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DECLARATION

I declare that Political communication: a case study of the Democratic Alliance and its use of digital media in the 2014 South African General Elections is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Sandra Pow Chong
August 2015

Signed: [Signature]
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Abstract

Political organisations are now using a two-way path of communication thanks to the development of technological platforms that work in-sync with the internet to allow this to happen. Information can now flow across new networks to allow exchanges from the many to the many. This study sets out to explore the use of social media by political organisations as a means of political communication. A case study was conducted which focussed on online communication used by the Democratic Alliance in the 2014 General Elections in South Africa. The social media strategies adopted by the Democratic Alliance was examined. Reference is made to the 2008 Obama Campaign. The study revealed that the DA primarily made use of two-way asymmetrical communication despite the party posting a lot of consistent information and content; however in response to many questions and comments posted on the social media fora by online users, the DA only selectively responded to a handful of these.

Keywords: Digital media, Social Media, Democratic Alliance, DA, Website, Campaign, Political Communication, Political Party, Stakeholders, Obama
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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The internet has changed the face of political campaigning by providing access to online social media tools that allow political organisations to extend their reach and communicate with voters through technologically advanced feedback mechanisms. Social media has also become an essential tool used by government and political organisations to engage with citizens in what is termed e-democracy (Kearns 2002) or government 2.0 (Department of Finance and Deregulation 2010), as well as in electioneering. Social media, or Web 2.0 as it was previously known, includes blogs, microblogging such as Twitter, social networks such as Facebook, and photo and video sharing sites such as Flicker and YouTube.

According to Howard (2006) ‘a political campaign is one of the most important organisations in a democracy, and whether issue- or candidate-specific, it is one of the least understood organisations in contemporary political life’. There is little doubt that the effects of the Internet and Internet tools on political campaigns at all levels will grow exponentially (Trent & Friedenberg 2008). In the 2014 South African General Elections, the Democratic Alliance (DA) was classified as the most effective South African political party in terms of its online presence (Strategy Worx 2014). According to research by World Wide Worx and Fuseware, South Africa currently has an estimated 9,4 million active Facebook users and 5,5 million Twitter users (Research and Markets 2013).

Many of the social media strategies used by the DA were adopted from Obama’s social media campaign. In 2008, the Obama campaign used social networking and microblogging to mobilise and organise supporters (Hendricks & Denton 2010). The success of the Obama campaign can be attributed to a team of social media experts, some of whom were co-founders and board members of Facebook. Obama also understood the value of social media and the impact it has on growing a campaign exponentially. In his 2008 Presidential campaign ‘online advocacy was elevated to the campaign’s highest levels and integrated into all elements of the organisation’ (Edelman 2009). Barack Obama’s landslide victory saw him claim nearly 200 electoral votes and 8.5 million popular votes. He won the presidency by converting everyday people into engaged and empowered volunteers, donors and advocates through social networks, e-mail advocacy, text messaging and online video (Edelman 2009).
Apurimac Media, a digital media and marketing insight company conducted independent research and tracked political parties on social media leading up to the 2014 national elections in South Africa, calling it ‘SA’s first digital elections’ (Apurimac Media 2014). Strategy Worx used its Online Synergy Audit tool to analyse the effectiveness of political parties’ websites in terms of content and usability and their social media pages. The DA scored the highest with 58%, followed by Agang with 52%, the ANC received 46%, Cope 35% and the IFP 21%. The DA received the highest score, because of its extensive use of social media and its highly visible presence online. The DA also has several secondary websites for regional areas and individual sites for specific public representatives and party leaders. The DA’s use of Twitter, Facebook and other social media platforms was also found to be consistent and appropriate overall (Strategy Worx 2014).

Online political communication provides a channel in which political parties can reach out to its tech-savvy youth and attract this potential supporter-based market. The Obama campaign achieved success amongst the US youth by building a solid contact database, a social networking presence and integration of video and blogs. Leading up to the 2014 General Elections, South Africa’s political parties tried to copy this and targeted their online political campaigning and marketing at South Africa’s ‘Born-free’ Generation. Despite this, many youth showed little interest in registering or having the intention to vote in the 2014 General Elections. According to an online survey by Pondering Panda, it found that in the run-up to the IEC’s final voter registration weekend, close to 1 in 3 young adults didn’t plan to vote in the 2014 elections (sabreakingnews 2014).

Messaging can come in different forms such as through advertisements in print, television and radio. In 2009, ICASA (Independent Communications Authority of South Africa) promulgated a new regulation which allowed all political parties free television space to broadcast their advertisements. Television advertising is also one of the quickest ways that an opposition party particularly a new one, could bring an image in the public mind (Glenn & Mattes 2011). Images in the form of pictures, photos and text as well as video using YouTube and audio via podcasts and radio interviews are also used as means of communicating the party message. Political parties will also use their manifesto which, according to Collins English Dictionary, is a public declaration of intent, policy, aims, etc. as issued by a political party, government or movement (Collins English Dictionary 2014). This is usually a lengthy document that also details what the party is about, why voters should vote for it and what it has to offer voters should be elected the ruling party.
Political parties make use of social media tools and analytics to track their own popularity online, build support from voters and potential voters, and engage online with party supporters or to monitor and track the activities of competitors in the social media sphere. According to an online article published by the SABC, political parties use the different social media platforms to police each other, slam each other, show off the work they are doing and to make promises about what they plan to do if they win the national or provincial elections (SABC 2014). This study focusses specifically on the political communication of the Democratic Alliance in the 2014 General Elections and how it utilised digital media to engage and communicate with its stakeholders online.

1.2 Problem statement
The problem statement of this study was to investigate the use of online communication namely social media and the website of the Democratic Alliance to communicate its message to its stakeholders (voters and potential voters). Part of the problem statement was to identify the issues raised in the messages communicated and how this ties in with agenda-setting.

1.3 Primary Research Objective
The primary objective of this study was to investigate the way in which the DA used social media platforms and party political websites to communicate its messaging and the type of content and information communicated.

1.4 Research Questions
• How has the Democratic Alliance used social media tools in the 2014 South African General Elections to engage with its stakeholders?
• What role does Excellence Theory play using non-empirical research methods, in the Democratic Alliance’s social media engagement with its stakeholders?
• What type of content does the Democratic Alliance use in its messaging and forms of communication online?
• What type of responses and comments does the Democratic Alliance receive in its online fora i.e. its Facebook account, Twitter account and YouTube account?

1.5 Research approach
The research approach for this study takes on a qualitative research method. This was done through an analysis of the online social media fora used by the Democratic Alliance
which includes its official national DA Facebook page, Twitter Account and YouTube account. An analysis of the DA’s National party political website was also conducted.

1.6 Research design
A case study was conducted using publicly available information accessed on the Internet (DA’s Facebook page, Twitter Account and YouTube). The evidence and material analysed in the data collection process of this case study consisted of documentation, archival records, and physical artefacts (Yin 1994). Other sources that were used to obtain relevant information included client/server computing, the Internet, and the World Wide Web. A case study was conducted on the use of social media and the social media strategies adopted by the Democratic Alliance in the 2014 General Elections in South Africa. In the case study analysis two types of evidence were sourced online, i.e. documentation and archival records. Yin (1994) identified six primary sources of evidence for case study research.

1.7 Population and Sampling
Population sampling is the process of taking a subset of subjects that is representative of the entire population. The sample must have sufficient size to warrant statistical analysis. (Explorable.com 2009). The research population for this study consisted of an extensive review and analysis of the DA’s national party political website, Facebook and Twitter account and YouTube channel. Lewis-Beck et. al (2004) describes a sampling frame as a list or other device used to define a researcher's population of interest. In this study a content analysis was conducted using online sources and online related documents, journals, articles, party political websites and news sites, online YouTube channels and social media fora. LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (1998:250) describe a sample as a portion or a subset of the research population selected to participate in a study, representing the research population.

