities (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006). According to Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006), ethics places a greater emphasis on participants' humane treatment, and researchers should always ensure that the research is ethically conducted. This tells us that it is paramount that researchers adhere to ethical boundaries when conducting research. Ethical behaviour in research has to do with the conduct of researchers when doing their work. It touches on protecting the dignity of respondents, their personal rights and dignity, among other things.

Issues such as confidentiality, deception, harm, and consent should be considered when doing research (Kruger, 2003). The researcher must inform the participants about the objective of the study. The researcher also maintained the confidentiality of all data collected from the respondents, and their information and privacy will be respected. The researcher has also read with understanding the university's Research Policy and the Guidelines for Research Ethics Review. Moreover, ethical clearance and approval were obtained from the ethics committee at the College of Human Sciences before the researcher commenced the data collection exercise.

This study was carried out considering ethical guidelines that have been deliberated above. Participants were not pressured to partake and were educated about their participation in the study, what it aims to achieve. They will not, in any way, be identified in the deliberations of the findings.

The university's ethical clearance letter outlines the ethical considerations and clearance for the study. That letter was discussed before any interview took place. The participants signed the consent forms, and the researcher ensured that those participating understood the purpose of the study and its objectives. The consent form also clarified that information acquired from the participants is private. This means that no one has access to the individual data or the participants' names except the researcher. All the participants were informed that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. The researcher only began with the interview once the respondents understood the purpose of the research, and the informed consent form was signed.

3.9 Covid-19 experience and challenges

Field notes are the written account of the things the researcher experiences, sees, hear, experiences and thinks about during their data-gathering exercise (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2005). It is the nature of research that researchers encounter many problems when they are in the field. These problems can range from natural disasters, time constraints, participants who at the last minutes decide not to partake in the probe or to get inadequate responses to answer the research questions and make sense of the phenomenon under study.

This study was conducted when the world was facing a deadly pandemic called COVID-19, which claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. Several challenges had a direct negative impact on this research work.

Initially, the research was to be conducted physically in Diepsloot, but the world got hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. South Africa was no exception. Some of the regulations proposed by the government were the barring of travel, business operations, academic activities and unnecessary physical contacts. As a result of that, the direction of this study on data collection was tempered with. The one-on-one physical interviews could not materialise because of the regulations, and thus the researcher identified telephone interviews as an ideal method.

This required the researcher to put together a database of participants with their contact numbers. Fortunately, the researcher and some community members established a working relationship when the researcher was doing a pilot in the area. Those community members provided the researcher with cell phone numbers of possible participants who had agreed on the community members' request. One of the biggest challenges was the refusal to participate by the identified candidate. As the researcher was a stranger to the participants, some cited trust as a factor for their refusal to participate. In contrast, others were afraid that the interview could be some telephonic scam.

During data gathering, some participants wanted to understand how they would benefit from a study. Despite the explanation made that the study was for research purposes, they refused to participate, explaining that they did not see how that knowledge will enrich them.

In some cases, people asked for monetary compensation before they could participate, which the researcher could not offer. Some interviews were arranged before the people who had previously agreed to partake. When the researcher called for the interviews, they would change their minds citing that they had discussed with family members who discouraged them from participating. Some of the reasons given were that it was dangerous to partake in the study since it was 'political'. As a researcher, I realised that some did not have a clear understanding of politics because they would assume that by participating in the study, they then become activists, which they seemed against. Another challenge with social research such as this one is that it is difficult to explain the material benefit of the findings to participants, some participants asked the 'so what' question when told about the importance of this study, deciding not to partake because they did not see its value in their lives.

Others explained that they had lost confidence in politics and politicians by merely hearing 'political communication' on the topic of the study. Despite all these challenges, the sampled number of participants was reached. Those who participated provided the researcher with the information required to put together the study, investigating political communication and its effects on voting behaviour.

3.10 Limitations of the study

This study aimed to examine the top three South African political parties' communications strategies and their effect on voters' attitudes and voting decision making of Diepsloot residents. It also assessed if Diepsloot residents understand political communication, especially during the elections period. With that said, South Africa has nine provinces that collectively have over 50 million citizens, and this study couldn't cover all the country's demographics. It would be challenging and almost not feasible for the researcher to cover all the nine provinces. It would be expensive and time-consuming, and that scope could not present clear findings as per the study's objectives. Another limitation was that the research was primarily focused on three political parties which are the African National Congress (ANC), the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF).

There are more than 30 political parties in South Africa with an active communication culture. The researcher only focused on the three as they held the majority of the electoral voter count. The researcher would have liked to study the communication strategies of the other parties. It would be interesting to hear people's views in more rural areas about political communication and understand its effects on their voting behaviour.

3.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, the methodology of the study was deliberated. Furthermore, the chapter outlined the steps that will be followed in the data-gathering processes and how the researcher sees it. It is essential for any study to be clear around its targeted population, the rationale for that and the methods used to analyse the data collected from such participants. The chapter deliberated on that.

That reflection also pointed out the need to follow ethical considerations when doing research, and that discussion highlighted how the researcher would ensure that that process is followed. From the discussion above, it is arguable that research methods are a fundamental part of the research methodology, which talks about the justification of selecting one method over others and which instrument can best collect the required data. Qualitative content analysis also enabled the researcher to understand communications patterns and its implication on voter behaviour. Using the tools mentioned above, I collected the data, and thematic analysis was used to make sense of the data. The findings will be put into dialogue and perspective in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyse the findings of the study. According to Dabula (2016), this part of the study allows the researcher to apply reasoning to understand and interpret data already collected fully. This study aimed to examine the top⁹ three South African political parties' elections communications strategies and their possible 'effect' on voters' attitudes and voting decision-making process. These parties are the ANC, DA and the EFF. The objectives were, to review the previous general elections communication strategies used by these South African political parties, to determine whether political parties' prior general elections communication strategies affected the decision-making process of voters and to assess the kind of effect that post-elections communication strategies have on voters' next elections voting decision and to understand whether voters relate to a party based on its communication strategies and messaging.

The study used qualitative research methods and strategies for collecting and analysing data. The data gathered was coded, and thematic analysis was used to arrange the discussion. Thirty sets of open-ended telephonic interviews were conducted with voters in Diepsloot and five more with political communicators or politicians (see Chapter 3 for a rational discussion on that). The interview guides had different questions for the various respondents and included the study's objectives and purpose. Generally, the questions related to how politicians communicate, how voters receive that communication, and their voting behaviour.

⁹ The top three political parties in the time of this study were the ANC, followed by the DA and lastly the EFF. These are the political parties with the largest representation in parliament based on electoral performance.

4.1.1 Thematic Analysis

Six steps of thematic analysis as identified by Braun and Clarke (2006) in Maguire Delahunt (2017:3355) were applied; “Step 1: Becoming familiar with the data; in this step, the researcher read and re-read the transcripts of the interviews. Then make notes and jot down early impressions.

Step 2: Generate initial codes; Here, the researcher started to organise the data in an expressive and organized way. This process condensed lots of data into small chunks of meaning. Step 3: Search for themes; in this case, the researcher examined the codes related to the impact of political communication in voting behaviour. At the end of this phase, the codes were organised into comprehensive themes that appeared to respond to the research questions and objectives. Step 4: Review themes: The researcher reviewed, modified and established preliminary themes identified in step 3. Step 5: Define themes: in this step, themes were refined to identify the essence of what they are about. Step 6: Writing-up: this is the end where the researcher reports the results”. Themes generated relate to false dreams, political rhetoric, service delivery, persuasion and emotive language and commitment and are presented in the table below.

4.5 Prior general elections communication strategies

Themes

Service Delivery

False Dreams

Political rhetoric

4.6 The kind of effect that post-elections communications strategies have on voters' next elections voting decision

Theme

Persuasion

4.7 Voters relation to a party communication strategy

Theme

Emotive language and Commitment

Figure 2: Proposed Themes

For better contextualisation, the chapter starts with a demographic presentation followed by in-depth discussions later. That exercise investigates voters' meaning-making and responses to political communication and whether these political party messages affect voting behaviour. The researcher had to make sure that he familiarises himself with political communication, communication strategies, and content to better prepare for the interview discussion (see chapter two for an in-depth discussion about political communication literature and theoretical frameworks applied). Some fair share of political knowledge was also needed as they helped spark political discussions that formed part of the interviews. The study aimed to examine the effect of political communication on voting behaviour. Thus, the presentation of the findings is based on the objectives of the study as discussed in chapter one, namely: to review the previous general elections communication strategies used by South African political parties, determine whether political parties' prior general elections communication strategies affected the decision-making process of voters, determine the kind of effect that post-elections communications strategies have on voters' next elections voting decision and to understand whether voters relate to a party based on its communication strategies and messaging.

Many researchers have previously used a myriad of analytical models to better examine voting behaviour (Harder & Krosnick, 2008). In general, that assessment is done using three theoretical perspectives: the party identification theory, the psychosocial theory and the rational theory. And while many empirical studies (Geys, 2006 & Antunes, 2010) have provided findings to support these different theoretical underpinnings, the truth is none of these theories is adequate to explain something so complex like voting behaviour.

According to Resnick and Casale (2013), most studies on behaviour use micro determinants such as national turnout data as a contextual framework to explain voting behaviour. While that can produce meaningful insights, they cannot fully explain voting behaviour, a psychological construct. To better explain voting behaviour in this study, the researcher combined both respondents' individual understanding of political communication and whether political communication affects their voting decision.

Since political communication is multi-faceted and comprises different layers as Mutsvairo and Karam (2018) note, the next thing to do was to ask respondents what communication they want to hear and when, whether before or after elections. By comparing the two, the researcher could read from the observation if indeed prior political communication affects who they vote for. To fully explain voting behaviour, Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz and Hutchings (2011) argue that there must be a dynamic analysis scheme that encompasses all these theoretical underpinnings of voting behaviour.

The following demographic section investigates the bearing variables such as political affiliation, gender, age and employment status on voting behaviour. Quackenbush (2004) further argues that when conducting research relating to electoral behaviour, such as this one, the researcher should also focus on various socioeconomic factors such as gender, religious preferences and party identification to determine voters' choice.

4.2 Demographic profile of respondents

4.2.1 Gender make-up of research respondents

Women at 56,7 percent made up most respondents in this study with men constituting 43.3 percent. According to the national population census of 2020, women in South Africa constitute 51,1 percent of the total population on approximately 30,5 million people (Statistics SA, 2020). As such, the respondent's sample represents national gender demographics. The explanations on differences in political interest and preferences between women and men continue to dominate the political space as research probes the impact of gender on voting behaviour (Abendscho & Steinmetz, 2014). Most political research that touches on gender focuses mostly on socio-cultural dynamics, such as how women are suppressed due to cultural beliefs and do not consider their socio-economic predicaments.

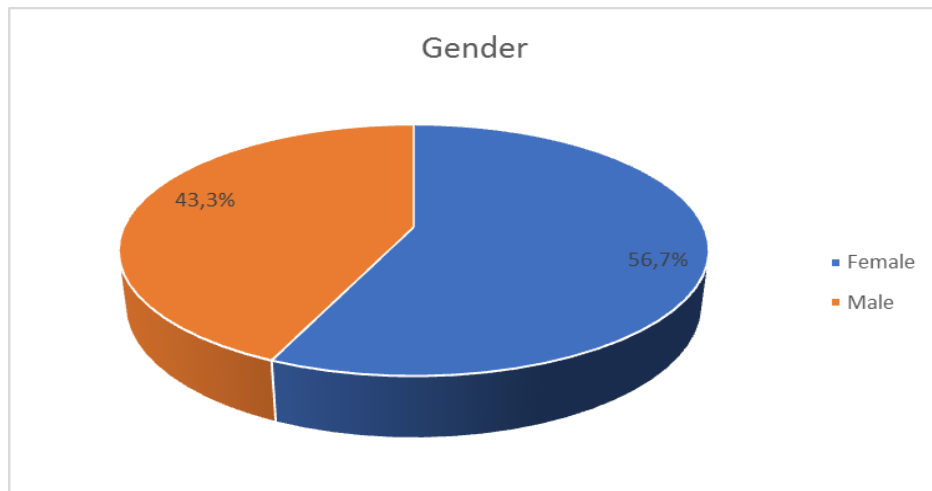


Figure 3: Gender make-up of research respondents

For that reason, there's little work with deep theoretical interrogation of the link between gender and voting and their mutually interacting nature (Hatemi, McDermott, Bailey & Martin, 2012). That lack of clarity is worsened by the confusion on the different viewpoints men and women have on politics and how that will impact electoral outcomes (Hatemi, McDermott, Bailey & Martin, 2012). In general, the two exhibit almost predictable differences in political attitudes and behaviour but to bring the gender variable and voting behaviour together it's essential to lay out some of the challenges both men and women face. According to Abendscho and Steinmetz (2014), although the act of voting is the same across genders, men and women arguably show distinct preferences when they go to the polls. According to Inglehart and Norris (2000), women are still faced with being overrepresented in low paying jobs and make up the majority of employees in the public sector and sectors such as healthcare, education and welfare services. They could feel that the system continues to trample upon them and are likely to vote for parties opposing such a phenomenon.

Following the fall of apartheid in South Africa, there was optimism with many women elected into the government, their inclusion in government would be used as a lever to address gender inequality (Hassim, 2003). A study by Swers (1998) on the role of gender in voting found that while women might not be as interested in broader party ideologies as their male counterparts, the more an issue directly affects them, the more likely they are to vote for a party that advocates against the matter.

It is almost possible that men would go for a party promising material benefits because they are fighting different issues than women. Many studies worldwide have revealed that women are less likely to participate in politics than men (Inglehart & Norris, 2000). At the same time, many of those studies investigate that fewer concentrate on the impact of gender on voting behaviour. Investigating this issue is essential especially in a country such as South Africa where there are issues of pay disparities based on gender, gender-based violence and other societal problems that weigh heavily on one gender and favour others (Hassim, 2003). According to Chuma (2006), because South Africa is emerging from a past defined mainly by legislation governing racial segregation and political participation based on race, women's outlook would define their access to the public sphere, and black women, in particular, have limited participation both in the mainstream politics and economy.