1.8 Methods of sampling techniques
According to Trochim (2006) there are two types of sampling, which are probability and non-probability sampling. Trochim (2006) describes probability sampling as any method of sampling that uses a random selection procedure, for this to happen the researcher must set up a process or procedure that assures that the different units in the selected population have equal probabilities of being chosen. A non-probability sampling method on the other hand does not involve random selection (Trochim 2006). A non-probability
sampling method was used in this study whereby the sampling unit consisted of an analysis of the Democratic Alliance national party political website, its national Facebook page, national Twitter account and its national YouTube account. The sampling technique concerns an analysis on political party Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, relevant YouTube channels, political party websites and news sites.

1.9 Data analysis
Content analysis was used for the purpose of this study. Content analysis used is a method for analysing hymns, newspaper and magazine articles, advertisements and political speeches in the 19th century (Harwood & Garry 2003). Information used in this study was obtained via the internet. According to Weber (1990) content analysis is used to examine beliefs, organisations, attitudes, and human relations in sciences. Cole (1988) had a similar view to Harwood and Garry (2003) and describes content analysis as a method of analysing written, verbal or visual communication messages.

1.10 Theoretical framework
Stakeholder Engagement Theory was used to examine the engagement with stakeholders of a political party. Freeman’s theory (1984) states that managers should adopt policies which prioritise the needs of its stakeholders; this includes its customers, suppliers, employees, the general public, communities, stockholders and creditors, shareholders and interested groups. He also views this theory as being about how people can create value for each other (Freeman 1984). Although Freeman’s theory is related to business, it is applicable to any organisation which has a responsibility to several different stakeholders. Freeman argues that it is necessary to find ideas and concepts that help to integrate ethics with the organisation and that it is the responsibility of the organisation and its executives to oversee to the needs of groups and individuals that can affect or be affected by the organisation (Agle, et al. 2008: 164). The message script used by a politician in their communiqué such as in speeches, press statements, will often focus on matters which affect or are of concern to its stakeholders. This is a way for political parties to show that they care about the needs of their stakeholders. This theory is backed by Donaldson et al. (1995) who also believe that organisations should behave ethically and be transparent and honest in their engagements with interest groups as this will be to its benefit.

Excellence Theory also forms part of the theoretical framework. Grunig’s theory (2001) maintains Excellence Theory to be a practiced two-way symmetrical communication model
by excellent public relations departments. The model of two-way symmetrical communication was identified as the most effective form of public relations by Grunig and Hunt in 1984 (Edwards 2009a). Grunig and Hunt identified Excellence Theory as a four part model of public relations identified based on a sociological theory known as Systems Theory (Edwards 2009a). Defleur and Ball-Rokeach also note that political candidates depend on the media to communicate their message. ‘Candidates of political office constantly struggle to convince people that their versions of what should be done will lead to the best consequences’ (1989: 302). The media can play a ‘support role’ in this instance by providing coverage for a particular political party’s policies for instance or for taking action on an issue such as corruption and show the politician leading the action in a positive light. Or the media can decipher the message of the political party in layman’s terms for the public to better understand. Therefore the media, the public and political organisations are dependent on each other and have an organic dependency-based relationship where their interaction with each other is a symbiotic relationship. Another way in which political organisations can build this relationship is to choose to support issues that affect the public at large such as E-Tolls which affects all road users in Gauteng. The DA chose to support the movement against E-Tolls which helped them gain support and favour of businessmen and women in Gauteng and investors in the province, as well as support of local road users in Gauteng. In this way the DA hoped to increase their supporter base come election time. Media Dependency Theory ‘conceives of media power as lying in the control of certain information resources that individuals require to attain their personal goals.’ (Defleur & Ball-Rokeach 1989: 308). Public relations practitioners need to have a knowledge of the publics the organisation is communicating with and understand the reason for communicating with them (Laskin 2009).

Agenda-setting was used as part of the theoretical framework. McCombs and Shaw (1972) define agenda setting as referring to the idea that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media place on certain issues and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences. McCombs (1972) further states that news media yields the power to set a nation’s agenda and focus public attention on a few key public issues that the media deems important. He goes on to state that the public is able to gain factual information from the news media, and learn how much importance to attach to an issue based on how much emphasis is placed on it in the news. Politicians also incorporate agenda setting into their own strategy by sending out a press statement following an issue reported on in the news.
1.11 Trustworthiness of the study
According to Babbie and Mouton (2002) a qualitative study cannot be considered transferable unless it is credible and cannot be deemed credible unless it is dependable. The reliability of the sources used in this study originates from credible sources which include the official political party website of the Democratic Alliance and its national Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts. Relevant party political webpages and online documents were also analysed. The researcher copied and pasted all DA media releases from the relevant dates onto a word document for safe-keeping. The researcher also downloaded and archived the Facebook data for further analysis.

1.12 Ethical considerations
Ethical clearance for this study was not required as research was conducted using a content analysis approach and the information used was publicly available online. Today content analysis has a long history of use in communication, journalism, sociology, psychology and business, and during the last few decades its use has shown steady growth (Neundorf 2002). This study is feasible in terms of cost and time. No individuals were harmed during the collecting and collating of the data as pre-existing data that was available freely online, which consisted of election-related documents such as election reports, media statements, speeches, websites and media reports was analysed.

1.13 Motivation for the study
This study is intended to further understand the use of political communication by the Democratic Alliance and the information contained in its messaging particularly during the 2014 General Election period.

1.14 Definition of terms
- **Facebook** - Facebook users can create and customise their own profiles with photos, videos, and information about themselves. Friends can browse the profiles of other friends, vendors and celebrities and write messages on their pages (Facebook 2014).
- **Twitter** - an online service that allows users to create and share updates with other users in 140 characters or less via ‘tweets’ or posts (Techterms 2014).
- **Hashtag symbol (#) - Twitter** - The hashtag symbol (#) placed before a relevant keyword or phrase in a Tweet helps to categorise those Tweets and makes them show more easily in a Twitter Search. By clicking on a hashtagged word in a message shows all Tweets marked with that keyword. Hashtags can occur anywhere in the Tweet – at
the beginning, middle or end. Hashtagged words that become very popular are often Trending Topics (Twitter Help Centre 2014).

- **YouTube** - a video sharing service that allows users to watch videos posted by other users and upload videos of their own. Videos that have been uploaded to YouTube may appear on the YouTube website and be embedded onto other websites (Techterms 2014).

- **Google** - a popular search engine that allows users to conduct online searches to access information, search for images on the Web, access Google Maps which can locate maps and directions, and access Gmail a web-based e-mail (Techterms 2014).

- **Democratic Alliance** - a South African political organisation, the DA is also South Africa's official opposition, and a party of government in the Western Cape (Facebook 2014).

- **Social networking** - allows users to become part of a virtual community on social networking sites such as Facebook and create a custom profile with text and pictures, videos, photo albums and online applications. Users can add friends, send messages to other users, and leave comments and create online communities (Techterms 2014).

- **Digital media** - any type of information stored in the computer, including data, voice and video (PC Magazine Encyclopaedia 2014).

- **‘Born-free’ Generation** - South Africa’s youth namely those born in the year of the country’s first free elections i.e. those born after 1994 (sabreakingnews 2014).

- **Government 2.0** - is about using technology to realise a more open, transparent and consultative form of government. The term derives from Web 2.0, which refers to technologies that encourage online discussion, sharing and collaboration (Australia Government 2010).

- **The Public Protector** - receives and investigates complaints from the public against government agencies or officials, and has the power to recommend corrective action and to issue reports (South Africa.info 2014).
2.1 Introduction

Chapter two looks at literature on political organisations use of online communication. The theories used are discussed and the process of website campaigning as a framework for political parties to engage with their stakeholders during an election campaign period. The use of essential social media tools in an election campaign is also examined.