4.2.2 Age of respondents

Majority of the respondents in this study were youth aged between 18-35. The respondents were grouped on four age brackets, 18-29, 30-39, 40-49 and 50-59 years for better age classification. Generally, it would mean that the youth, aged between 18-35 in South Africa, were the majority of about 18 percent. To break that number down, the youth between 18-30 made up 13 percent with more than 5 percent on the 30-39 age brackets.

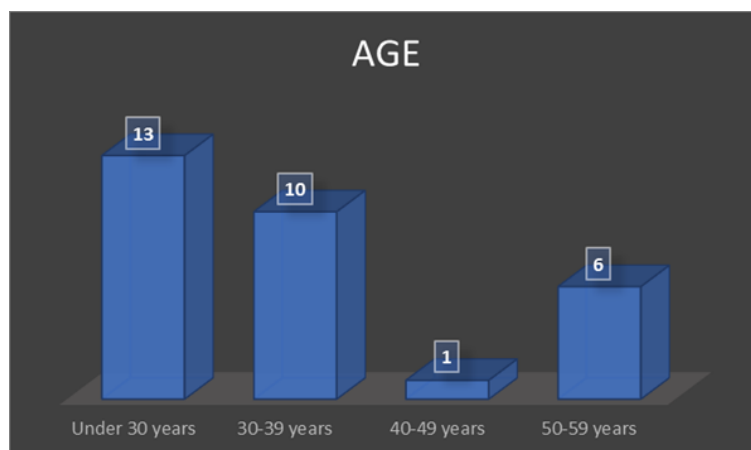


Figure 4: Age of respondents

The effect of age has been an overlooked heuristic within the voting behaviour research, but it can help us explain how people from different age groups vote (Webster & Pierre, 2019).

It also appears that as people grow older, they become more motivated to vote because they feel that they have more at stake economically in the outcomes of elections (Harder & Krosnick, 2008). Across the world, such are pensioners who receive social grants from welfare who are periodically told that they will lose that if there's regime change (Harder & Krosnick, 2008). Across the world, young people are highly concerned about their economic and civil rights and therefore always want to remain in the political space (Chuprov, Williams & Zubok, 1997). Except for their participation as activists, voting offers them an opportunity to choose their future trajectory. South African youth constitutes a third of the population on 17,84 million (Statistics SA, 2020). Sears and Chareka (2006) argue that young people use voting as a vehicle to impact discourse.

In the 2009 general elections, about 80 percent of the newly registered voters were youth between 18 and 29 (Kersting, 2009). It is essential to gain an understanding of who these people could be. These could have been the younger generation born just before the dawn of democracy, most of whom were promised educational opportunities by the government or political parties. Several studies show that although young people are somewhat frustrated with politicians and the slow pace in which they address societal issues, they feel strongly about being part of the political discourse (Sheeren, 2007). According to Mutsvairo and Karam (2018) in recent times in the country, the #FeesMustFall campaign revealed the power of grassroots political communication where political activists can use new media such as Facebook and Twitter to mobilise campaigns.

The #FeesMustFall movement was one turning point in domestic politics. It revealed how much students or young people are frustrated with the political dispensation, and as Resniek and Casale (2014) note, most of them find themselves disadvantaged economically. Although it happened in a bottom scale political space, it helped shape government policy on free education. An example of that concentration of young people in politics is the formation of the EFF which brought about a new crop of young leaders, most of whom were members of the ANC's youth wing. According to Chareka and Sears (2006), many young people view choosing leaders as the only way to determine the country's direction and further shows the power and influence of young people in domestic politics.

In Africa, the youth have always been at the forefront of political transitions and significant events in history. In South Africa, the 1976 Soweto Uprisings which highlighted the atrocities carried out by the then apartheid regime were led by youth. In Malawi, university students ignited countrywide protests that ended the country's one-party rule in 1992, and Zambian youth took to the streets to protest over the rising cost of maize meal which led to then president Kenneth Kaunda's decision to hold multiparty elections in 1991 (Resnick & Casale 2014). In South Africa, the right to vote and democracy, in general, came at a cost and a lot of people died in their quest to achieve those rights. But beyond choosing leaders, some consider voting as a method to select someone who better represents them and can be their voice. Respondent 1 had this to say when talking about their political party preference;

“The EFF, for instance, is very popular among the youth because it speaks on matters which are very close to their hearts in a language which is easily accessible.

Their good use of social media and branding has also popularised them. “

While commenting about why they voted the EFF, respondent 2 echoed something about voting for a leadership that better represent him;

“My vote was more aligned to the change in leadership rather than the messaging. SA as a democracy we vote for a political party rather than individual, and the policy direction remains the same. However, the leadership of the particular party matters as they are the ones to implement the policy.”

Over the years, researchers have found interest in investigating the youth's level of interest in the political system. According to Oyedemi and Mahlatji (2016), an assumption that the youth's interest in voting is vital is underlined by an assertion that there are continuous calls from political parties for the youth to honour those who laid down their lives fighting for the right to vote. In most cases, political parties encourage young people not to forget the long and protracted history of the struggle for liberation against the apartheid regime. This is even though the youth are the most affected by unemployment. According to the quarterly labour force survey by Statistics SA (2020), the youth aged between 15-34 accounted for 63,3 percent of unemployed people. Broadly, elections campaigns are centred on jobs opportunities, housing, free education and other inclusive service delivery issues.

With the youth being the most hit by unemployment, they are likely to be the ones who want to vote to better their fortunes. Even with disappointments in political organisations, people still vote to express their anger or support for a particular party. According to Oyedemi and Mahlatji (2016), unmet expectations of housing, roads, water, and electricity are factors that influence youth involvement in voting.

“There needs to be job creation, poverty eradication, a non-racial country and safer South Africa for all. A country with less socio-economic challenges and a healthy environment are some of the things I consider when going to vote.”

Respondent 3 above cites issues such as social security as their motivation to vote for political parties. As people grow older, there seems to be a steady increase in their interest in political matters. Against this background, one can assume that as people grow older, they seem to take their civil duties and responsibilities seriously by participating in voting issues (Schoeman & Puttergill, 2006). This is supported by Harder and Krosnick (2008) study where they found that people become increasingly likely to vote as they grow from middle class to adulthood arguably due to historical events that a particular generation of people witnessed and shaped their lives. In South Africa, the dismantling of the apartheid administration is always part of campaigning by the governing ANC.

The high number of unemployed youth in the country (Oyedemi & Mahlatji, 2016), which paints a grim picture, versus their participation in voting could mean that as much as voters are unhappy about the pace in which political parties and government are moving in bettering their lives, there is still hope that one day their fortunes will be turned. However, people can choose to participate or not to out of frustration. One of the most interesting issues rising from such frustrations is that young people are starting to get involved in alternative political acts (Sherren, 2006). The #FeesMustFall was probably one of the first political fights outside mainstream politics with then ANC president Jacob Zuma proclaiming free education in 2017. This could better explain why, for example, people abstain from voting but get involved in a boycott.

c) Marital Status of respondents

Around 53 percent of the respondents said they were married with 47 percent single. Marital status can provide us with insight on what motivates voting behaviour and can further explain the possibility of explaining whether married couples vote in unison or exclusively.

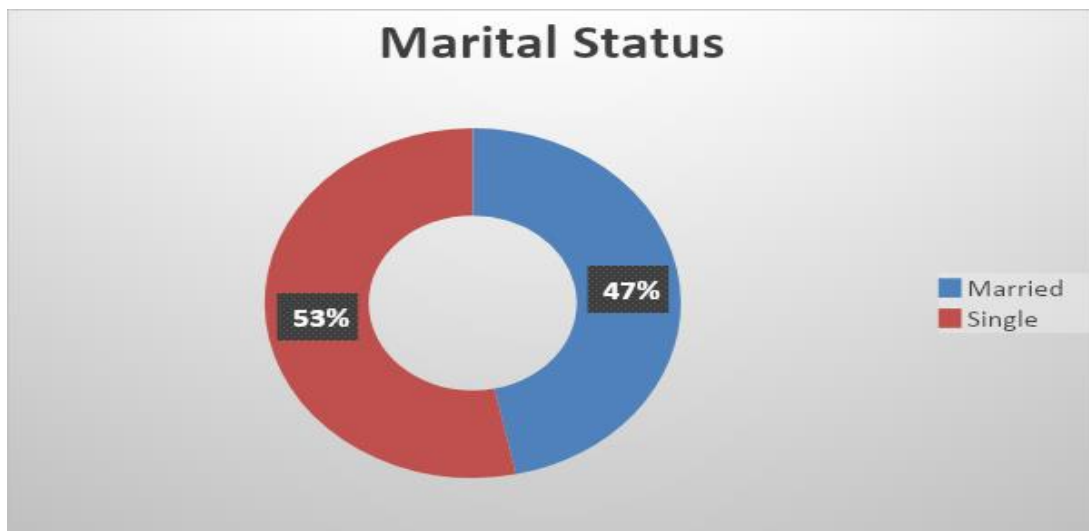


Figure 5: Marital Status of respondents

Research on voting behaviour considers race, partisan groups, ethnic groupings, religion and class as determinants of voting behaviour. According to Nickerson (2008), studies on interpersonal influences point out that cohabitating couples share similar views on political developments. Their unison may determine voting patterns among married people, and they vote for the same political parties. Sarlamanov and Jovanoski (2014) in their research on what determines political behaviour found that some of the values that underpin people's behaviour are learned within the family setup. Voters could go as far as wanting to remain loyal to their family and their parties in general.

While married couples are exposed to various political messages, their engagements with each other may give an essential motivation for a choice on voting behaviour. This view is supported by Nickerson (2008) whose study revealed that the decision to vote appears to be motivated and assisted by interactions with family members, friends and neighbours.

In marriages, the highly politically motivated partner inspires the spouse to vote by exposing them to political information or explicit persuasion (Harder & Krosnick, 2008). The possible explanation for that is the frequent interactions within the households on politics and other societal issues. It's the nature of companionships that members engage in political discussion; the one with a more decisive view is likely to influence others' decisions. A study by Harder and Krosnick (2008) found that while motivation to vote might come from a perception that being an accountable civilian obliges one to vote, pressure from one's family, spouse or family can also be a factor. Furthermore, Mutsvairo and Karam (2018) reveal that the advent of online technologies allows civil society and citizens to empower each other politically, motivating voting behaviour. Some of the social factors that may lead to voting might not be personal motivations, but individuals' surroundings such as friends, colleagues and family members who support the notion of voting (Dubula, 2016) that it is inter-personal political communication which Trent, Friedenbergr and Denton (2018) say can happen between prospective voters.

(d) Employment Status of respondents

Of those who participated in this study, only 40 percent were unemployed, and 60 percent employed. That exercise on understanding voters' employment status was necessary for a study such as this one which investigates what determines electoral behaviour.

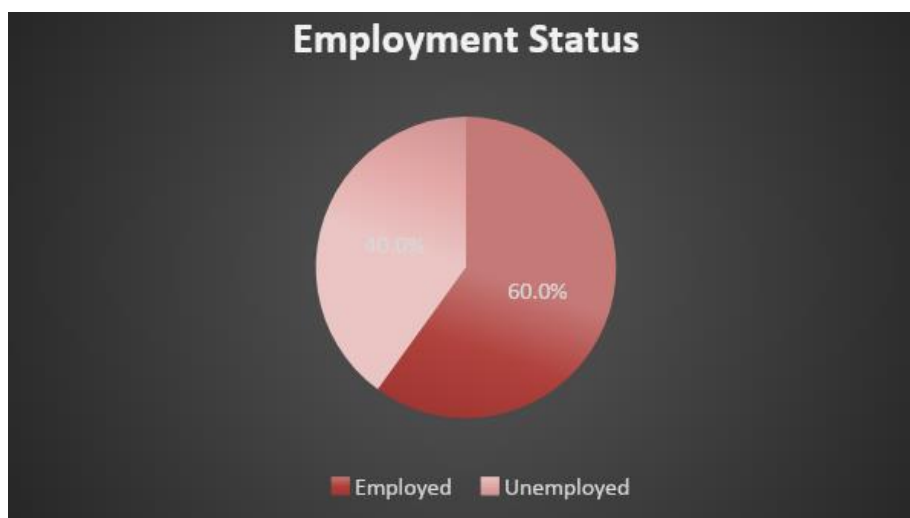


Figure 6: Employment status of respondents

A study by Grafstein (2005) on the impact of employment status on voting revealed that the unemployed vote for the party, which is expected to produce growth associated with possibilities of job offers. Respondent 3 comments on the issue of employment as a determinant when deciding on who to vote for;

“Prior elections, every political party promises job creation, dealing with lack of education, cultural and religious discrimination, overpopulation, corruption and other things. These are the challenges faced by majority of my community members, and I expect any party coming to campaign in my area to address such.”

Research attempting to understand the impact of unemployment on voting behaviour should consider both voting and unemployment in a political-economic and materialistic context (Grafstein, 2005). It is clear from respondent four that voters go to the polls with material expectations.

“A message of making my life easier and giving opportunity and direction to the country’s problems, that’s what I vote for.”

It looks like the employed and the unemployed face two options; the employed to vote for the government that has provided a job to them or the unemployed voting with an expectation that the government can deliver jobs. Respondent 5 echoed this when asked why they vote.

“Parties should always be clear about the stances on national matters like education, the economy and healthcare because these directly affect people’s day-to-day lives. Depending on how they are communicated, they can motivate people to vote.”

The respondent’s viewpoint on communication as a motivation to vote is closely linked to findings by a study by Sarlamanov and Jovanoski (2014) which found that in rational voting what is significant are the diversity and the quality of information based on which social actors make decisions for whom to give their vote in the elections. This reveals that voting is closely tied with the Rational Choice Theory, which assumes that voting is issue-based, meaning that people vote for the material benefit (Schoeman & Puttergill, 2006).