2.2 Political communication and the public sphere

Political communication as defined by Perloff (2014) is the process by which language and symbols, employed by leaders, media, or citizens, exert intended or unintended effects on the political cognitions, attitudes or behaviours of individuals or on outcomes that bear on the public policy of a nation, state or community. Tuman's (2007) studies on how US citizens view political communication reveal that several views exist which encompass the way in which information is sent, received and shared that shapes political disclosure and decision making. One view is that political communication can be seen as interaction between different groups that influence political decision making such as a three-way discussion between political elites (politicians), the media (print and broadcast), as well as the average voting public. Another view distrusts American political communication, perceiving it to be about propaganda, distortion, exaggeration and half-truths; ‘in an attempt to unethically manipulate and influence voters in elections’ (Tuman 2007).

Howard (2006) found that political communication also consists of a number of digital media components, categorised under the term *hypermedia*, this includes email, websites and news which carry political information. This form of digital media is however further developing into more multimedia interactive and user friendly formats which allow a more customised or personal feel to such forms of communication by political organisations. This includes online petitions, candidate websites of political office bearers and relational databases (Howard 2006).

In the past political organisations have depended on traditional mass media to communicate their message to their stakeholders. This has had limitations in terms of feedback, engagement and interaction; the variety in ‘voices’ was also limited (Boeder 2014). The internet has however introduced a digital platform in which political parties now also utilise. This digital platform allows a two-way form of feedback where the sender
sends a message to the recipient and the recipient is now able to reply to the sender of the message instantly which allows stakeholders to interact and engage with political parties, ‘there is little question that the internet has increased opportunities for access between voters and their elected representatives’ (Economist 2011).

The public sphere is the ‘space’ in which political organisations and its stakeholders can communicate in. Political party stakeholders include their party supporters who will vote for that party, the media, potential voters, foreign and local investors, government, the business sector, NGOs, churches etc. According to Dahlgren (2005) a functioning public sphere is a constellation of communicative spaces in society that permit the circulation of information, ideas, debates and the formation of political will (i.e., public opinion).

Habermas describes the public sphere as something which ‘transcends the physical appearances as an abstract forum for dialogue and ideology-free public opinion, a lively debate on multiple levels within society’ (Boeder 2005). These ‘spaces’ that are created via the internet therefore play a key role in establishing communication links between ordinary citizens and politicians aka the public sphere, which acts as a medium for citizen concerns to be expressed and debates to take place. The internet therefore acts as an online platform for two-way communication and can be found in the form of discussion groups, chat rooms, alternative journalism, civic organisations, NGOs, grassroots issue-advocacy sites (cf. Berman & Mulligan 2003; Bennett 2003b), and voter education sites (Levine 2003). According to Habermas (1989) the public sphere in election campaigns creates a space in which citizens can come together and engage in ‘rational-critical debate’ so as to become informed, contribute to political discourse and reach consensus expressed in the form of ‘public opinion’.

Social media as part of the public sphere has therefore become an online space for members of the public to engage with one another and with politicians on matters that are of concern to them. Fernback and Thompson (1995) argue that the notion of an online public sphere has the potential to increase the feeling of involvement as opposed to encouraging participation from online or virtual communities, ‘It seems most likely that the virtual public sphere brought about by [computer–mediated communication] will serve a cathartic role, allowing the public to feel involved rather than to advance actual participation.’
Rheingold (1998) however emphasises the importance of active participation, ‘When we are called to action through the virtual community, we need to keep in mind how much depends on whether we simply ‘feel involved’ or whether we take the steps to actually participate in the lives of our neighbours, and the civic life of our communities.’ According to Trammell, et al., (2006) online campaign has moved from one way communication through providing information about the candidate to becoming engaging and interactive. Gilpin, et al., (2010) is of the opinion that organisation should provide space for interaction or the constituency engage with each other with minimum restriction.

Rheingold (1993) was able to foresee the potential that technology and telecommunications would one day have, ‘Telecommunications gives certain people access to means of influencing certain other people’s thoughts and perceptions, and that access — who has it and who doesn’t have it — is intimately connected with political power. Whoever gains the political edge on this technology will be able to use the technology to consolidate power.’ Rheingold further states that technology and the way it is used to communicate, has democratising potential (Rheingold 1993). Habermas describes the public sphere as ‘part of the bedrock of liberal democracies’ (2006: 412). In the 2014 South African General Elections, political parties used social media as a means of engaging with their party supporters and to win over potential voters namely those voting for the first time. The 2014 national elections in South Africa has also been named ‘SA’s first digital elections’ (Apurimac Media 2014). Technology has greatly expanded choices, with a wealth of sources and channels available to people (Bennett & Iyengar 2008).

2.3 Theoretical Framework

2.3.1 Stakeholder Engagement Theory

Freeman defines a stakeholder as ‘any group or individual who can affect or who is affected by the achievement of the firm’s objectives’ (1984: 25) in this case it is the objectives of a political party. Stakeholder Theory Development is divided into: (1) defining the stakeholder concept and (2) classifying stakeholders into categories that provide an understanding of individual stakeholder relationships. According to Donaldson (1995) a challenge faced in stakeholder analysis has been the construction of a universally accepted definition of the term ‘stake’. Hill and Jones define stakeholders as constituents who have a legitimate claim on the organisation (1992: 133). Clarkson (1995) views stakeholders as risk-bearers and argues that a stakeholder has some form of capital,
either financial or human, at risk and, therefore, has something to lose or gain depending on an organisation’s behaviour. However the sharing of content and information online and the encouragement to share it freely with others is a strategy that can be used to build relationships with stakeholders. In Stakeholder Engagement Theory the relationship with these stakeholders needs to be maintained and nurtured. Increasing the quality of stakeholder relationships, encouraging them to buy into an organisation’s vision, along with getting stakeholder’s perspectives so that an organisation can continue to evolve, are all vitally important elements of public relations (Edelman 2012). There are different methods in which organisations can engage with stakeholders using social media and implement aspects of Excellence Theory. Stakeholder Theory is based on the notion that for an organisation to be effective, it must act in a manner that solves problems and satisfies the goals of stakeholders as well as of management (Grunig 2008). If the organisation acts otherwise, stakeholders may pressurise the organisation to change or will oppose it in such a way that adds costs and risk to organisational policies and decisions.

2.3.2 Excellence Theory

Grunig and Hunt (2001) identified Excellence Theory as a four part model of public relations communication strategies which includes press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetric communication, and two-way symmetric communication (Tench & Yeomans 2009: 150). Grunig’s Excellence Theory is based on a 15-year study of best practices in communication management. The general theory of public relations under-which this study falls, incorporates theories of publics, public relations and strategic management, models of public relations, evaluation of public relations, employee communication, public relations roles, gender, diversity, power, activism, ethics and social responsibility, and global public relations (Public Relations Evaluation) (Grunig 2008). Grunig’s Theory (2001) maintains Excellence Theory to be the most effective as a practiced two-way symmetrical communication model by excellent public relations departments. Tench and Yeomans (2009:151), however, dispute this model as being too idealistic and impossible to carry out in reality. They substantiate this by stating that organisations choose who they aim their communication at as well as the contents of it (Tench & Yeomans 2009:151). Ambler and Wilson (1995) found that firms do not respond to each stakeholder individually; but rather to the interaction of multiple influences from its stakeholder pool. Technology also allows for a platform in which communication is no longer just one way but occurs as two-way symmetrical communication which lets
stakeholders engage and participate in conversations with an organisation in which it has an interest in. Grunig’s Excellence Theory states that ‘organisations must communicate symmetrically with publics taking the interests of both the organisation and publics into account to cultivate high-quality, long-term relationships with them’ (Grunig 2008).

2.4 Agenda-setting
In 1922 Walter Lippmann posed the idea that the mass media shapes public perception with images. Lippmann also argued that the press serves as a window on the distant political world that shapes our political beliefs (Lippmann 1922). Unbeknown to him at the time that this idea would today be developed into a theory known as Agenda-setting. McCombs and Shaw (1972) define agenda-setting as the media’s emphasis on certain issues which makes its audience attach importance on those issues. Agenda-setting Theory is therefore established on the notion that the media plays an influential role on how the public perceive certain issues and formulate their perceptions, according to issues that the media deem most important. Rogers and Dearing (1988) define agenda-setting as a process through which the mass media communicate the relative importance of various issues and events to the public. Iyengar and Kinder (2010) state that agenda-setting can influence voting behaviour. The media plays a powerful role in the amount of coverage it gives to an issue which often comes to mind first for an individual when asked what the most pertinent issues facing a country at that point in time are. Framing which is linked to agenda-setting refers to how the news media characterise an issue that influences the audiences’ perception of the issue (Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007; Tewksbury & Scheufele 2009).

2.5 Polling
The media and political parties are increasingly making use of tracking polls to gauge voter views or preferences over time (Newman & Vercic 2002). Polling forms an integral part of political consulting and can provide an approximate outcome of results in political elections. Pollsters will use methods of tracking by following political party activity and monitoring voter support by conducting public surveys and polls online or face to face. Traugott and Lavrakas (2008) define a poll as ‘literally a counting of heads’ and a pollster as ‘a person who conducts polls’. Polls also play a significant role in news media coverage during and leading up to an election year.
Cape Town-based research company, Pondering Panda, conducted several surveys over the 2014 South African General Elections period. The surveys include the voting opinion of the South African youth aka the born free generation and their take on whether they would vote, who they would vote for and what they thought the main issues in society were and how these issues were being tackled. Polls are also used to gauge voter support, predict possible election results and outcomes and inform a political party about the voter support for the opposition parties. Both random and specifically selected groups of people were asked to be part of surveys which are meant to represent the overall view of a select group in society. Advocates of online polling point out that the internet is a particularly convenient way of securing voters opinions (Sherman & Schiffman 2002). This information is both useful and beneficial to political parties in selecting and driving their key messages in an election campaign. At the same time the population that form part of the political survey may also be ‘interested in determining whether their own views are being reflected in what politicians are saying’ (Sherman & Schiffman 2002).

DA Gauteng Premier candidate Mmusi Maimane, stated in an opinion piece published by the Daily Maverick newspaper online and in reference to the Democratic Alliance Ayisafani tv advert which was released on YouTube, that ‘polls tell us the election will be extremely close…the overwhelming response to the Ayisafani campaign was steadily sending the polls in the direction of change’ (Daily Maverick 2014). The traditional news media naturally see the internet as a significant opportunity to secure more news content for their traditional audiences, as well as a new opportunity for the many individuals who visit their websites to secure the results of a political poll or some other form of political information (Sherman & Schiffman 2002).

However there are also disadvantages to using polls to predict an outcome such as swing votes where voters are convinced to vote differently on the day due to a promise from a politician or when a political party does something which upsets the voter. Potential voters who feel disgruntled by their current government often due to lack of service delivery, job opportunity and corruption will choose to not vote at all as in the case of South Africa’s ‘Vote no’ campaign, led by Former Intelligence Minister Ronnie Kasrils and supported by former political veterans. The campaign called on South Africans to go to the polls on May 7 and cast a ‘protest vote against the ANC by voting for another party to send a warning or to spoil their vote if no party represented their interests’ (Mail & Guardian 2014). This form of apathy can lead to unreliable polling outcomes prior to an election. Chin (2001) states
that ‘adding to the ‘mess’ of predicting the outcome of a political race is the large number of potential American voters who are either ‘apathetic’ or ‘undecided’. This behaviour can cause expected outcomes to fluctuate and result in an inaccurate projection in media reporting. Another disadvantage of using polls is that polls distort actual political outcomes by creating a misguided ‘bandwagon effect’ which encourages potential voters to vote for the most popular candidate (based on poll results), instead of the best candidate (Newman 1994). If a candidate is a frontrunner he/she will be perceived as a winner and receive more press coverage, while the perceived ‘loser’ is viewed negatively and generally receive less media attention (Benedetto & Drinkard 2001).

2.6 Political Web Campaigning
Empirical studies of party and pressure group activity online has revealed a number of uses for new ICTs (Gibson & Ward 2000a and 2000b); this includes using them as an ICT administrative tool for storing or providing information such as a website or intranet that is used as a library or archive to provide members and citizens with information. This can have both financial and administrative implications whereby requests can be directed to and through the website. Technology can be used to link different departments within an organisation more effectively, the flow of information can be communicated much faster, and websites can act as a ‘one stop shop’ for the public by providing links to all the constituent parts of an organisation. Martin and Geiger (1999) found that new ICTs can be used for a variety of campaigning or marketing purposes. Many studies have noted the tendency of political organisations to use the sites for advertising and propaganda and some have likened sites to electronic billboards (Roper 1999). Political organisations also use database technology to canvass and target specific voters in marginal constituencies with direct mail marketing and fundraising activities. Previous studies however show that political organisations use of new web technology has been to incorporate it into existing administrative, campaign or mobilisation strategies. Many political parties and groups have yet to develop proactive web strategies (Gibson & Ward 2000b).

The growing use and creation of organisational websites, indicates the growing need for political organisations to have an online presence and to communicate with its stakeholders. According to Stanyer (2006) most parties now consider a website a necessary tool for campaigning. Foot and Schneider (2006) state that ‘with the integration of the Internet into every aspect of society, the web has become a realm in which it is necessary for all kinds of political actors to have a presence – at least in order to be

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credible among the growing population of Internet users…’ The intention behind a political organisation website should however have a clear purpose whether this is to inform on policies, educate, create awareness or fundraise and it should be measured against whether it can influence perceptions of voters and whether any of the content is covered in the media and how it is portrayed.

According to Perloff (2014) there are seven main characteristics of Presidential campaigns: Campaigns try to cultivate images. They are candidate-centred and use image-oriented messages as opposed to solely focussing on the party. Campaigns are highly personalised whereby candidates share their personal lives which can be both beneficial and a drawback for the electorate. Campaigns aim for favourable stories in the news media, candidates focus on cultivating favourable visual images and campaigns are organised around online technologies such as websites, YouTube and social media. Trammel et al. (2006) found that candidate websites ‘have evolved from mere ‘brochure-ware’ to more engaging and interactive tools to inform and mobilise prospective voters and the media.’ Aside from political organisation websites, political party candidate websites are also popular as an ‘add-on’ to the main political organisation party website especially during election campaign periods to promote a presidential or premier candidate. Candidate websites typically share content, messaging and branding strategies and provide two distinct categories of engagement which includes increased horizontal communication among people and increased vertical communication between citizens and their political elite (Stromer-Galley 2000).

According to Rackaway (2007) the role of technology for the candidates/campaigns is to (1) build community, (2) watch and listen as the campaign unfolds, (3) mobilise and (4) identify voters. Foot and Schneider (2006), divide the online strategies of campaigns into four categories: informing, involving, connecting, and mobilising. Foot and Schneider (2006) in their comparative analysis of US candidate websites from 1998-2004 identified six indicators of informing activity, seventeen indicators of connecting activity, ten indicators of involving activity and four indicators of mobilising activity (Table 2.5.a).
According to Gibson and Ward (2000), political party websites have five basic goals which include information provision on what the party's identity and policies are, campaigning purposes in an attempt by political parties to recruit voters. Political party websites are also used as a resource generator such as for funding and registering new members, for networking and building relationships within the party and with external stakeholders through discussion applications and hyperlinks. Political party websites are also used to promote participation by encouraging people to engage in the political process by raising awareness of events and issues and offering opportunities for interactive communication.

The internet is used for different purposes and political parties can use it as a platform to reach out to potential voters, the media and those looking for more information about the party. The wealth of information that is freely available online can be accessed and retrieved quickly which allows opportunities for engagement with the content and the internet user. Research however shows that the available functions are not being utilised and the Internet is primarily used by political parties for information dissemination (Jackson 2007). Gibson and Ward (2000) developed a framework that used 43 evaluation criteria upon which the functionality and delivery of websites is based. Functionality looks at the broad direction and type of information and communication flow (ICF). The direction of the
information could be upward (from organisation to user), downward (from user to organisation) and lateral (outwards from the organisation to other bodies, or inwards to structures within the organisation). Two-way or interactive ICFs are characterised by input from users or from the organisation with either side expecting a response from the other. The delivery component of the framework examines the effectiveness with which the functionality is delivered (SAJIM 2010). The criteria used to evaluate delivery are focused on data retrieval and presentation, which looks specifically at navigability, accessibility, freshness and visibility.