Looking at the impact of unemployment on voting behaviour, Brown (2012) states that those who faced a gloomy future because of unavailability of jobs believe that voting for a party governing will deliver unemployment for them. It's clear that for those voters, the drawbacks of electoral behaviour are incentive-based. The high levels of unemployment continue to stick out like a sore thumb in an economy that mainly consists of macroeconomics fundamentals compared to the early 1990s (Hodge, 2009). All these make unemployment a perfect campaigning talking point. Such societal challenges inevitably become campaign talking points for political parties and socio-economic issues top the list in election campaigns, making the issue of job creation the best hooker (Oyedemi & Mahlatji, 2016). This is consistent with the assertion that political parties thrive with issue-based campaigning in voting, where they make promises for votes in return (Brown, 2012). Thus, it was essential to understand from respondents what kind of material promises were used during campaigning.

The response from respondent 6 below reveals the nature of campaigning and what political parties use to garner support;

“Everyone during election seasons make big promises just to get votes, so it is important take all campaign messages with a pinch of salt and analyse it against what the party has done up to thus far. One measure is the party’s ability to provide service delivery and its willingness to be held accountable by citizens and own up to its shortcomings.”

With the use of the line ‘it is important take all campaign messages with a pinch of salt and analyse it against what the party has done up to thus far,’ the respondent seems to understand that it is in the design of campaigns that promises are made and that until they have been fulfilled voters should not view them as a done deal.

Respondent 7 reveals inconsistencies with how campaign messages are designed in comparison to the deliverables. She does admit that politicians are aware of the challenges facing her community but do little to resolve such.

“Challenges are always addressed, but there are no solutions. No solution as to why people in my area still have no water while there is a giant dam filled with water all year around. Those who can have boreholes in their homes, but others continue to suffer.”

As respondent 8 tells the researcher, they are deeply concerned with political parties' continuous manipulation when campaigning.

“The truth is most political parties lie their way into the hearts of voters who fall prey to their lies due to their destitute situations of poverty and unemployment.”

To those battling it, unemployment is both a psychological and material challenge, and it is natural to assume that voters' electoral choices could be impacted by their employment status (Grafstein, 2005). However, other issues compound the problem of unemployment. According to Benerjee, Galiani, Levinsohn, McLaren and Wollard (2008), another challenge is the mismatch between job seekers' skills and what the job market is requiring from prospective employees. This study was completed when the world was battling the spread of COVID-19, which had brought economies to their knees. South Africa was not an exception, and many people were either working from home or losing their jobs due to the pandemic's effect in the job market. The country's census agent, Statistics South Africa, had also just released the latest quarterly labour force survey which showed further job losses. It revealed that the youth are the most affected by unemployment.

According to the survey, the youth, between the ages of 15-34, accounted for 63,3 % of unemployed (Statistics SA, 2020). All these are caused by the economy changes where there is less demand than supply (Hodge, 2009). In South Africa, trading activities were put to a halt due to the freeze in economic activities caused by the lockdown. Despite the unhappiness from people concerning government stopping economic activities which led to job losses civilians somehow still have confidence in the government that it will turn their lives around. According to Schoeman and Suppergill (2006) in the context of politics in the Southern African region, the party identification theory is still prevalent as liberation movements seem to find support from the membership they acquired in the olden days while there is proof that opposition parties still battle to topple these parties despite their shortfalls.

In South Africa, the liberation party, ANC, is still in power, the South-West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) in Namibia, and the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). All these governing parties are still on the helm of governments, respectively, despite frustrations from the electorate on service delivery and developmental issues.

With the notion that democracy allows civilians to voice their dissatisfaction on governing parties, this brings us to question of whether citizens use their ballots as a method to hold politicians to account for failing to deliver on their electoral policies (Kadt & Lieberman, 2017). According to Bratton, Bhavnani and Chen (2012), the reasons for such continuous support could be that voters have unmet expectations on the ruling parties they could fall on partisan identification when it comes to party support. Such voters allocate their ballot based on partisanship when voting. There is also a sense of solidarity as respondent 9 puts it;

“I believe that my voice does matter and by me casting my vote I would be doing something my parents had the privilege of not doing.”

Here in South Africa, that statement could be why the ANC has mainly remained hegemonic despite its perceived failures to transform the lives of ordinary civilians. Booysen (2007) says that while some of those failures might have awakened people on the grass-roots level from blind-loyalty to have a confrontational and critic stance on the party, it hasn't done much to tamper on their loyalty to vote for the party in government.

e) Employment position of respondents

The respondents hold different positions in the job market, and figure 7 below gives a detailed spread of the various roles they play. Majority of the respondents at 40 percent were self-employed. The other one's informal employment are seated at 3 percent. This study was conducted during a difficult time across the world.

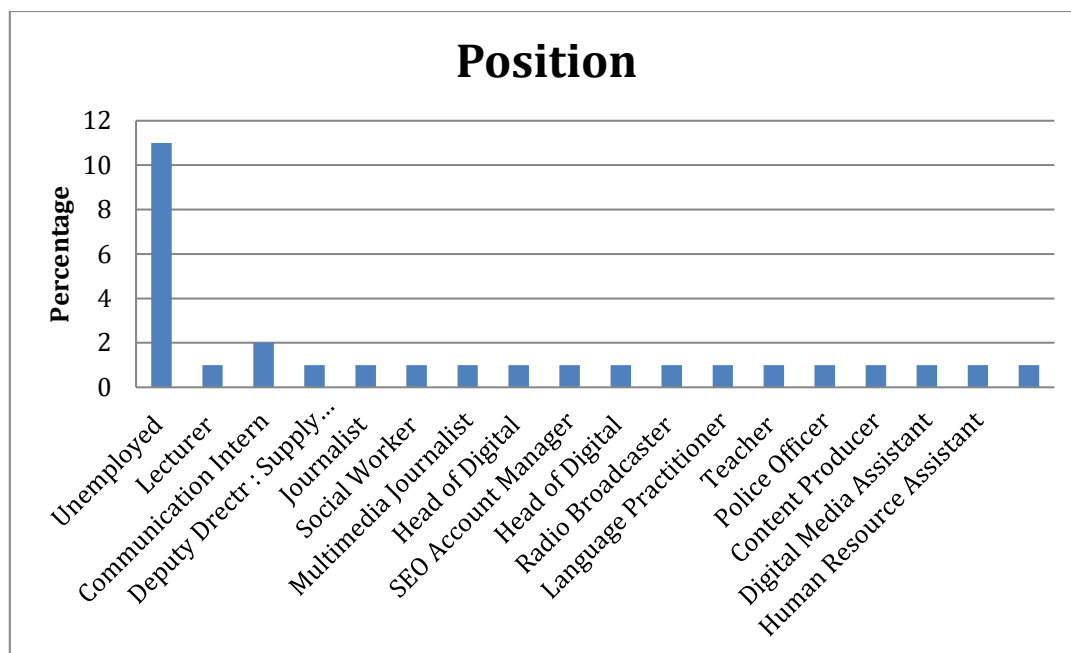


Figure 7: Employment position of respondents

COVID-19 has killed hundreds of thousands and infected millions and had brought a halt to economies and led to high unemployment rates, especially among the youth. It is the unpredictability of globalisation that most young people in developing countries face a high prevalence of unemployment than their counterparts elsewhere (Curtain, 2001). In South Africa, the situation has always been a thorny one with some historical underpinnings. When the democratic government took over in 1994, it inherited a stagnant economy from the then apartheid regime with growing unemployment levels and a fiscal deficit of about 7 percent gross domestic product (Hodge, 2009). This would make it impossible for people to hold down jobs in the labour market.

A study by Benerjee, Galiani, Levinsohn, McLaren and Wollard (2008) found that the spatial separation between business centres and rural settlements where the majority of black people are residing, the lack of affordable public transportation, corruption and the difficulties of funding business start-ups are some of the causes of the high rate of unemployment. In recent months, the situation was worsened because governments had instituted lockdown to slow down the virus's spread. Due to that, businesses closed shop and were forced to retrench staff. Many people found themselves having to close their establishments.

As Resnick and Casale (2013) observe, South African youth feel that nothing much has changed since the dawn of democracy. Their low participation in voting may be driven by a lack of faith in the political parties standing for elections. Elsewhere, the two researchers find that in the 2009 Malawian elections the youth felt excluded from the governing party for lack of employment opportunities, thus prompting them to abstain from voting.

It is, however, a different picture when making a comparison to senior citizens. Harder and Krosnick (2008) argue that those in positions of authority in workplaces are also expected to have a sense of political entitlement, leading to higher political and voting participation. The perception of government performance which has to do with a rational approach to voting, is prevalent and can influence people's workplace positions. People vote for different reasons and what possibly motivates a banker to vote would be different from what motivates a farmworker in a field somewhere in the countryside.

According to Harder and Krosnick (2008) much as public servants who vote to keep the governing party in power and secure their jobs, farmers would do the same with an expectation to receive their farming subsidies and have farm-related government policies in place. This preferential voting can also be seen when profiling a voter living in a metropolitan area and a rural settlement. The destitute nature of rural settlements means that residents find themselves with no water and that's the utility they would vote for. In contrast, those in urban areas vote for something different. Respondent 10 alludes to the perception that residents in the same municipality could receive different treatment from the municipality when it comes to the delivery of services;

"I used to live in Cape Town, where I noticed that services are prioritized in line with the apartheid spatial planning. To date, there are white zones (where first-class government services are provided), coloured zones (where only essential services such as waste removal, electricity and water supply are standard), and black zones that are regarded as informal settlements where prominent services offered by the municipality is evictions and demolition of shack habitats. Even here in The City of Johannesburg, you can see that the service we receive is mediocre in comparison to neighbouring high-class areas."

Hough (2008) brings an insightful analysis of residents' dissatisfaction that those that believe they are poor are not necessarily the poorest in the country but compare themselves and their livelihoods with that of local politicians and the surrounding areas which leads to them feeling frustrated and resort to attacking their leaders and their assets. Those with jobs that give them meagre salaries are more likely to vote for a party in the helm of government if they feel uncertain that socioeconomic rights will be protected when another political formation assumes power. These are some of the factors explained by political scientists Harder and Krosnick (2008) on why the older generation of pensioners keep voting for the ruling party for fear of losing social grants should another party come to power.

e) The political affiliation of respondents

Ninety-seven percent of the respondents were card-carrying members of political parties with only 3 percent who had no membership.

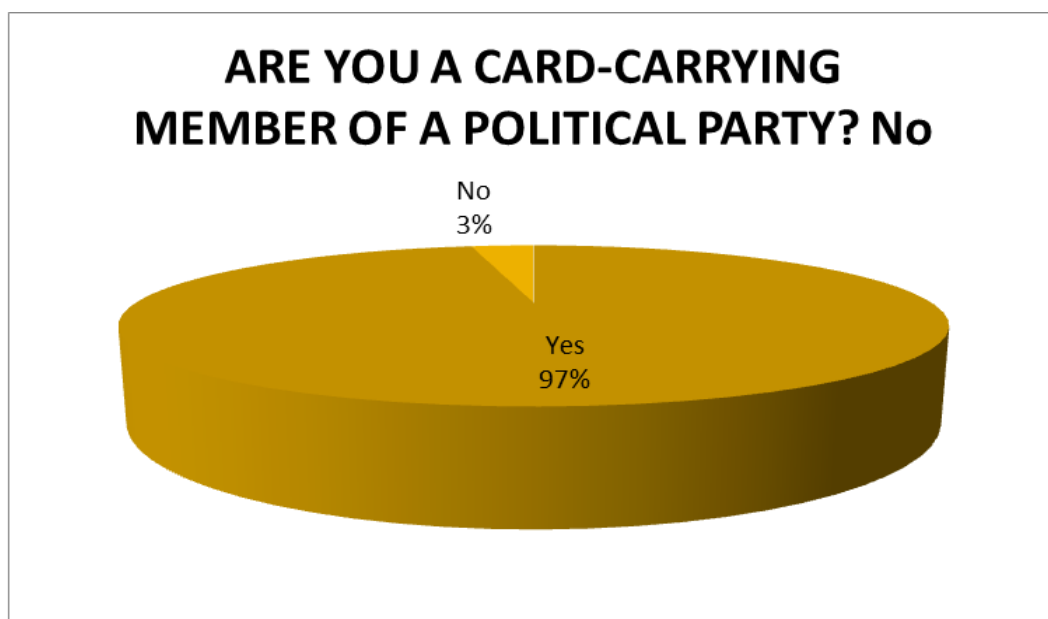


Figure 8: Political affiliation of respondents

In a study such as this one, it was essential to understand the respondent's political affiliation because card-carrying voters are likely to express loyalty to their affiliated parties (Quackenbush, 2014).

Arguably, voters who are aligned to a party with membership are likely to vote for the party which they belong to. This could be better explained by the Party Identification model, which states that the electorate act based on the party or candidate they are aligned to and portray loyalty to their party (Kersting, 2009). This could better explain why political parties motivate citizens to take a membership with them because they possibly believe these people could become Party Identification voters and vote for them. The other 3 percent of voters who participated in the study expressed that their support varies from election to election. These voters fall in the Rational Model Theory (Sarlamonov & Jovanoski, 2014), attaching voting behaviour to expectation. They expressed that they will only vote if they have confidence that the political parties will deliver in their electoral promises.

“Their plans to combat socio-economic issues and then after elections, we want a strategy on how they will implement that plan.”

Respondent 11 outlines that promises alone do not hold water, but voters want practicality and results. These are the sentiments expressed by another youth respondent who complains that youth unemployment needs to be dealt with.

“Clear action and intentions of making a difference in the community, especially when it comes to youth empowerment is a key driver for voting.”

This voter shows traits of a rational voter theory. According to Wang (2013), the theory assumes that individual political actions are a result of expected utility calculations, especially in comparison to what they are likely to receive when choosing another party. This could mean that the rationale for voting for a particular party instead of the other would be the voter's expectation on the selected party, in the case of this respondent being youth empowerment. Respondent 12 below outlines that political parties need to own up to their mistakes but the mention of *‘general membership’* in the response suggests that the respondent could be a card-carrying member of the party;

“The ANC’s ability to provide service delivery and its willingness to be held accountable by us as the general membership and own up to its shortcomings is one of the reasons why I voted them again.”