The Gibson et al. (2003) framework has been used in previous studies such as for a comparative study on Internet campaigning in the USA and UK and a study of political party websites used in the 2006 Italian election; Vaccari’s (2008) evaluation used three main groupings of variables which includes: user- and party-initiated information supplied, participation that includes online interaction and resource mobilisation as well as professionalism in terms of multimedia usage, accessibility, update frequency and accessibility. This study confirmed the findings of earlier studies, that party websites are still used mainly for information exchange rather than establishing a participatory environment.

Approximately only one in ten South Africans has access to the internet (Lefko-Everett 2009). However, this is still a significant proportion of the people who vote (Lusoli 2005; News24 2008). Whilst most campaigning will continue to utilise traditional media, such as television and print, there is a growing opportunity for South African political parties to use electronic media to reach certain groups of supporters (Lefko-Everett 2009). An exploratory study conducted on the 2009 elections examined how effectively South African political parties use the Internet. The study used the adapted coding scheme proposed by Gibson et al. (2003) to conduct content analysis focused on the functionality and design of the political party websites. A look at the functions available online provided insight into whether the channel was used to reach a wide audience, provide information quickly and cost effectively, and whether or not it was used as a way of interacting with voters. The usefulness of the website depended on the effectiveness of the delivery of the functionality as the content counted for little if the target audience couldn’t use the information. The study found that despite the low figures of Internet access in South Africa, 72.5% of the political parties that contested the 2009 elections had websites.
According to Gibson et al. (2003), political parties do not consider the Internet as an important campaign tool, but perceive it as a one-way information provision tool and, therefore, do not exploit the full capability of the communication channel that it offers. The 2009 study confirmed this finding. Most South African political parties use their websites solely for information purposes as opposed to encouraging participation in the political process via the Internet. The Internet can however be used as a two-way form of communication between political parties and online users such as through the use of political party websites, forums, email, newsletters and social media fora. Through these online features online users who are supporters of the political party can voice their concerns, it is then the responsibility of the party to listen and become aware of what societal issues are being raised online. The Internet can be empowering and offer mechanisms for ordinary people to make their voices known (Perloff 2014: 42). The DA was found to have made the most of the opportunities offered by the Internet to communicate with voters. Previous research has examined the possibility that the Internet provides an opportunity for equalised competition between parties regardless of party size or resources available (Gibson & Ward 2002).

2.7 Lessons from Obama

The 2008 Obama presidential campaign used several of the website strategies Foot and Schneider (2006) mention in their comparative analysis of US candidate websites. Barack Obama relied primarily on social media and used an array of new, incredibly quick and cheap internet tools, such as email, social networks and Twitter to run a grassroots campaign that contacted individual voters in personalised encounters on a near daily basis (Grabber 2010). Screenshot 2.6 displays the design and layout of the barackobama.com website as it looked in 2008. The URL of the website www.barackobama.com reveals that it is candidate focussed as Barack Obama was the presidential candidate for the democrats in the US in 2008. Western democracies now share an emphasis on personalised, candidate-focussed campaigns, reliance of news media and social networking technologies (Swanson & Mancini 1996).

Obama used the Internet to develop personal relationships with supporters, and was elected for reasons beyond traditional things such as ‘experience’ or ‘party affiliation’ (Alexandrova 2010). In this way Obama built relationships with citizens and connected with them on a personal level he also utilised the power of ‘organisation’ on his website to mobilise ordinary American citizens to fundraise for his presidential campaign by making it
about them and for them and not about himself therefore involving them in the campaign. According to Dreier (2009) Obama’s Campaign method was *organising*, an action that had been driving the US for ages. This method of organising was done through building communities online which assisted Obama to establish relationships with online users who then took the act of organising further, through activities such as fundraising. His campaign was then established from grassroots level up. This also gave Obama the upper hand over his opponents. Obama represented change as he became the first black American President. He also placed a lot of emphasis on bringing about change in his 2008 election campaign with the initial slogan as ‘Change we Can Believe in’ which was later edited to ‘Change We Need’. The majority of those who supported Barack Obama reproduced it into ‘need for change’. There were people who voted for his ‘character,’ those who ‘agree with his policy,’ and those who heard his call for ‘hope and unity’ (Alexandrova 2010). Obama focused on words such as ‘hope’, ‘progress’ and ‘unity’ in his campaign. In a Harvard study conducted in 2008, which asked for the main reason young people supported their candidates the study revealed that respondents named ‘character’ over ‘experience’ which suggests he became an individual for them, not just a distant politician (Alexandrova 2010).

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**Screenshot 2.6.a:** The design and layout of the official 2008 barackobama.com website

‘I’m asking you to believe. Not just in my ability to bring about real change in Washington… I’m asking you to believe in yours.’ – President Barack Obama

The layout design of the 2008 Obama Presidential candidate website includes a website banner with the political organisation logo, a photo of the candidate elect and a direct quote from the candidate. In terms of informing and connecting with voters there is also a
section in which the website user can find out more about the candidate by clicking on ‘Meet Barack Obama’. Finkelpearl (2008) suggests that for candidates the web works because key site elements appear in consistent locations across all well-designed sites. The word ‘Believe’ is capitalised and bolded. The wording used in the quote includes the word ‘change’ and overall the wording used on the website is about the people which includes words such as ‘together’, ‘we’, ‘you’, ‘your’ and ‘get involved’. An alternative slogan Obama used in his campaign was ‘Yes we can’ as seen in screenshot 1 and he thanks his supporters from New Hampshire. He uses words such as ‘build’, ‘momentum’, ‘win’, ‘thank you’ which triggers positive feedback that encourages people to participate and be part of the elections to support him by running their own fundraisers for his campaign and being acknowledged for it by posting their efforts onto citizen created websites such as mybarackobama.com and Obama attributed blogs linked to the main www.barackobama.com website. Again this is another effort to connect with voters and at the same time involve them in the election campaign.

Obama strategically aimed his campaign at the youth which played a major role in his victory because it was not based on his experience, but rather his character that saw him as a favourite. In the 2008 US Elections, President Barack Obama largely depended on the Internet and an extraordinary social movement which enabled him to come to power and youth were the engine of his victory (Harfoush 2009). He used social media namely Facebook and Twitter to connect personally with his voters and was seen as a ‘nice guy’ that everyone liked he was charming, intelligent and represented positive change. In the 2008 Obama campaign it was the youth vote that boosted Obama’s supporter base to win the elections. ‘Volunteering in record numbers, young people became the super force of the Obama camp, sustaining and energising what became one of the biggest grassroots movements for a presidential campaign ever seen,’ pronounced The Nation after the elections (Rigza 2008). The upward looking image of Barack Obama on the 2008 website, was also used in the Hope and Progress poster used in the 2008 Obama campaign (See screenshot 2.6.b). The image was based on an original photo taken by Associated Press (AP) and designed by Shepard Fairey. The upward look represents progression, hope and a look towards a bright future.
Obama’s team made use of cross-platforms to develop an integrated media campaign which included the use of several digital platforms. His campaign included the use of social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Reddit and YouTube as well as a candidate website. Several of his supporters created websites in support of Obama’s presidential campaign. The Obama 2008 campaign made use of live video streaming service, YouTube. According to Edelman (2009) Obama had four times as many YouTube viewers as his political opponent John McCain had. YouTube essentially provided the campaign with free advertising and delivered a double bang for the buck when ads were covered by the mainstream media (Johnson 2011). Obama also had more than three million Facebook friends (Edelman 2009). Several of his supporters on Facebook used the tools offered by the social media platform to spread the message that supported his candidacy. For instance, more than 900 000 people joined the ‘One Million Strong for Obama’ group on Facebook and nearly every college in America created Facebook groups in support of Obama. The campaign utilised the participation on these networks to reinforce messages across platforms and create as many touch points as possible. His campaign consisted of strong messaging and strong branding that was executed across different channels. People went on Facebook, MySpace, and other social networks and got the same brand as people who received it on TV and radio. It was so powerful because it was consistent across all media.