While this respondent does not rule out that political affiliation is one of the issues that propel voters to support their part, he says there needs to be some motivation to do with a commitment to change the electorate's lives. The Psychological Model of voting behaviour postulates that voters put party identification first, and personal factors are secondary (Kersting, 2009). That argument is supported by Bartels (2000), who argues that partisanship influence electoral behaviour.

4.3 How do voters receive political communication messages?

The results of this section of the study show that political parties are benefiting from social media platforms to convey political communication. As Figure 7 below shows, most voters access political communication through social media or the internet in general. When it came to be using the different political information sources, it became clear again that the social media on 37 percent and cell phones on 21 percent are the main platforms used. The advent of the internet has allowed political parties to use the medium as their political communication (Patru, 2014).

Newspapers seem to have lost popularity among people when it comes to receiving political information on 8 percent. Political rallies that have always been perceived as the traditional method of gunning political support are 0 percent, the bottom of the preference list. A lot of factors can compound that. One key is the fact that the youth, which makes up most of the respondents in this study, are the ones who have a clear understanding when it relates to using the internet and social media applications. There are also those people who use radio as their primary source of political news at 18 percent. The following chart shows the different mediums used to access political information among the voters who were sampled.

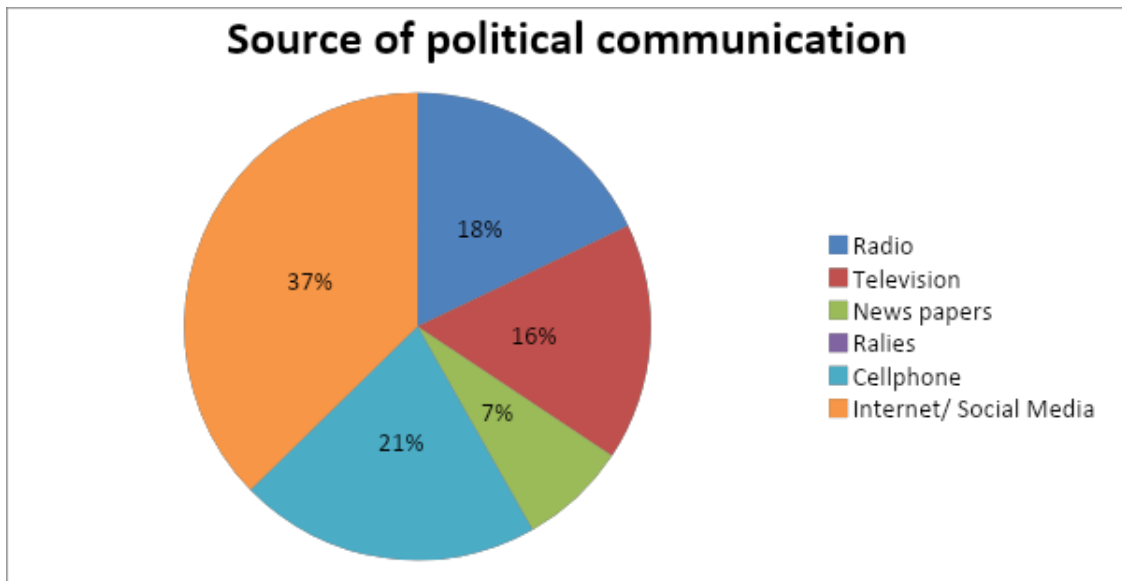


Figure 9: Respondents source of political communication

According to Guvevitch, Coleman and Blumler (2009), the significant changes in the consumption of political news have been the growth of social media platforms which offers receivers quick access to information. The number of people who depended on television and other mediums such as newspapers is on a downward trend, losing viewership and readership (Guvevitch, Coleman & Blumler, 2009). Respondent 13 cements the findings of a study by Mutsvairo and Karam (2018) which revealed that candidates in recent presidential elections in South Africa and elsewhere in the continent employed the new media, being Twitter and Facebook as a method to win especially the young vote;

“For me, social media was the best and simplest way through which I received the communications. Parties should adopt this because it’s almost impossible for people to attend rallies unless if they are affiliated to the hosting political party.”

At 18 percent in this study, radio still receives a relative preference, and that could be due to its nature which allows people to access it everywhere they are, with or without the internet. In South Africa and elsewhere across the globe, political messages are delivered through rallies, manifesto launches, on television, and radio (Sorenson, 2018).

However, as Guvevitch, Coleman and Blumler (2009) point out, while television remains a very integral part of society in the transmission of information between the public sphere and home, its static nature does not offer any interactive opportunity like digital media networks which allow people to engage each other and call-ins which could be found on radio formats. Osunkunle and Mhlomi (2017) researched the power of social media as an effective method in engaging the masses in campaigning during elections and found that most respondents conceded that their experience on the run-up to the 2014 South African general elections was that social media played a vital role. More South African political groupings are embracing social media as a medium for political communication and campaigning irrespective of the low access to the internet (Onumajuru & Chigona, 2012)

The measurement of political interest was essential before establishing how voters receive political messages. Furthermore, this assessment is beneficial for a study such as this one that is interested in finding information and getting to understand the respondents' perception. The study of voting behaviour taps into people's knowledge and explores their experiences and can examine what they think and how they feel and why they feel that way. For that reason, voters were asked if they understand what political communication is. While explaining that, they would also identify a medium which they believe political communication is delivered through. Below are some of the definitions made by the respondents;

“My understanding of political communication relies largely on press statements/advisories issued by the various political parties using email or via social media platforms. In some cases, it is direct communication from parties.”

Respondent 14 understand it to be just a method employed by those campaigning for elections to lure voters for support;

“Communication used by political parties to get votes.”

According to respondent 15 above, this type of communication can never be complete without the use of the media as a channel to convey the political messages to the general citizenry;

“Political communication is the reporting or presenting of political information between the media, citizens and policymakers.”

Political formations use this kind of communication to make their manifestos known. Manifestos contain party policies, and respondent 16 above captures the essence of political communication as a vehicle for policy pronouncement.

“Political communication would be a type of communication used by politicians and how this influences politics and policymakers and as well as how the communication influences citizens as well as the media.”

Respondent 17 is conscious that political communication is meant to impact on policy formulation. The respondents’ explanations are almost aligned to their expectations of what they want politicians to address in their communication or the mediums they use to access that communication. Various political communications scholars have attempted to define what political communication entails. Denton and Kuypers (2008), McNair (1995) and Smith (1990) define political communication as the process by which language and symbols are used by leaders, media or citizens, exerts envisioned or unplanned effects on the political cognition, attitudes, or behaviours of individuals or on consequences that bear on the public policy of a country, state or community.

The high usage of social media among the youth, who were the majority in this study signals that social media sites are more than just channels through which voters receive political communication but also serve as space where they can express their political commentaries and interact with their political leaders (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2008). For instance, most young people have access to social media or the internet than the old generation. That means the concentration of young people in the online medium would be much higher than older ones. According to respondent 18, she receives political messages through the internet more than any other medium;

“I imagine that it is be done via newsletters and mass SMS’ to feedback on previous issues and/or new developments about the party politics/strategies/policies/events etc.”

This form of communication presented by modern technologies appeal to almost every member of the society, be it politicians, citizens, and media professionals themselves (Mutsvairo & Karam, 2018).

4.4 The previous general elections communications strategies used by South African political parties.

Political parties capitalise on election campaigns to mobilise electoral support and create a relationship with voters during election periods. While South Africa remains one of the most unequal states globally, political parties are bound to communicate clear policy direction on how they wish to address inequality. The crux of that communication is to convince voters that you are a better electoral choice (Fourie & Froneman, 2007). While Political parties can easily decide on what communication strategy, medium and language they can employ to communicate with prospective voters ahead of elections that decision needs to be balanced with a consideration of who they are communicating with. This exercise has very much to do with strategies to reach potential voters through inter-party methods of communications or the news media or external campaigning (Stroembaeck, 2014).

Research on political communications strategies has pointed at the challenge of understanding voters' expectations, ideally forming part of the party messaging (Glenn & Mattes, 2011). In South African politics and elections, it's important to read and understand voters' expectations when designing messages to avoid the misdirection of efforts. As Africa (2019) argues, a good campaign should be easily accessible to prospective voters and credible content.

4.4.1 ANC previous elections communication strategy

This section digs deep into the ANC's past elections communication strategy. It is important to note that to win elections, political parties will be selective in highlighting policy issues that seem to have an advantage (Sargazazu & Kluver, 2015). The governing ANC has been good when it comes to that, and in their past election messaging, they banked on their track record to deliver social grant, housing and better infrastructure (Booyesen, 2007). In its previous manifestos, the party played a defensive approach that acknowledged that it freed South Africans from apartheid (Phago, 2012). This message resonates with many South Africans, the majority of who votes for the party (Hamill, 2010);

“The ANC’s message caused a sense of stagnation for me. They were a repetition from the past, which meant that not a lot would change. I voted because it is an honour, but their messages were not the cause of my voting.”

This is what respondent 19 said about the communications strategies used by the African National Congress. While it speaks less of the party’s communications strength, the respondent does agree that voting is a privilege that must not be taken for granted. According to Plaut (2004) the party’s continued electoral victory results from its traditional and old-fashioned electioneering where it mobilises its leaders to do door to door campaigning, something opposition parties rarely match. However, the party’s electoral support dwindled in the 2019 general elections. The party achieved its all-time low of 57,5 percent, the first time it got less than 60 percent since the first democratic elections of 1994 (IEC,2020).

As Hamill (2010) previously argued, these results highlight the party’s downward trajectory, giving opposition parties a view that they can erode the ANC’s electoral might. Essential in its communications has always been that it stands for ‘*A better life for all.*’ Since 1994 the organisation sometimes referred to as ‘the broad church,’ has preached that it is the only legitimate organisation that is qualified to better the lives of ordinary South Africans (Africa, 2019).

“The historical happenings which have an emotional impact on the masses along with evoking a deep empathic side of people are the reason why the party is popular among South Africans.”

Respondent 20 somehow portrays the characteristics of a psychological voter. The psychological model of voting underlines that behaviour is rooted in the concept of partisanship and portraying a lasting relationship with a political party irrespective of whether that party delivers its promises (Antunes, 2010). This respondent commends the ANC for its historical relevance in the country’s history as a liberation movement, stating that it deserves to be voted back into power because it can speak about how it delivered citizens from the apartheid regime. Walton and Donner (2010) argue that although this message of a caring liberation movement might not find resonance with young voters, the ANC’s triumph could be attributed to its historical relevance.

One of the significant traits of the ANC's campaigning strategy is that its election posters feature the presidential candidate as he or she is the leading contender for the party (Booyesen, 2007). While there is concrete justification for this analysis, it might capture the essence of how the party hang on to its continued electoral victory (Plaut, 2014). Elections are fought under different political climates, which will determine the party's campaign and communication strategy. As Africa (2019) notes, the ANC's campaign strategy focused on the following;

- (1) Outlining the apartheid past and the ANC's contribution to overcoming apartheid;
- (2) The achievements of the ANC since coming into power, in particular emphasising the act that the achievements since the advent of democracy, delivered by the ANC, should be celebrated;
- (3) Acknowledging challenges and shortcomings concerning their goals and providing reasons for them;
- (4) Drawing attention to the ANC's unique strength, experience and commitment to deal with the pressing social and economic challenges facing South Africa; and,
- (5) Setting out their plans for dealing with their stated goals.

Elections occur during different political environments and it is vital to consider the timing of the elections as a factor in strategic planning (Sargazazu & Kluver, 2015). For that reason, political parties are torn between communicating their electoral promises and making sure that that communication resonates with their constituencies. It is arguably true looking at how the ANC positioned itself before the 2019 general elections. The party's campaigning message was around organisational renewal following a myriad of issues that affected its credibility. Its biggest drawcard then was current president Cyril Ramaphosa, a man touted by many as a good negotiator. A substantial change in the campaigning message can be noticed with the party campaigning on the ticket of a '*New Dawn*' spearheaded by current president Ramaphosa. The overall manifesto theme as '*Let's grow South Africa together*' (Africa, 2019). The ANC's message of a '*New Dawn*' can be seen as the party's admission of its shortcomings during Jacob Zuma's tenure, marred by corruption.

To disseminate this message, the party employed different methods such as its most used traditional stadium rallies, public engagements, and door-to-door visits where it engages voters mostly in the rural and informal settlements (Dzinotywei, 2019). It is also worth noting that unemployment has been rife in South Africa, with the youth most affected. The ANC's manifesto was somehow responsive to that. It included a message of hope, promising to revive the country's economy to enable South Africans to realise their dreams of jobs attainment and playing a role in the economic arena (Dithebe, 2019).

4.4.2 DA previous elections communications strategy

The DA's message has been its promise for a clean government (Africa, 2019). This was in response to the credibility issues the ANC faced under then-president Jacob Zuma. Zuma's ascension to the presidency of both the party and country despite corruption and rape allegations at the time was the DA's talking point (Africa, 2019). In their 2019 manifesto, the party focused on a promise to eradicate corruption in the space of what it called 'cash for jobs' and 'sex for jobs,' also stating that alleged nepotism especially in the public sector and its entities hinder those who are not politically connected to get job opportunities. Respondent 21 below commends the DA for what she calls 'great campaigning' but still states that its messaging was full of empty rhetoric.

"The DA had a great campaign illustrating the importance of voting for youth. With all the empty political rhetoric, their campaign pushed me to get to a voting station and cast my vote."

This, to a greater extent, applauds the power of political communication that despite the party selling the electorate dreams, the voter still buys into their communication. The manifesto outlined that the party aims to address the mismanagement of funds in state-owned enterprises (Nene, 2019). A study by Wang (2013) found that although emotions have a role in pushing voters to go to the polls, the charisma of political candidates and communications also plays a role in generating emotional responses to competing candidates, which then increases people's willingness to vote.

The issue of foreign direct investments was also in both the DA and the ANC's manifestos ahead of the 2017 general elections, setting the issue forward to address the issue of unemployment and slow economic growth (Dithebe, 2019). The organisation also capitalized on its governance of the Western Cape which is primarily perceived to be credible and emphasised its long-held assertion that the ANC administration lacks integrity and competence, thus positioning itself as the ANC's alternative. The DA's most used poster and message, 'One South Africa for all,' was widely seen as an attempt to create one united South Africa (Dzintyewei, 2019). The party was also strategic in one of its messaging by invoking the ideals of late ANC president Nelson Mandela of a Rainbow Nation. However, the DA which is mostly seen as a party advocating widely for white people's rights, then under Mmusi Maimane, was criticised for its alleged hypocrisy. Among other methods, it used automated calls, SMSes and television advertisements to deliver its messages. For respondent 22, the party's communication strategy was broadly receptive to the youth;

"The party made use of social media to get messages across. Roughly 19.9 million South Africans are on social media. This works in the party's favour to get the message to as many people as possible."

According to Blumler and Savagath (1998), these communication methods show political parties' way of coping with the demands of the online medium with its large audience and a more mobile electorate who moves from one party to the other seeking political and electoral communication. Similar to the EFF's use of the Marikana Massacre in its 2014 election campaign, the DA used the Life Esidimeni tragedy, which involved the deaths of 143 patients at psychiatric facilities due to either neglect or starvation, as an electoral ticket by publishing their names on a billboard which blamed the ANC government for the deaths (Mazibuko & Nene, 2019). The party was criticised by the families of the patients and the general public for allegedly using the tragedy for their electoral gains without consulting them.

4.4.3 EFF previous elections communication strategy

This section looks at the Economic Freedom Fighters, a party mostly regarded as the game-changer in the political circle when it comes to political communication (Ndletyana & Maseremule, 2015).

The EFF has always been viewed as a party which defied the status quo. What came out during the discussions was comments on the party's fierce make-up. The party's use of military symbolism EFF's particularly the red colour and the beret is a stroke of much attention. The organisation has built its brand around being a watchdog for democracy and the downtrodden, advocating for wealth redistribution through the nationalisation of mines and the reserve bank, thus seeing other political parties as outsiders (Horwitz, 2016). As respondent 23 observes, the party employed unorthodox ways of putting their point across;

“The EFF uses an orchestrated method of communications which is meant to disturb the status quo. On a surface level, it doesn't seem like communications, but if you look deeper, you will realize that they are delivering a message of some sort.”

This observation by respondent 23 commends the EFF for what he believes is a fierce outlook meant to disrupt the status quo. The initial premise of the Economic Freedom Fighters when it was formed in 2013 was that the black majority in South Africa had not benefited materially since the dawn of democracy and that the ANC which has been in the helm of government since 1994 has failed to ensure that (Dithebe & Mazibuko, 2019). It's on that basis that the name of the party somehow has a radical connotation in it. As Nene and Dzinotywei (2019) notes, the meteoric rise of the EFF has very much to do with the fact that party leader, Julius Malema, has managed to drive a populist approach.

“The party is unconventional in many ways. Its disruptions either in parliament or how they communicate on social media, are meant to portray what it stands for. For me, it appeals to its fellowship because we understand its militant nature.”

This is how respondent 24 understand the party and its political position. The respondent seems to back the party for its communication, further implying that it is unconventional in its communication nature. The organisation has always positioned itself as a party representing the poor and marginalised, continuously bashing at the ANC for its alleged failure to redistribute economic power to the black majority. This can be noted from the party's sympathetic involvement with the victims Marikana Massacre just after its formation and one of its briefing held in an open field in Alexandra ahead of the 2016 Local Government elections (Mbele, 2016). That's against what respondent 25 cites as the DA's lack of connection with the electorate;

“The DA’s communication is always marked by sloganeering and doesn’t take into cognisance the fact that many South Africans did not go to school and have no understanding of English.”

From that response, one can understand that voters expect political parties to use simple when addressing them in their communities. Some of these people are uneducated, and while they understand English, a more profound political language can be a challenge for them to comprehend. It is worth noting that before the 2017 general elections, the land question was a big campaigning point with the ANC and EFF preaching the expropriation of land without compensation to address land dispossession, but respondent 26 believes the DA was not vocal about that;

“Campaigning is a space where there is usually a competition of popularized slogans and policies that are clickbait amongst social media users. The land issue one of the messages I anticipate along with service delivery, but some parties seemed uninterested in addressing that.”

The EFF’s campaign message in its majority was about the former president, Jacob Zuma’s dealings with the controversial Gupta family, the government’s irregular financing of the security upgrades in Zuma’s private home in Nkandla and ultimately the Constitutional Court’s 2016 ruling that the former president had violated his terms of office by failing to comply with the Public Protector’s report on the security upgrades (Mbele, 2016). Commenting on the party’s manifesto, this is what respondent 27 said;

“The manifesto spoke about the challenges of the majority. With land redistribution, free education, and black youth empowerment, amongst others. These are top of mind when I consider a party to vote for.”

It seems that majority of the respondent agreed that the Economic Freedom Fighters were innovative in their communication strategy. The organisation’s strategy also featured ‘economic freedom’ for the downtrodden (Nene & Dzinotiwei, 2019). That rhetoric has allowed it to align itself with the marginalised 26 years since the collapse of the exclusive apartheid government still hasn’t benefited much from the new dispensation. Majority of these people are the unemployed youth found in the townships, informal settlements and the rural areas of South Africa.

“To a certain extent, the EFF’s message has been consistent with the Party’s cardinal pillars and its founding manifesto. Their communication has helped to clarify what the party really stands for. I identify with the political stance of the party on spatial planning, and their track record (in Johannesburg and Tshwane Metros) in swaying budget and service delivery decisions towards the marginalised.”

Speaking of consistency, respondent 28 believes that political parties need to match their promises to deliver services. It’s an issue raised by many that political parties have no interest in transforming voters' lives but getting their votes when elections come. In response to unemployment, the EFF had a poster titled ‘Our land and jobs now,’ further evoking its long-held assertion that the land needs to be returned to the majority from the minority, which the party says are benefiting unfairly (Ditthebe, 2019). Respondent 28 again commended the EFF’s way of communicating, saying it finds resonance with his situation;

“Look at the EFF, for example, they know their target market and know what to tell them to garner votes. When one promises people what they’ve always wanted, the support will come in numbers. Because even elderly people and those that are illiterate often hear and grasp these messages yet without the ability to read or write.

“

Another EFF talking point was more of an intervention, promising to increase the social grant currently earned by needy South Africans and supporting the expropriation of land without compensation, the provision of housing, better healthcare and the introduction of a minimum wage (Mazibuko, 2019). The EFF’s use of Malema’s picture with a message ‘SON OF THE SOIL,’ seemed to be an appeal from the party that the leader is in touch with the masses, majority of whom seem to be left out in the country’s main economic activities. A study by Chuma (2006) on what voters consider when making their mark revealed that they focus on unemployment, foreign policy, affirmative action and issues relating to racism. This means that any campaign featuring some of the mentioned issues is likely to be a hooker.

When all things are said, it's up to voters to mark their decision; the next section looks at whether prior general election communications strategies affect voters' decision.

4.5 Prior general elections communication strategies

Election campaigns form part of democratic South Africa and abroad used by political parties to garner electoral support (Africa, 2019). Generally, this form of strategic political communication is meant to organise purposeful management of information and communication to reach their political objectives and get the electorates to consider them on the ballot (Strömbäck & Kioussis, 2014). However, as Dzinotyiwei (2019) observes, the decision to vote is influenced by a myriad of considerations woven into the country's economic, social and political fabric.

This subdivision contextualises how voters received and interpreted political parties' previous general elections messages in the past elections and whether those messages resonated with them and ultimately led to a voting decision.

4.5.1 Theme 1: False dreams

Respondents expressed their different viewpoints on prior elections communications messages and their impact on their decision to vote. On the surface, people vote for a party because they expect to benefit somehow from their exercise;

“For me, voting for the ANC was due to the previous deliverables which have been promised and achieved. I will never vote for a new political party that has never contested before.”

From respondent 29 above, one can read that an electoral decision has much to do with what a political party in government can deliver to its constituency. A study by Paret (2016) on why voters supported the EFF, DA and ANC in the 2014 South African general elections highlighted that people voted for reasons such as jobs, good healthcare, housing, service delivery and social grants. The respondent also reveals that political parties are conscious of the challenges communities are failing and only entertain them out of desperation for votes but fail to address them.

“Their messages always speak to the issues being faced in the communities. But they always fail at implementing those plans.”

The remarks from respondent 30 below, reveals that she doesn't take political messages seriously for lack of accountability;

“Political party messages don't influence me. Anything said before an election is said out of desperation and often undermines the intelligence of voters.”

The respondent went on to say that before elections, political parties will most likely make promises and point fingers at their political rivals.

“Politicians don't understand that we are not interested in party politics, sloganeering and political mudslinging. What we want to know is what a party is prepared to do for us, when the promises are too good to be true, we easily see that.”

What came out from the interaction with respondent 30 is that many parties fail to effectively communicate messages based on those themes to specific voting groups. According to the respondent, the most apparent challenges are service delivery, poverty and unemployment and she feel no party handles them with the sensitivity and practicality they deserve. When asked about what motivates them to vote, this is what the respondent said;

“All political parties sell us dreams during their campaign. I vote based on the strong dislike I have for other political parties and choose the 'better devil. The EFF's commitment to raise the monthly social grant, the ANC's promise to scrap the E-Tolls and the DA's promise to get rid of corruption is some of the messages that convinced me to vote.”

That response speaks about the importance of messaging and directing it to the relevant constituency. In 2017 during its 54th national elective congress, the governing ANC announced its intention to roll out compulsory political communication training to effectively spread its views, further stating that political communication should be professionalised in the party (*Citizen, 2017*). Political parties need to understand who they are talking to because any political communication, no matter how strong it is tailored, loses its power when sent to the wrong constituency. To those frustrated by corruption, counter-corruption messages find strong resonance. Those who depend on social-welfare for survival messages on the increase of social grants seem to be much received. Again, these are some of the considerations that need to be made when designing messages.

Responded 31 alluded to the power of tailor-made messages by political parties and seemed to understand the way it's tailored and its intention thereof;

“The marginalized are always targeted, so telling them what they want to hear has always formed part of political campaigns.”

This response taps deep into issue-based campaigning where political parties target those in the bottom of the value chain. Such people fall prey to political organisations who promise them better living should they vote them to power. In South Africa, politicians are typically seen visiting destitute settlement and make promises of service delivery. According to Kadt and Lieberman (2017), political parties can thrive because service delivery can be politicized and targeted strategically. Although with an understanding of how campaigning works, Respondent 31 did consent to the fact that they were moved by prior political communication in voting;

“EFF is a strongly pro-black and youthful party. In theory, they are what I mostly stand for. The party’s rhetoric is a big factor in making them popular, and I think most have realised this and are tapping into it to appeal to the needs/wants of the masses. It made me want to vote, I felt strongly against some of the messages other parties were spreading, so the vote was more against them than actually supporting the party I voted for,” he concluded.

The EFF’s militant nature has been a subject of much criticism from those supporting other political parties. Still, it seems that for those in favour of the party, its robust nature finds resonance with its supporters. Sorensen (2018) cites that the party engages in a planned disruptive protest method that combines symbolic acts and social media tactics. According to Anyangwe (2012) in some cases motivation to choose a particular political party over another might be necessitated by, for instance, an emotionally driven desire to exact vengeance on a political party in response to perceived wrongdoing by that party. The voter above explains that he feels strong against some political parties; hence he opted for the Economic Freedom Fighters. Voting indeed ensures that a democratic political system is complete because it enables citizens to choose their preferred political leaders and express their opinion using their ballot papers (Baek, 2009).

This argument is supported by Juma (2011), who argues that citizens choose a party or candidate who they feel mirrors who they are and what they desire. Respondent 32 expressed the importance of prior election communications as a method to win support;

“What they say tells me what they stand for and I have to decide whether I want to be associated with that. That information will assist me to make the right decision going to the polls. However, we understand that they are just telling lies and hardly deliver on the promises.”

The nature of election promises that politicians provide voters with what to expect from the candidates or parties they voted for despite what the actual intentions of those candidates are (Haan, 2004). The respondent, though, points out that political parties also promise good things before elections and hardly ever deliver on those promises after elections. It appears that voters in the country are primarily interested in providing service delivery from those they vote for and listen thoroughly in what political leaders say against what they can offer after being voted into power. The delivery is the one that thus serves as a signal of the character of such a party.

4.5.2 Theme: Political Rhetoric

Respondent 32 confirms that prior elections communications are flooded by political rhetoric. According to the respondent ‘the EFF’s racist rhetoric’ positively impacted her decision to not vote for them;

“The DA will tell you why not to vote for the ANC; the EFF will harp on about WMC and race the ANC will attempt to highlight its success as the governing party. Generally, The EFF’s racist rhetoric certainly impacted my decision to not vote for them in the previous elections. Their anti-Indian messaging felt exclusionary.”

Here the respondent recalls the sentiments made by political leaders and taps into negative campaigning used by political parties to discredit their opponents. This kind of communication strategy is mostly used by opposition parties who in most cases, communicate what they perceive could be the shortcomings of the governing party in order to score political points.

Although political parties' strategies are mostly centred on those preaching their milestones, Fourie and Froneman (2005) note that evidence shows that negative messages could be beneficial to parties since they attract voters' attention. Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) term this party-dominated communication system, where political leaders talk about issues that only matter to them and what they think sets them apart but forget trivial issues that affect their supporters.

Much as these messages can be well-received in some communities, they can be unattractive to others. This instance could be the negative effect of mass media. While a message could be tailor-made and delivered in a setting community, the fact that it could be broadcasted to any corner of the country means even those who were meant to be excluded from it can receive it. The respondent also said that the political parties are strategic in that they know who their constituents are. So they speak directly to the issues that plague them and the matters that agitate them when it comes to opposing political parties. In general, there's an agreement from most respondents that previous general election messages are meant to attract electoral support and not come from a policy direction.

“All political parties say the same things when it's time for elections. I always look at how they do their day to day functions because words have become cheap.”