2.8 Essential social media campaign tools for politicians and news media
Social media is a communal activity which occurs in the online space. Communication with other individuals online is done using an alias, nickname or with the user’s actual name. The use of an alias allows users to comment on issues anonymously; however anonymity can lead to ‘flame wars’ whereby the user makes negative comments and avoids taking responsibility for them. The use of the user’s real name makes the comment more credible and helps to identify and legitimatise the user. Social media allows for the sharing of information freely with other users; by clicking on a post on Facebook for instance, the
user will be taken directly to the news story. Therefore it allows for many sources of news and data to be used simultaneously. This platform also allows the media to use, modify and reorganise content that has been gathered from other sources (Suomen Toivo Think Tank 2011).

Social media is in the public domain therefore what was previously thought of as private is now no longer the case. Gossip stories can be easily spread online and can appear as ‘trends’ on sites such as Twitter. Sometimes public figures are quoted out of context which can be damaging to the person’s reputation. There are risks and opportunities inherent in the more complex uncontrolled communication environment of social media (Sorrell 2008:4). In terms of the online reputation management of an organisation, the messages it communicates publicly and the behaviour of the organisation as a whole will determine the way in which it is perceived by its audience. Employees also act as brand ambassadors for the organisation by posting who they work for, what their views are on the party’s stance on certain issues even if their views oppose those of the party they are still accountable for what they say because of their work association. Several theorists such as de Chernatony (2001), Harris and de Chernatony (2001), Hatch and Schultz (2001), Wilson (2001) and Balmer and Soenen (1999), argue that ‘employees are key to building relationships with all the company’s stakeholders as well as contributing to the meaning of the brand’ (Hatch & Schultz 2001). Furthermore social media has become so easily accessible and instant that the rate at which messages are posted and shared can happen within seconds. Therefore if a damaging post has been made about a political organisation, maybe a negative comment by an unhappy voter i.e. poor service delivery, then other social media users can further incite the negative comment with badmouthing the party with complaints on the public platform. Phillips and Young state that your brand is no stronger than your reputation and will increasingly depend on what comes up when you are Googled (2009 p157). The media which follows these users and political party social media accounts can then use the online public comments for a news article which can damage the image and reputation of the political party. Although some political parties may believe that all PR (public relations) whether good or bad is in fact still good for the party as it counts for media exposure for them.

The rapid rate at which the uploading and sharing of news and information online takes place, can be both positive and negative. An example of a positive may be when a political party exposes corrupt activity by a political leader of the ruling party, while at the same
time that leader might be canvassing for a higher political position. The negative is that inaccurate information can be shared without first confirming the facts. Sometimes important information could be missed because of the speed at which things are shared. Open source software or online sources which can be edited by anyone is not attributed to a particular source therefore if there are inaccuracies on the website such as Wikipedia, no one can be held accountable because of its many editors and contributors (Suomen Toivo Think Tank 2011).

2.9 Social media as a form of democratisation

The role of social media in democratisation is categorised under two different views. One view is that the role of social media is ‘revolutionary’ as it empowers people living in non-democratic societies. The second view is to minimise the role of social media (Jebril et.al. 2013). On the other hand a more sceptical approach regarding the role of social media is referred to as contextualism. This approach uses comparative research to emphasise the impact that political, social, and economic variations have on the role of the social media in collective action (Wolfsfeld et al. 2013: 4). Social media is also not viewed as the ‘main cause’ of such complex processes, nor are they seen as completely uninfluential (Comunello and Anzera 2012: 453). The uprisings in the Arab world have been labelled as the ‘Twitter Revolutions’ or ‘Facebook Revolutions’ as a result of the role played by these social media tools in the coordination of mass protests, communication of real-time images and up-to-date information, and for their appeal to the international community, foreign civil societies, and diasporas (Cottle 2011; Barkai 2012; Lim 2012).

Leading up to the 2014 South African General Elections, Apurimac Media conducted research from 1 March – 18 April 2014 on the social media accounts of the Democratic Alliance. The study looked at the number of Facebook fans and Twitter followers the party had as well as the number of tweets made by the party over this same period. South Africa has an estimated 9,4 million active Facebook users and 5,5 million Twitter users (Research and Markets 2013).
Table 2.8.a indicates the levels of growth experienced by the DA between 1 March – 18 April 2014 in terms of Facebook fans and Twitter followers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE RANGE</th>
<th>FACEBOOK</th>
<th>TWITTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 7 March</td>
<td>66,674</td>
<td>65,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 – 14 March</td>
<td>71,377</td>
<td>67,263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 – 21 March</td>
<td>75,235</td>
<td>68,808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 – 28 March</td>
<td>77,140</td>
<td>69,629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 March – 4 April</td>
<td>80,831</td>
<td>70,949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 11 April</td>
<td>83,897</td>
<td>72,294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 – 18 April</td>
<td>86,946</td>
<td>73,845</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2.8.b indicates the number of Twitter tweets per week by the DA from 1 March – 18 April 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE RANGE</th>
<th>TWITTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 7 March</td>
<td>Over 100 tweets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 – 14 March</td>
<td>Over 100 tweets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 – 21 March</td>
<td>Over 100 tweets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 – 28 March</td>
<td>Over 100 tweets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 March – 4 April</td>
<td>Over 100 tweets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 11 April</td>
<td>634 tweets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 – 18 April</td>
<td>734 tweets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Apurimac research, political candidate and DA party leader Helen Zille posted 7.5 tweets an hour, or one tweet every 8 minutes, per day for a 12-hour day in the third week of April on her personal Twitter account.

2.10 Social media as interactive communication

Social media has enabled its users particularly organisations to interact with their clients and stakeholders beyond one-way asymmetrical communication. Organisations now have the option of reaching out to their stakeholders through features such as online forums, social media fora, instant messaging and video. In addition to this, these features can be accessed from anywhere in the world as long as the user has a computer or electronic device that has an internet connection and access to those features. Social media enables professionals to maintain ongoing, quality relationships with influencers, media, customers and partners regardless of where they are (Perkett 2010). Organisations can use social
media to build, develop and maintain these relationships with their stakeholders on an ongoing long-term basis by using these communication channels to constantly keep them updated, engage them and inform them on what is happening within the organisation and how it will affect the stakeholder. Social media helps PR executives to build more new relationships across a wider landscape and in a sustainable fashion never before possible (Perkett 2010). Thus social media could be changing the way public relations has traditionally been done and hence transform the way organisations socially engage with their stakeholders. Macnamara (2010) states that industry reports and statements suggest that public relations practitioners are engaging in use of social media and that these interactive applications are helping realise the two-way symmetrical model of communication recommended in *Excellence Theory*’ (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig 1995; Grunig & Grunig 1992; Grunig, Grunig & Dozier 2002).