Those are the sentiments from respondent 33, highlighting that she is not moved by what parties say before the elections but mostly interested in post-election communication. Although the respondent complains about familiar messages from political parties, it is worth noting that the preferences for basic service delivery are almost universal. They range from the provision of clean water, better housing and job creation. This means that any political party campaigning for support could do so in the ticket of the above. Service delivery protests in South Africa are part of the political discourse; probably the only way voters can express themselves between elections (Kadt & Lieberman, 2017).

In his study on why South Africans voted in the 1999 elections, Friedman (2007) argues that in some cases, people do so to affirm their identity, race and their political beliefs. Majority of the respondents expressed that their decision to vote is not shaped entirely by prior election communication and a willingness to give certain political parties a chance based on past performance.

While admitting the power and importance of such communications, respondent 33 went on to reveal that did not shape her decision;

“I just wanted to vote, and none of the parties currently in parliament speak to me, so I literally went into the voting booth and chose a familiar logo. All political parties say the same things when it’s time for elections. I always look at how they do their day to day functions because words have become cheap.”

From this response, one can deduct that there’s some sort of revenge in the voting exercise. This act has been researched before. Anyangwe (2012) found that when exercising this revenge-seeking exercise, voters choose a party not necessarily because they favour it but because they believe the party is a better devil and can govern. That kind of voting behaviour seems to be happening for many people. When asked what motivated them to vote in the last elections, this is what respondent 34 said this;

“I voted because I wanted to exercise my democratic right to choose a party that will represent me in government/ Parliament.”

Some voters just want to exercise their democratic right and have no political basis for exercising that. Edlin, Gelman and Kaplan (2007) allude that by saying another conclusive shortcoming of voting behaviour models, they cast out the possibility that citizens can vote as a civic duty but do so for beneficiary purposes. A study by Young and Blais (1999) on why people vote found that decision to vote or not to is merely based on considerations that could have nothing to do with rationality. They cite that a certain level of political interest could have been a significant determinant of voting. It’s almost the same for respondent 35 who said she voted because the right to vote had some lost their lives;

“I wanted to exercise my democratic right. I wouldn’t say there was a push from either of the political parties contesting the elections.”

For some voters to measure a party when it comes to power, they need to hear what it promises to do and what it will ultimately do to decide whether to vote for it or not. Respondent 35 said she doesn’t just give her vote away;

“Yes, I do believe that a lot of the messages addressed the challenges faced in my community. Things such as crime are an all too common issue that most political parties have addressed. Another largely contested issue in my community that political parties sent messages about is the issue of land restoration. Over the past four-five years, the area I live in has had a number of land invasions. Now land is something that does need to be addressed. But political parties have taken a liking in justifying illegal land invasions all in the name of “land restoration”.

Land dispossession was a big campaign message going into the 2017 general election. The use of land in political campaigns has gained momentum in recent times (Onama, 2008). It's not surprising that governing parties use the land issue as a ticket to campaign because in Africa there is a lot of pressure on leaders to redistribute land in countries where the land is in the hands of few to help mitigate landlessness. Respondent 31 who earlier mentioned that the EFF is strongly pro-black and youthful party and commending its rhetoric said although the party's stance on land moved them, not much has happened;

“Issues such as land reform and free education were used by some parties to get the majority vote. However; they haven't delivered upon these promises.”

In some cases, there is a critique of the strength of the party's communications strategy. Respondent 33 who told the researcher that they just wanted to vote and didn't pay focus on political communication said this;

“I honestly can't really remember what these political parties said. All I remember was that most of them played the “blame game”. I'd say what largely influenced my vote was the fact that, if I didn't vote, then I have no reason to complain or have issues addressed. When political parties speak about building the country and speak about finding solutions the problems the country faces, then those are just one off the main things that matter to me when said. This instils a sense of patriotism and hope in citizens. When a political party talks about putting the country and its citizens first, that's one reason why I would want to vote for it.”

The response above tells us that some voters go to the polls as a means of patriotism and not because they might have been persuaded by a political party to choose them in the ballot.

People believe that by voting, they exercise their birth right to decide which political party will better represent them in government. When asked whether political communication impacts on his decision, this is what the participant also said;

“It doesn’t matter to me because I feel like all political parties promise the same thing before elections but fail to implement the promises when the votes are in. It doesn’t matter as not much of the promises are delivered afterwards. A lot is said around job creation, providing free higher education for the poor, improving ageing infrastructure, providing South Africans living in informal settlements with clean drinking water and proper sanitation.”

4.5.3 Theme 3: Service Delivery

Much of the promises made before elections are around service delivery. This term encompasses better housing, provision of water, free education, among others. However, because the term is used loosely as a point of campaigning, some respondents feel that it lacks meaning and doesn’t lure them to vote. While some voters consider prior political communication before voting, respondent 30 who said that politicians don’t understand that voters are not interested in party politics, sloganeering and political mudslinging said he doesn’t promise when making electoral promises because they hardly translate to anything;

“During rallies, political parties mostly promise voters things that they later fail to fulfil.”

The reason why some people turn to protests as a point to supplement their dissatisfaction around service delivery should be looked at as an expression of frustration (Booyesen, 2007).

During elections period promises are made, much which political parties fail to deliver on. This respondent says in many times, political parties make promises that they don’t even fulfil. It’s the nature of campaigning that promises are used to lure voters into considering a particular party over another. For some voters, prior political communication might not be a case to base their voting upon and a basis to understand the party’s ideological direction.

Respondent 30 doesn't rule that out;

“Usually I make up my mind which party I will vote for, way before elections. But what they say before elections are important it lets me know which policy political and ideological direction the party wants to take the country.”

This point is reinforced by Teer-Tomaselli (2005), who argues that the success of political communication depends primarily on a parties' ability to communicate with their constituencies. The complexities in any political dispensation are that there are those interested in understanding a party's policy and ideological direction while some who care less about policies but want that to translate into service delivery. According to (Booyesen, 2007), the latter consists of citizens struggling to have their voices heard and tell their own experience of service delivery deficit. Respondent 30 explained that he is more interested in what the political party promises to do before voting, stating that if the message contains such promises, he will undoubtedly be influenced to vote.

“Service delivery informs much of voting behaviour and also a historical contribution for liberation party.”

This response finds resonance in the theoretical framework, which this study is based on the Rational Choice Theory, which states that people vote with some material expectation in mind (Juma, 2010). Meanwhile, it is challenging for some voters to find a party whose communication is clear and meaningful. This respondent also mentioned that his decision is very much motivated by the political party's historical trajectory, despite its electoral performance.

“I have voted for the enemy I know rather, which is ANC nationally given that the possible saviour of SA being EFF is still at its tender stage, but I voted for them in the local election to test the waters.”

Voters who are unhappy with the party in government would choose to vote for another. It is the nature of the political setup in multi-party democracies, where civilians consider opposition parties as a hope to improve the representation of their needs (Booyesen, 2007). As seen above, the respondent says that he instead opted for the Economic Freedom Fighters because the governing ANC appear to be failing.

4.6 The kind of effect that post-elections communications strategies have on voters' next elections voting decision

The construct of political communications strategies in the voting decision was interpreted through questions that sought to understand what it that motivates the decision. Voters were asked if they are pushed by pre-elections communications to vote. Majority of them said that doesn't bother them, but they would love to see what politicians or political parties say after the elections. The questions about the effect that post-elections communications strategies have on voters' next elections were asked to understand if such communications impact who they will vote for in the next elections.

4.6.1 Theme: Persuasion

Respondent 26, who spoke of sloganeering and promises before elections told the researcher that assessing post-election communications helps determine if political parties were honest with their electoral promises.

“Parties need to stick to their political positions even after elections. Tracking party statements after elections help to see if parties keep their promises.”

Anecdotal literature suggests that politicians are mainly interested in winning and promise more in election campaigns than they are prepared to deliver (Haan, 2004). This assertion relates to long-held beliefs that politicians are only concerned with what benefits them than other things that they make empty promises on their quest to get electoral support. As soon as they get that, they disappear (Haan, 2004). The very same respondent highlighted that in her response when talking about post-election accountability.

“They need to keep to their promises; some parties tend to change their tone once they see the ‘numbers. It’s wrong and shows that political don’t care about us but only interested in numbers.”

When asked about the importance of post-election communication, this is what respondent 26 said;

“Even though at the back of my mind, I know that it is a strategy of persuasion, but it helps to be on their necks afterwards and demand that they deliver their promises. I leave a room for disappointments. I don’t worry much about post-election communications.”

Earlier on, respondent 31 alluded to the power of tailor-made messages. They also believe that it’s essential that political parties to remain in touch with the electorate;

“Yes, it does matter reason being that their message after the elections sets my reason to vote for them again afterwards.”

As respondent 31 puts it above, post-elections communication sets a tone for a commitment from the party’s side on whether they still stand on their pre-election promises or not. Against this background, Haan (2004) suggests that voters are very observant and can infer a political party's real character that promises and never delivers on them. Respondent 21 who earlier commended the DA for what she called ‘great campaigning’ but still states that its messaging was full of empty rhetoric demands that the party continue committing to delivering services even after receiving electoral support.

“It matters that a party comes back and outline how they plan to roll out their plans. Time frames are key. “

There are views among voters that political parties are only interested in getting the vote and then return to their fancy lifestyles. While this communication is vital, respondent 21 went on to say that they are more interested in post-election communication;

“I consider a broad period of their communication, not the period after elections alone.”

According to that respondent, it is essential to assess pre, during and post-election communication to determine if the political parties live up to what they promise before the elections when the elections have passed. While that communication is a crucial tool to communicate electoral promises by public officials, Trent, Friedenbergr and Denton (2018) argues that it’s the actual voting that allows the electorate the opportunity to determine how their interest can best be served;

“Some political parties address the issues of poverty, unemployment and inequality; however, they do not have a good track record of acting on their promises.”

Respondent 21 is also concerned with the lack of delivery after political parties promise to change voters' lives when campaigning for electoral support.

4.7 Voters relation to a party communication strategy

In looking at the different political strategies, the researcher asked the voters if they find resonance or relate to a party based on its communication strategies. Although voters agree that these strategies are essential, some think the parties' leaders do not align with those strategies and plan, thus nullifying the same thing they say they stand for. Voters were first asked about their understanding of political communication. Part of that exercise was partly meant to understand, at least from the researcher's side, voters' insights around the diverse mediums through which political communication is delivered.

4.7. 1 Theme: Emotive language and commitment

Respondent 32 told the researcher that they voted for the ANC due to its track record of service delivery and the message of freedom which evokes emotions. Here they speak on the importance of a robust message-driven communication strategy but says that need to be paired with commitment;

“Clear political messages their manifesto, and political messaging that inspires confidence and hope. We have seen political parties developing campaign messages that are not aligned to what they really believe in or what they have managed to produce in the past years. I would rather see them deliver on their promises as opposed to their post-election speeches, whether in power or no.”

That's what respondent 32 believes. She says that she is interested in seeing the work done than the promises, which she says are easy to make. This is supported by Anyangwe (2012) who states that political affiliation, party preference, party policies, issues prevalent in the current political climate, and personal interests could be some of the issues that explain voter behaviour. When asked if she relates to a party based on its communication strategy, this is what she said;

“Yes, communication is a powerful tool that could increase visibility and create awareness on a subject. Therefore, communication can be viewed as a contributing factor in popularizing parties among people. Parties should communicate their plans with action/implementation plans that have clear and realistic timelines. They should also communicate what they have done in the past, account where they failed to achieve their targets and outline how they plan on changing the narrative.”

The above response tells us that voters want to understand a party from a policy position and says a political communication strategy makes that easier. Garcia (2012) states while political communication touches on efforts to influence voting in elections, it's also a platform in which political parties discuss policy stance on public diplomacy and the administration of their affairs. Respondent 28 cited the use of emotive language in communication strategies to relate to a political party.

“Messages communicated during rallies were especially influential for me because they are emotive and directly tap into some of the issues at stake in the election. The EFF, for instance, is very popular among the youth because it speaks on matters which are very close to their hearts in a language which is easily accessible. Their good use of social media and branding has also popularised them. Clear statements about their political ideology, their practical plans on growing the economy, education, and healthcare. Their views and plans for tackling gender-based violence.”

Those are some of the respondent's issues making the Economic Freedom Fighters stand out from the rest of the other political formations. The responses highlight that there is a range of different motivations for people to vote. It was a party message that pushed them while some felt deeply passionate about politics and leaders. On the other hand, apart from being pushed by political communication, some respondents found it their civic duty to make their mark in the ballot because they understand that the right to vote came with loss of lives. The study reveals that the internet has become a new mode of political communication. It also shows that the internet promotes and facilitates the interaction between politicians and voters. Most respondents highlighted that they receive political information using the medium. The above shows that there's a link between how a party communicates and its reception among people.

Asked whether prior-political communications impact on his voting decision, respondent 28 again declared that he depends on the communication before taking a decision;

“Yes, it does because their message and manifesto are the reason why I would vote for that political party. I vote based on party policy and manifesto communicated as well as their track record, which is more objective and bypasses their communication. I analyse parties and their communication long before elections.”

According to Kriesi (2011), an informed electorate is essential for a healthy democracy as political knowledge helps citizens make rational decisions.

4.8 Conclusion

The findings of the interviews were presented above. The interviews showed that there was a range of different motivations among people for voting. Many scholars have employed a variety of analytical models to examine voting behaviour empirically. Some vote for a party because of political affiliation and some after assessment of policy direction or expectations. When it comes to the messages that the parties deliver to woe voters, they may not be the only reason people vote. Another important aspect of election campaign communication is the tension between service delivery and just empty promises. No matter how strategically political parties plan their campaign activities and communication, the voter is the one who decides to vote or not. If that communication is not paired with actions, it is likely to be rejected.