Carpentier (2007), McMillan (2002: 166-172) and Szuprowicz (1995) discuss three levels of interactivity in relation to computer mediated communication. This includes user-to-system interactivity, user-to-documents interactivity, and user-to-user interactivity. User-to-system interactivity involves the clicking of a mouse and accessing menus. User-to-documents interactivity allows the user access to edit and create content other than just consuming content. User-to-user interactivity is seen to be most significant in Web 2.0 and allows for interaction between different users such as communicating between one another. Megan Boler states that ‘the Web has always been about voice and conversation’ she cites Web founder Tim Berners-Lee who said the Web was never intended to be about delivering content to passive audiences, but to be about ‘shared creativity’ (2008: 39). Human-to-human and human-to-content level is seen as ‘open interactivity’ as it involves *conversation, collaboration, and co-creativity* which harnesses collective intelligence (Macnamara 2010a: 38-39). Social media on this level aligns closely with Excellence Theory in public relations as outlined by  Grunig and Grunig (1995); Grunig and Grunig (1992); and Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002) and dialogic models of public relations as discussed Kent and Taylor (2002) and others.
2.11 Summary and Conclusions

The success of an organisation is largely dependent on its relationships with its stakeholders who in turn act as ‘partners’ to the organisation in which they have an interest in. As described by Freeman (1984) that a stakeholder is any group or individual who can affect or who is affected by the achievement of an organisation’s objectives. The literature review illustrates the variety of digital platforms that are available on social media and via webpages and the many uses for them. These digital platforms allow for different ways in which organisations can communicate with their stakeholders and allow for this to be a symmetrical ‘two-way street’ in which both can communicate with each other in a symmetrical way as opposed to solely one-way and asymmetrical communication, with the organisation being the only or predominant communicator. Grunig (2009) states that two-way symmetrical public relations uses research, listening and dialogue to manage conflict and cultivate relationships with both internal and external publics more than one-way and asymmetrical communication. Stakeholders can also pose as a risk to an organisation that it has a stake in by what it says about the organisation or what it can do to it in terms of lobbying against an action taken by the organisation that it disapproves of or if it is a financial backer it can influence the management decisions or be influenced by them. As Clarkson (1995) states that stakeholders are risk-bearers whether financial or human, it has something to lose or gain depending on an organisation’s behaviour.

A successful online political campaign such as the 2008 Obama website take advantage of Foot and Schneider’s (2006) online strategies of campaigns using a party political website which acts to inform, involve, connect, and mobilise. In effect the role of the media in influencing a political party’s key messaging to its stakeholders also sets the agenda of what makes news and thus what can inform stakeholders.
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction
Chapter three looks into the research methods used in this study, this includes research design, population sampling and data analysis. The research methods included a qualitative content analysis of information via the internet and relevant party political websites and social media fora. According to Bryman (2004) qualitative content analysis is ‘probably the most prevalent approach to the qualitative analysis of documents’ and ‘comprises a searching-out of underlying themes in the materials being analysed’ (p392). A single case study was conducted on the Democratic Alliance social media strategy in the 2014 South African General Elections through content analysis. According to Yin (2003a: 2) ‘the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena’ as ‘the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events.’

3.2 Research Design
According to Welman and Mitchell (2005:52) the research design is the plan according to which we obtain participants (subjects) and collect information from them. The research design therefore acts as a blueprint of how the research will be conducted i.e. what will be done with the participants in order to reach a conclusion that answers the research problem. Huysamen in de Vos et al. (2005:132) substantiates this definition as the plan or blueprint according to which data are collected to investigate the research hypotheses or question in the most economical manner. Kerlinger (1986:279) in Kumar (2005) defines research design as a plan, structure and strategy or investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions and problems. According to Babbie and Mouton (2002:75) research design focuses on the end-product, i.e. what kind of study will be conducted and what results does it aim to achieve, it includes the research problem and related research questions. It also looks at what type of evidence is needed to address the research questions adequately. The research design therefore guides the research methodology that will be used in a study.

3.3 Research Methodology
Research methodology focuses on the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used in a study. It examines data collection or sampling, and focuses on the individual steps in the research process and the most objective procedures that will be
used (Babbie & Mouton 2002: 75). There are two types of research methods that exist qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative research methods are done through unobtrusive research via texts and other ‘cultural artifacts’. Qualitative design is purposive or deals with theoretical sampling. It allows for great depth of analysis of qualitative data. The research instrument can be adjusted as the research progresses and the focus is on validity. The coding process is also more open and focus is on how meaning is constructed (Stoddart 2003). Quantitative research methods deal with ‘counting’ and numerical data with a quantitative, experimental or empiricist view. Theorists that identify with quantitative research methods include Newton, Locke, Comte and Mill (Cresswell 2003).

A content analysis has several advantages. It is a transparent research method often referred to as an objective research method of analysis. When conducting a study it allows for a longitudinal analysis with relative ease as the researcher can track changes in frequency over time (Warde 1997, Bligh et al. 2004) this can be for a long or a short time span. Content analysis is also referred to as an unobtrusive method, a term devised by Webb et al. (1996) in Bryman (2004) that refers to a method that does not entail participants in a study having to take the researcher into account and is thus a non-reactive method. In the case of historical documents, such as newspaper articles, there will be no reactive effect although in this study the comments made by online social media users could have a reactive effect had this been a live forum debate and the comments were then analysed which would also require ethics clearance however this was not the case in this study. Ethical scrutiny was also not necessary in this study. Content analysis is a flexible method that can be applied to different types of unstructured textual information. Content analysis is also useful to generate information where it is difficult to gain access to social groups Bryman (2004).

The disadvantages of content analysis is that the information is only as good as the documents on which the researcher analyses. Scott (1990) in Bryman (2004) recommends assessing documents in terms of authenticity, credibility and representativeness (whether the document in question represents sufficiently all possible relevant documents). Using content analysis it is difficult to determine the ‘why’ questions of what is being analysed. Speculations can be made on answers but then this is only speculation. Content analysis studies are often regards as too theoretical with emphasis given to what is measurable as opposed to what is most significant or important. Although Fenton et al. (1998) conducted their content analysis on the importance of studying the mass communication process
from inception to reception and the importance of power and contestation within that process Bryman (2004).

Case studies seem to be the preferred strategy when ‘how or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin 1981: 59, 2003a: 2, 5-10). Hartley states that case study research ‘consists of a detailed investigation, often with data collected over a period of time, of phenomena, within their context,’ with the aim being ‘to provide an analysis of the context and processes which illuminate the theoretical issues being studied’ (2004: 323). Case studies also have an important function in generating hypotheses and building theory (cf. e.g. Eisenhardt 1989; Hartley 1994: 211; Hartley 2004: 325). Yin (2003a: 13-14) offers a more technical definition of case studies. He states that a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis’. [15] A case study as a research strategy comprises an all-encompassing method, which means that a number of methods may be used—either qualitative, quantitative or both (cf. e.g. Hartley 2004: 324; Yin 2003a: 14-15). A case study research design can also be used with other research strategies to address related research questions in different phases of a research project, and yet a further strategy would be to start with exploratory case study research and then to test the emerging findings in wider survey-based research (Hartley 1994: 215, 2004: 326-327). [16]

3.3.1 Research methodology adopted in this study
The research methods adopted in this study involved a case study approach conducted on the Democratic Alliance social media strategy and website use, by analysing the information that was available online. The second research method involved a content analysis of relevant information via the internet. Holsti (1969) defines content analysis as ‘any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics and messages.’ Thus, in this study certain trends and messages made by online users of social media and online video fora was identified in the comments fora aka
the online public sphere. Several messages made by users appeared to be in support of similar topics such as that the ANC is no longer the same as before and is not the ANC of Mandela, other topics included how corruption has become rife in South Africa and that positive change was needed. Therefore, content analysis acts as a useful means of identifying and quantifying certain behaviours and trends in research studies. Content analysis as a research method is a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena (Krippendorff 1980, Downe-Wamboldt 1992, Sandelowski 1995).

3.4 Population and Sampling
A population can be defined as the totality of all subjects that conform to a set of specifications, comprising the entire group of persons that is of interest to the researcher and to whom the research results can be generalised (Polit & Hungler 1999: 43, 232). The research was conducted using relevant political websites and social media with a focus on political communication. The population was the Democratic Alliance national party political website for 2014 www.da.org.za, relevant DA candidate websites www.maimane.com, www.lookingforwardto.co.za, the DA national Facebook Page, National Twitter account and Twitter account as well as its YouTube Channel. Eligibility criteria specify the characteristics that people in the population must possess in order to be included in the study (Polit & Hungler 1999: 278).

A sampling frame is a list or other device used to define a researcher's population of interest. According to Lewis-Beck et al. (2004), a researcher rarely has direct access to the entire population of interest in social science research therefore a researcher must rely upon a sampling frame to represent all of the elements of the population of interest. In this study, the sampling frame is the 2014 Democratic Alliance national party political website, the DA candidate website www.maimane.com, www.lookingforwardto.co.za, the DA national Facebook Page, National Twitter account as well as its YouTube account.