This study's results posit that most of the respondents have a general interest in politics and use social media to read, disseminate or even engage in political discussions on social media. Furthermore, they agree that social media is a more useful information source than the so-called traditional media that employs newspapers and radio stations. Considering all the voting behaviour models deal with a homogenous voting society, each voter can behave to all the theories. For instance, it's possible that one voter could vote based on their identity with the party or vote with an expectation from the party. For that reason, classifying voter in either one of the voting models could limit researchers in laying out the possibilities of a mixed outlook of voters' considerations.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The demographic details of the participants of this study were outlined in Chapter 4. The first part of that contextualisation presented information such as age, the respondents' political affiliation, gender, and marital and employment status. The previous chapter also laid bare voters' in-depth political opinions on what motivates their electoral behaviour. That part was presented in various forms and categories such as graphs, charts and lengthy paragraph forms for better comparison and further analysis. This chapter further details some of the key findings made from this study. A qualitative study of this nature, focusing on rich textual analysis of in-depth responses from voters, sought to make meaning out of the raw data collected from the field. To ensure that the voting behaviour theories produce the desired explanation for what motivates voting; qualitative interviews were conducted with the interview guide showing a mix of questions to provide the evaluation is strong.

5.2 Summary of the chapters

In essence, this study looked at the effects of political communication strategies on voting behaviour. Chapter one presented an outline of the research problem. Chapter two broadly gave the literature review, and the theoretical framework was also presented. The theories were used to determine the extent to which the different models of voting behaviour can be best applied in this study. That was followed by chapter three, which details the methodology that the study observed. It is against this background that Chapter Four contains the presentation and analysis of the data which revealed that most of the voting behaviour models were, to varying extents, applicable to the case of Diepsloot residents. Finally, chapter five presents a summary of the key findings, the recommendations and study recommendations based on this study's findings.

5.3 Objective of the study

This study's objective was to review the previous general elections communication strategies used by South African political parties. To achieve that, in-depth research on political communication strategies was done. The study was also meant to determine the effect that prior, and post-elections' communications strategies have on voters' next elections voting decision. In addition to that, the study sought to understand whether voters relate to a party based on its communication strategies and messaging. To determine all that, respondents were asked if they considered that kind of communication before going to the polls.

5.4 Discussion and interpretation of findings

The critical question in this study was whether political communication strategies affect voting behaviour. That question is multifaceted, same as communication itself. Thus, to explain that action, different voting behaviour models were employed. Among those were the Party Identification Model, also known as The Michigan Model, with its focus on loyalty, The Rational Choice Theory which says voters act with an expectation, and The Sociological Model stresses the social base of values and interests (Fumagalli, 2020). For that reason, when considering all these models, it is possible to detect some common traits in what motivates people to vote because all the models encompass issues that determine voting, be it social, psychological and sometimes material explanations. The proof of that is some of the respondents who revealed that they voted for the ANC because of its promise for a better life for all and its findings reveal that issue-based voting and party-affiliation exists during voting.

Furthermore, the study attempted to understand whether voters relate to a party based on its communication strategies and messaging. It was found that that communication alone doesn't move voters who expect parties to communicate and communicate credible messages and fulfil their electoral promises. Some respondents revealed that while communication is a factor in influencing voting, it needs to be paired with political parties' material commitment.

Some research respondents also explained that opposition parties hardly offer their alternative policies for governance but instead promises that they can do better than the current ruling party. The findings of this study revealed the complexities involved in the voter decision-making process. Voters employ a variety of elements when deciding which party to vote for. Among those is whether the candidate standing for elections on behalf of the party can be trusted. Although there is an excellent possibility that the Party Identification Model can help explain voting behaviour in the case of Diepsloot residents, this research's findings might not verify the extent to which this is true. Due to the electoral system in South Africa that is conducted on party-basis, the parties are represented by leaders who voters might not identify with, stopping them from voting for such a political party in government. Some voters have indicated that they didn't vote because they feel the incumbent leader doesn't represent them and cannot identify with the leader.

However, the voters' preferences to identify with particular political parties could help explain their voting behaviour as those who expressed their support for a specific candidate admitted to having voted for their parties in the past.

An example of that is one respondent who expressed why he voted for the EFF by saying that the party represents his values;

“The EFF is a strongly pro-black and youthful party. In theory, they are what I mostly stand for.”

The degree to which the Party Identification Model Theory relates to the case of Diepsloot residents who were interviewed is somewhat indefinite. Even though some voters have strong political values and liking for specific political organisations, some seem to not put their ballots for those parties they traditionally support. Although they support the parties, they either do not identify with the incumbent leader and their political beliefs. That was clear as some expressed frustration with their political parties and the people who are at the helm of the organisations:

“My decision making has relied a lot on familiarity, to stick to the ANC, hoping that at some point things will change. Interestingly the one time I decided to vote for the DA stemmed a lot from the progress I had seen from the party's municipal performance.”

When it comes to the Rational Choice Model, it became clear that there is a high possibility that voters find rational reasons which direct them to vote or not to vote. Rational voters base their decision on what they can benefit from that exercise. Such reasoning was deduced from their responses during the interviews through their political opinions and beliefs. One voter indicated that he has previously abstained from voting to show his dissatisfaction with how the country is being run, stating that no amount of political communication and convincing can change his mind. Perhaps abstinence from voting signals unavailability of preference considering that voters can choose from a pool of political parties. Another possibility may be that such voters cannot find a rational reason for voting. Thus, they appear apathetic. From the engagements with voters, it was clear that they are interested in politics because they expressed coherent inputs on how they feel political parties should conduct themselves.

One of the issues the study suggested is that voters feel that political leaders are not visible when needed, and they want to see them not only during elections but even after. They think that they don't get opportunities to engage their leaders. Although such dissatisfactions can be expressed through voting for an opposition party, Runciman, Bekker and Maggott (2019) assert that there could be unavailability of a strong opposition party as the main opposition, the DA, seem to be an unfeasible option to many voters frustrated with the ANC. The EFF in recent times has come to represent a more viable political alternative to the 108-year-old ANC for mostly black working-class voters.

It is also essential to consider the makeup of the young voters, the majority of whom were sampled for this study, concerning the political events they have been exposed to in the country. Most of them never experienced apartheid. It was clear from their responses that they expect service delivery and not the political rhetoric around how political parties fought and defeated apartheid. Another issue that came out is that political consciousness somehow plays a role in voting behaviour. There also seems to be a slight difference between the young and the old regarding the motivation for voting. The engagements with voters from different generations revealed that voting behaviour and political values differ in that the earlier generations were not as political exposed and educated as most of the youth who formed part of this study.

The old group of voters were motivated by struggle credentials as a determinant to vote. Hence the majority of them voted for the ruling ANC for freedom-related reasons.

The recent cohorts of young people are informed about governance and policies before making their mark. They also proved to be politically aware and in touch with current affairs and understood the mandate of political parties in government. The findings suggest that as time passes, and new political parties enter the electoral space, the historic block of voters who were easily enticed with the ANC's struggle credentials seems to be fading with time and voters want action. One respondent alluded to that;

“There needs to be job creation, poverty eradication, a non-racial country and safer South Africa for all. A country with less socio-economic challenges and a healthy environment are some of the things I consider when going to vote.”

With regards to the research question of whether voters relate to a party based on its communication strategy, the answer is yes, but many of these voters were unhappy with those strategies. They felt that the strategy and manifestos were poorly developed and lacked resonance with them. One key issue raised by voters was that they think the manifestos are too general and don't touch on the issues happening in their backyards. They think that the parties didn't speak to what they are going through. There seemed to be a negative perception of the parties and empty promises that are made when parties are pleading electoral support. The respondents also felt that the opposition parties' campaigns around the same issue by focusing on alleged poor service delivery and corruption on the part of the ruling ANC. Instead, voters say they are interested in understanding what political parties can do for them instead of bashing on the failures of others.

It is also worth noting that South African politics are moving to a space where they will be defined by more practical policies as voters want to know what the political parties can offer before voting. Most of the respondents explained that they base their voting decision on what the parties can deliver versus what they promise to do.

With the current political climate in the country, it offers voters an opportunity to switch easily and vote for a party they believe will represent them better in government. That found expression in an argument that political parties are only interested in making promises before elections and does not follow up on them when voted into power.

As the results of this study posit, it appears that a lot of changes have since taken place on motivations that influence voting behaviour. Initially voters were mostly concerned about economic benefits as a determinant for voting behaviour. With the younger generation getting increasingly involved in politics, the expectations are more rational, and they are calling for exemplary ethical behaviour from their leaders. In conclusion, all the theories of voting behaviour were applicable to the voters sampled, whether to a lesser or greater extent. It looks, though, that there is no model that can exclusively explain voting behaviour as the assumptions of these models showed in the voters' reasons for voting. There is also anecdotal evidence of voters who vote not because they have been convinced to do so by political parties but because they want to exercise their democratic right to choose a political party of their choice.

In general, there is still a dearth of research that better explains voting behaviour in a country such as South Africa which is tied with a lot of socio-economic issues, political and sometimes societal ills. For that reason it becomes very difficult to determine the reason why a person vote for a certain political party despite its shortcomings or why they vote for a party with no better chances of winning election, could it be because they identify with the party, or they rationalise the party's make or could it be that they expect that the party will pay them back for their ballot. It is within this context that one can argue that as societies undergo political changes and the lives of residents are altered, their behaviour when it comes to voting also changes, which leads to some theories losing relevance while others becoming more relevant. Although that those changes don't imply that the theories have become less important, they explain the shift within society in which political events unfold.

5.6 Recommendations

As the Literature Review in Chapter 2 points out, political communication presents political parties and leaders with an opportunity to maximise electoral support. There are enormous researches that support that assertion however that it is the best communication strategy that puts Party A ahead of Party B in as far as getting support is concerned. That literature points to issues such as research on what voters want to hear, the inadequate use of technology, segmenting, using the right mediums and as well as delivering to past electoral promises. The following recommendations are put forward in accordance with the findings of this study.

5.6.1 Accountability

The general feeling among the participants in this study was that political parties do not live up to their promises. Most of them believe that the organisations are only interested in just making promises, get a vote and then disappear to reappear in the next election period. Commenting on post-election commitment, participants lamented that even those leaders who came across as unapproachable during campaigning turned to be difficult to reach after elections. As much as communication is important and plays a role in winning electoral support, for a political party to thrive it needs to communicate credible messages, be consistent in doing that and not only communicate but deliver on those electoral promises. One respondent had this to say about accountability;

“The governing party (ANC) has for the longest time understood how to use their advantage of being a liberation movement party that brought democracy and freedom to the people and leech on people’s fears of “return” of apartheid or oppression on black people. All this they do while the issues that matter the most are not dealt with.”

Voters want open and honest communication between them and political parties. Most have expressed a strong dislike for leaders who are not accountable, saying it shows disregard for them. They say that communication will assist in identifying challenges that need to be prioritised and resolved.

During the data gathering process, it was also found that some community leaders affiliated to political parties do not report back to their constituencies on developmental issues. Those who participated felt that they are neglected by the people they voted for. They recommended that those leaders should engage communities on regular intervals and fill them in on what's being done to address communal progress.

5.6.2 Use of technology

The effect of Covid-19 which brought almost all economies to their knees between 2019 and 2020 has revealed that the world was not ready to deal with the enforced change caused by the disaster. Due to the pandemic and the way in which it spreads the global community was forced to adapt to new ways of doing things. Moving into the 2021 local government elections, it is likely that technology will alter how elections have been conducted over the years. Political parties will need to adapt to that change otherwise they risk finding themselves unable to carry out their mandates.

COVID-19 has forced governments and political organisations to use new methods to communicate with their constituencies but that exercise is three-ways and is made entirely possible by broadcast media houses and some social media channels which livestream these activities. One respondent has expressed why he thinks that is necessary;

“Political parties must stop relying on past successes and understand that we live in a time that presents new challenges, some old. However, party’s need to understand that firstly we live in a digital age. Information is readily available and young people are no longer just relying on party manifestos to help them decide which party to vote for. Parties need to innovate how they communicate. They need to interact more on digital platforms that also allow users to interact with the party.”

Hence political organisations need to come up with ways to ensure there is a link between them and their constituency. It is also recommended that social media channels should be used to effectively communicate party messages.

5.6.3 Segmentation

In order for political parties to thrive they need to understand the needs of their supporters. That will assist them to tailor make their communication.

For instance, it would be beneficial to target young voters on social media as many of them use the medium. According to Dabula (2016), knowing voters intimately will assist the political parties to not only to put up the right message but also use the right tone which will ensure that they sway the voter to support them. This research found that most respondents use social media or the internet to access political messages. It is therefore essential that political parties employ social media to disseminate their messages. This means that political organisations leverage the medium and the various platforms to deliver their messages. Therefore, it is conclusive to say political movements need to exploit social media.

5.6.4 Tailor-make clear communication strategies and speak in one voice

The majority of the people who raised the issue of inconsistent messages cited the ruling party, the ANC, as one party whose leaders contradict each other when it comes to the party messaging. This may be because the party is a big organisation—it almost has equal representation in all 9 provinces in the country, regions among those provinces, sub-regions and branches. This means that the communication charged from the head office in Luthuli House needs to be delivered across the country. However, the secretary-general who serves as the party's head or their spokesperson cannot communicate across all levels and those given the responsibility of delivering such messages can easily contradict each other. The respondents recommend that political parties need to speak in forked tongues and deliver messages that they mean. Voters want communication to be streamlined to avoid sending ambiguous messages.

5.6.5 Don't address the opponent, address your supporters

Respondents feel that political leaders miss out on convincing voters by attacking their political opponents. By doing that, the supporters feel it becomes a lost opportunity for the leaders to sell their organisations.

It is the nature of politics that political parties will employ methods meant to discredit their opponents, however as they do that, they use the time they are supposed to use to promote their parties to popularise their political enemies. This is mostly done by opposition parties who bash at ruling parties and their alleged failures in government.

5.6.6 Open-up for dialogue

Voters, especially the youth who always have appetite for political dialogues, feel that political parties do not consider them on party formulation. For that reason, South African politicians and their leaders should consider opening up to the youth. From the engagements with young voters, what came out is that these are very politically opinionated people with a hunger for dialogue on how the country can move forward. They are frustrated and feel left out in the conversation on how the lives of their peers, most whom are dealing with unemployment, can be turned around. Those are some of the reasons they have raised for losing interest in voting. For all those reasons it can be recommended that political parties make an effort to start listening to these people who, according to the national census, are the majority in the country.

5.7 Recommendations for further research

Most of the youth who were interviewed in this study make for an interesting case study with their strong political viewpoints. An exclusive study on youth might reveal meaningful findings such as their broad understanding of domestic politics. As mentioned, the historic block of voters who regarded political parties' struggle credentials is fading with time and the youth, majority of whom are called 'born-frees,' are very probing when it comes to service delivery and ethical issues in leadership. These are people who are difficult to convince using the traditional 'we freed you' narrative and want more than political rhetoric. It would be thought-provoking to sample them for a study such as this one to understand their political viewpoints and voting behaviour.

5.8 Limitations

The study was aimed at investigating the effects of political communication on voting behaviour with a focus on Diepsloot which is in the West of Johannesburg.

To this end, South Africa is a country with 9 provinces and over 200 townships with a make and demographics similar to Diepsloot but only the latter was targeted as an area of study. The reason for that is that it would prove difficult, if not entirely impossible, for the researcher to target the whole country. It would not only be a tedious exercise but also become very expensive and time-consuming task. Even among Diepsloot residents getting all the residents to participate would be challenging, for that reason the researcher was limited to only few members of the community. In qualitative research it's impossible to study the whole population due to size and the nature of qualitative research and for that reason the researcher selected a sample from the population. In sampling a method is used to rationalise the collection of information and draw conclusion but if that smaller group is selected thoroughly and carefully, the results of the sample will reflect the same traits as the larger group (Brynard & Hanekom, 2006).

5.9 Summary

Generally, the aim of this study was to investigate the effect of political communication on voting behaviour. It is clear that political communication is a meaningful vehicle for electoral support but it emerged from the interviews that political communication alone cannot sway voters but there needs to be a stronger relationship that is based on constant honesty. The use of political communication afford parties an opportunity to express their political opinions, create a platform for the exchange of information between the electorates and politicians but most importantly allow voters to asses which party can they trust and which one they cannot. Voters raised that in between election periods they feel neglected by the people they voted for. They said political parties are only interested in getting votes and then disappear until the next elections. Voters want political parties to be accountable and show strong leadership by delivering to their electoral promises.

6. Conclusion

This study was an Investigation of political communication and its effects on voting behaviour. To answer the research question; how do Diepsloot voters relate to domestic political parties' communications and messaging during the election period? It emerged during the interviews, that while voters understand what political communication is and what its purpose is during elections, they believe that it is manipulative and that politicians during their terms in office hardly deliver on the promises they make while campaigning. They feel that political parties do not prioritise the provision of effective service delivery, something that is communicated during election messaging. Key to interviewees' concerns was that was that political institutions only communicate to voters when it suits them.

From the results of the study, it can be concluded that political parties understand the power of communication, which is why they use it as a tool to garner electoral support. Research on political communication, specific to the South African context is still in its infancy (Karam and Mutsvairo, 2018) and the unavailability of more comprehensive, in-depth literature reveals this.

Several factors could influence a voter to support a political party or a certain politician. It is worth mentioning that it's possible to find the tenants of the models of voting behaviour in the responses from the different respondents, thus making these theories applicable to the research problem. However, in some cases that was a lesser than a greater extent. For that reason, there was no obvious and direct relevant model that applied to the voting behaviour of Diepsloot residents. To place that finding well, it's important to place the context in which this research was conducted. South Africa, like many others throughout the world, was battling with the effects of COVID-19, an air-borne virus which claimed approximately a million lives worldwide, infected and continues to infect millions and left governments and multi-national corporations in dire financial strain. One ripple effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is the widespread loss of jobs and household earnings.

In South Africa the government responded with relief packages which many felt were ill administered, leaving them frustrated with the governing ANC and its leaders.

Most of the people interviewed for this study expressed that if general elections were to be held in 2020, they would not vote for the ruling ANC. To answer the research question; To what extent do political parties' pre-election communication strategies influence a Diepsloot voter voting decision?

The findings suggest that voters considered a party's policies, patriotism, their identification with particular party leaders and a leader's charisma, a party's image, its communication strategies, ethical considerations, ethnic and lastly racial considerations (Anyangwe, 2012). Those who relate or identify with political parties on ethnic and racial grounds are likely to vote for that party during elections. In this study, some respondents spoke of 'a better devil.' They explained that their choice to vote for Party A, rather than Party B, was neither here nor there, as they expressed love for both.

One of the objectives of this study, was to determine whether political parties' prior general elections communication strategies affected the decision-making process of Diepsloot voters. The study has found that the dynamics of people's behaviour is constantly changing, and election campaign strategies play a vital role in that. This indicates that there are many factors that influence voting behaviour, such as the role of the media and how the media reports during elections. Given the complexities of human behaviour, the contexts and "times" in which elections take place in, the findings of this study cannot be predicted for future elections and are therefore not concrete.

Another objective was to determine the kind of effect that post elections communications strategies have on Diepsloot voters' next elections voting decision and the study found that residents are frustrated with the speed at which electoral promises are fulfilled. However, their responses suggest that they have come to realise that political parties can be dealt with using the ballot come elections time. This might be because political parties make promises before elections and hardly deliver on time when they have been voted to power, an issue most residents raised that political campaigns are filled with lies. This also reveals that on the objective that sought to understand whether Diepsloot voters relate to a party based on its communication strategies and messaging, they are not entirely moved and relate to a party based on the communication but service delivery.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX: A (INTERVIEW GUIDE)

TITLE: *INVESTIGATING SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL PARTIES' COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES AND HOW THEY INFLUENCE VOTERS' DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.*

Dear Prospective Participant

Declaration:

My name is Trevor Hlungwani and I am a Master of Communication Sciences student at the University of South Africa, supervised by Professor Siyasanga Tyali, a Senior Lecturer at UNISA's Department of Communication Science. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled *Investigating South African Political Parties' communications strategies and how they influence voters' decision-making process*. The aim of this study is to review the previous general elections communications strategies used by South African political parties, and to determine whether political parties' prior general elections communication strategies affected the decision-making process of Diepsloot voters. The focus was on the current top three parties, The ANC, DA and EFF. The research objectives are to review the previous general elections communications strategies used by the parties, to determine whether political parties' prior general elections communication strategies affected the decision-making process of Diepsloot voters, to determine the kind of effect that post elections communications strategies have on Diepsloot voters' next elections voting decision and to understand whether Diepsloot voters relate to a party based on its communication strategies and messaging. The study seeks to answer the following questions: what kind of communication

strategies has the three top South African political parties (ANC, DA & EFF) used in the past general elections in South Africa? To what extent do political parties pre-election communication strategies influence a Diepsloot voter voting decision and how do Diepsloot voters relate to domestic political parties' communications and messages during elections period?

To accomplish my research objectives, a questionnaire has been prepared to gather information regarding the study. The significance of this study is to generate valuable insights for political parties and create motivation to strengthen the knowledge base on the strategic framework that they can develop to align their campaigns with their overall communication strategies. It will also spark more interest for further research on the significance of political communication in a developing democracy such as ours as the findings of this study might reveal the connection between political communication and voting behaviour.

- Your responses will be held confidential.

- You are under no compulsion to participate in this survey.

- Your co-operation is appreciated.

This questionnaire is to be filled by respondents who are of voting age or over 18-years-old. Should you need any further information please kindly contact me and or my supervisor on the details below.

Trevor Hlungwani on mjtrevor1@gmail.com and **Supervisor: Prof Siyasanga Tyali** on tyalism@unisa.ac.za

Yours sincerely

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

A.1 GENDER

MALE	FEMALE
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A.2 AGE

Under 30 years	30 - 39	40 - 49	50-59	60
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A.3 MARITAL STATUS

SINGLE	MARRIED
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A.4 EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Employed	Unemployed	Permanent	Contract
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A.5 POSITION

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A.6 PERIOD IN CURRENT POSITION

<5 Yrs.	>5yrs<10yrs	>10yrs<20yrs	>20yrs
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A.7 Employment sector

Private

Public

A.8. ARE YOU A CARD-CARRYING MEMBER OF A POLITICAL PARTY?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION B: ACCESS TO INFORMATION

B.1 What is your main source of information?

Radio	<input type="checkbox"/>
Television	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/>

Rallies	
Cell phone	
Internet / Social Media	

B.2 Medium Usage

On a scale of 1 – 5 please rate your usage of the following mediums. 1 Never, 2 Rarely, 3 Sometimes, 4 Often, 5 Always

	1	2	3	4	5
Radio					
Television					
Newspaper					
Rallies					
Cell phone					
Internet /					

Social Media					
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SECTION C: VOTING BEHAVIOUR

Instructions on answering the questions: The questions relate to your understanding of political communication and its effects on your voting behavior. Some questions require you to answer 'Yes' or 'No' and others require you to do that and explain further. Please indicate your answer with either a 'Yes' or 'No', and then explain where required.

Section C. Voting behaviour: TO DETERMINE WHETHER POLITICAL PARTIES' PRIOR GENERAL ELECTIONS COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AFFECTED THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS OF VOTERS

No.	Question	Yes	No	Explain (Please explain where directed)
C.1	What's your understanding of political communication?			
C.2	Have you voted before?			
C.3	Which political party did you vote for (please note that this question is optional, and your identity will remain private)			
C.4	If you have never voted, why haven't you done so? Please explain			
C.5	What would you attribute to be the single thing that influences your decision to vote or not from the political party messages?			
C.6	Does it matter to you what a party say before elections? Please explain your answer			
C.7	Does it matter to you what a party say after elections? Please explain why you think it matters or don't to you.			

C.9	In light of some of those issues they communicate, do you think some of those messages spoke to some of the challenges faced by your community? Please explain what those challenges are or were?			
C.10	Was your last vote influenced by the party's messages? If yes, please explain how it was influenced by that.			
C.11	Do you understand the languages they use?			
C.12	Do you think the communication has contributed in popularizing the party/ parties among people? Please explain			
C.13	What sort of meanings did you attribute to these messages? To vote/ not vote, why? Please explain			
C.14	What do you recommend should parties communicate?			

C.15	What is your perception of political communications in educating people about democratic processes?			
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SECTION D. QUESTIONS FOR POLITICAL/ COMMUNICATION OFFICERS

1. How do you decide on what to communicate to voters before elections?
2. Do you tailor-make the messages depending on who you want to speak to? If yes, what do you consider?
3. What are the key factors that you look at when you decide to put out pre and post-election communication
4. How important is political communication in influencing voter's decision?
5. Do you think your communication have somehow created a perception of what the party stands for?
6. How important is political communication in influencing voters' decision?

7. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 meaning No impact, 2 Slightly Impactful, 3 Impactful, 4 More Impactful and 5 meaning Highly Impactful, how would you rate the impact of your communication strategy on voters' decision to vote for your party

1	2	3	4	5
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8. On a scale of 1 to 5 , 1 meaning Not important, 2 Slightly Important, 3 Important, 4 Very Important and 5 Highly Important, which of the following are the most important political activities do you think have most effect on voter's decision?

Social Grants

1	2	3	4	5
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Service delivery

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Rallies/ manifestos

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Political messages

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Television Adverts

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Television Adverts

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Radio Adverts

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Newspaper adverts / Columns

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

9. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 meaning no impact, 2 less impactful, 3 impactful, 4 very impactful and 5 highly impactful, how would you rate the impact of your communication strategy on voters' decision to vote for your party

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Thank you for taking part in this study. Should you have any further information to add please elaborate here.

.....
.....
.....

APPENDIX: B (CONSENT FORM)

DECLARATION:

I.....hereby declare that I am fully aware of the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I fully agree to participate in this research project.

However, I am taking part in this project as a volunteer, and therefore I have full rights to refuse to answer questions that I may not wish to answer. I also have full rights to withdraw at any point in this research project should I wish to do so, and my action will not disadvantage me in any way.

Signature of Participant

Date

.....

.....

APPENDIX: C (ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER)



UNISA COMMUNICATION SCIENCE ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

NHREC Registration #:
Rec240816-052
ERC Reference # •.2020-
COMMSCIENCE-CHS-
90443896 Name: T
Hlungwani
Student/Staff 90443896
Date 17 February 2020

Dear Mr Trevor Hlungwani

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 17 February 2020 to 18 February
2023

Researcher(s): Mr Trevor Hlungwani


Supervisor (s): Prof SM Tyali
Department of Communication Science
University of South Africa
tvalismaunisa.ac.za
012 429 8762/073 497 9391

Working title of research:
INVESTIGATING SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL PARTIES' COMMUNICATIONS
STRATEGIES AND HOW THEY INFLUENCE VOTERS' DECISION-MAKING
PROCESS.

Qualification: MA in Communication

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by Department of Communication Science Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for three years.

The low risk application was reviewed by the Departmental Ethics Review Committee on 21 November 2019 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment. The decision was tabled at the Committee meeting on 17 February 2020 for approval.
The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:



University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ricjgei City of Tshwane PO Box 392 UNISA
0003 south Africa Telephone: +2712 429 3111 +2712 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the Communication Science Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date (18 February 2023). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number 2020-COMMSCIENCE-CHS-90443896 should be clearly indicated on a// forms of communication with the intended research participants, as we// as with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Signature :



Mr Siyabonga M Mfuphi

Ethics Chair :

Ethics Chair

Communication Science Ethics Review Committee

E-mail: mfuohsm@unisa.ac.za

Tel: (012) 429-6661

URERC 25.04.17 - Decision template (V2) Approv

Signature :



Signature.

Dr Elijah Dube

Ethics Chair : CREC

E-mail : Dubeeen@unisa.pc.zg


Tel: (012) 429 3892

University of South Africa
Prelier Street. Muckleneuk Ridge. City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South
Telephone. +27 i 2 429 1 1 Facsimile: +27 1 2 429 50 www.unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX: D (LETTER FROM THE EDITOR)



Confirmation of Editing

Editor	Chengetai Chikadaya
Client	Trevor Hlungwani
Title of Thesis	INVESTIGATING SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL PARTIES' COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND HOW THEY INFLUENCE VOTERS' DECISION-MAKING PROCESS
Date	15 January 2021
Statement	This document confirms that the above-mentioned journal article was edited for language.
Signature	
Contact	chengetai@conceptafrika.com +27 79 788 30 64