3.5 Data Collection
3.5.1 Secondary data collection
Secondary analysis according to Bryman (2004) is the analysis of data by researchers who will probably not have been involved in the collection of those data, for purposes that in all likelihood were not envisaged by those responsible for the data collection. Secondary analysis concerns the analysis of quantitative (Dale et al. 1998) or qualitative data (Corti et. al. 1995).
According to Dale et al. (1998) secondary analysis consists of several advantages which include a reduction in time and costs as the data that needs to be analysed is already available, high quality data can be obtained from credible sources and offers the opportunity of longitudinal analysis. It allows for subgroup analysis on a broader scale and cross-cultural analysis. More time is given to data analysis because data collection on its own is time consuming and there are opportunities for reanalysis which can derive new interpretations and findings. Dale et al. (1998), however, states that there are limitations of secondary analysis this includes a lack of familiarity with the data as it has been collected by others. The complexity and volume of the data can be overwhelming as there is no control over data quality and sometimes while analysing secondary data the researcher may find key variables missing as the data originally gathered may have been for other purposes. Secondary analysis is thus collected by someone other than the user. This can include research reports, reference books, the Internet, government reports, government statistics, annual reports, interviews, field notes, literature reviews, and case studies.

In this study, secondary analysis was applied as the primary source of data analysis using unobtrusive measures through a content analysis of online documents, press statements, media articles, e-journals and relevant websites on the internet. This research method included an extensive review and analysis of related literature which included the Democratic Alliance national party political website for 2014 www.da.org.za which consisted of an analysis of a random selection of press statements, speeches and the SA Today e-newsletter which were published by the DA between 1 January – 7 May 2014. In total, 152 press statements, 4 speeches and 7 SA Today e-newsletters were analysed. DA candidate website www.maimane.com, www.lookingforwardto.co.za, social media pages of the DA such as its national Facebook Page, National Twitter account and its YouTube Channel were also analysed. The comments made by online users and stakeholders of the DA were analysed on these platforms. Other supporting documents retrieved online were also used this included online news and media articles and e-journals.

A case study research method was conducted on the Democratic Alliance online campaign in the 2014 South African General Elections. According to Yin there are six possible sources of evidence for case studies: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts (2003a: 83, 85-96). Yin (2003a: 8) states that the strength of a case study is in ‘its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence: documents, artifacts, interviews and observations’.  

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Table 1: The strengths and weaknesses of a case study research approach (Yin 1994: 80)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>● stable - repeated review</td>
<td>● retrievability - difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● unobtrusive - exist prior to case study</td>
<td>● biased selectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● exact - names etc.</td>
<td>● reporting bias - reflects author bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● broad coverage - extended time span</td>
<td>● access - may be blocked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival Records</td>
<td>● Same as above</td>
<td>● Same as above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● precise and quantitative</td>
<td>● privacy might inhibit access</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The case study used unobtrusive measures which did not require the participation from the subjects or for the data analysed. Webb, Campbell, Schwart, and Sechrest (1966) describe unobtrusive measures as ‘nonreactive research’ because the researcher is expected to observe or gather data without interfering in the ongoing flow of everyday events. Data collected in this manner include documents, archival records, and physical evidence. In qualitative studies documents and archival records are most frequently used. This study included the analysis of online documents such as press statements, media articles, e-journals, party political websites, social media fora, YouTube video channels and relevant politics related websites on the internet.

3.5.2 Primary data collection

Primary data is information gathered from aspects such as population, sample frame and sample. This information can be obtained through conducting surveys, focus groups and questionnaires and involves direct human input and feedback. Primary data can also be collected through observation and in-depth interviewing. Observation entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviours, and artefacts (objects) in the social setting chosen for study. Planful and self-aware observers use observation systematically (DeWalt & DeWalt 2001). Observation methods were not however used in this study.

3.6 Data Analysis

Qualitative research methods were used for this study whereby the analysis of the data was conducted through a content analysis. The following section details the differences that exist between a quantitative and a qualitative content analysis approach. Scheufele (2008) defines quantitative content analysis as an empirical method used in the social sciences primarily for analysing recorded human communication in a quantitative, systematic, and intersubjective way. This can include newspaper articles, films, advertisements, interview transcripts or observational protocols. Zeh (2005) describes quantitative content analysis as a highly selective and structured method which is based
on the principles of social science of ‘measuring and counting’. He further states that content analysis can be used to examine large amounts of media content with statistical methods. Meanwhile qualitative content analysis searches for coherent meaning structures in the text material (Scheufele 2008).

Qualitative content analysis is a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon 2005: 1278). Mayring (2000) defines this as an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step by step models, without rash quantification. In this study both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used. In the first section quantitative methods were used to count and identify keywords and phrases associated with issues that the DA focussed on in their press statements, speeches and SA Today e-newsletter. The period analysed was between 1 January and 7 May 2014. In total, this amounted to 152 press statements, 7 speeches and 7 SA Today e-newsletters. In the second section, qualitative research methods were used to specifically look at the type of content posted by the DA on its social media accounts and website. In addition, the content from the conversations and engagements between the DA and its online users was also analysed. The third section looks at the rate at which the DA posted content on its social media accounts and the number of times it posted on specific issues. This also includes which topics appeared to be most ‘popular’, had the highest activity or was most discussed amongst online users. This was measured based on the number of likes, comments and shares each post received.

Hence qualitative research methods were selected for this study as it was well-suited to the research approach needed to substantiate the research problem. In this study, a content analysis was conducted through an extensive analysis of party political websites, relevant political webpages, social media accounts and political communication documents which included e-journals and scholar studies. Press releases, e-newsletters, political speeches and news articles also formed part of this analysis. The case study focused on the Democratic Alliance social media strategy in the 2014 South African General Elections through content analysis.
3.7 Trustworthiness of the study
According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) the key criterion for good qualitative research is in the notion of trustworthiness, i.e. neutrality of its findings. A qualitative study cannot be considered transferable unless it is credible and cannot be deemed credible unless it is dependable (Babbie & Mouton 2005). Reliability is the degree to which an assessment tool produces stable and consistent results (Phelan & Wren 2005/06). The sources of the case study originated from the official organisational website of the Democratic Alliance and its national Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts. Related party political webpages and documents were also analysed. Validity refers to how well a test measures what it is purported to measure (Phelan & Wren 2005/06). The quotes and excerpts in this study have been referenced and cited in the reference section at the end of this paper.

3.8 Limitation of the study
The data collection and analysis for this study was conducted by one person therefore the results of the study could be incomplete or interpreted differently. The data was collected using a single content gathering method i.e. through content analysis. Interviews and surveys could have also assisted in bringing rich data for the study. The research involved the analysis of political communication by only one South African political organisation within South Africa. The results indicate a general overview on political communication and agenda-setting as well as a case study of the Democratic Alliance and its use of digital media in the 2014 South African General Elections. The other limitations of this study include not having ‘fresh’ or raw data to work with. No focus groups or surveys were conducted. The content analysis was a very lengthy and tedious process as the analysis of the press statements, speeches and the SA Today e-newsletter had to be copied and pasted individually onto a word document for safekeeping and counted individually. Access to the internet to obtain this information was also a challenge at times as there was either no internet connection available or the internet connection was very slow.

3.9 Ethics
Ethics clearance was not required for this study as all research was conducted using information publicly available online. Copyrighted information has been referenced and will not be used for commercial purposes.
3.10 Summary and conclusion

This chapter described the research design and methodology used in this study. Information was sourced from internet sources with reference to theorists such as Du Plooy and Holsti. A qualitative research methodology approach was selected for this study as it was well-suited to substantiating the research problem. Details were given on the population, sample frame and sample. The primary data for this study was gathered from a content analysis of information accessible publicly on the internet. This content included the analysis of the Democratic Alliance national party political website for 2014, relevant DA candidate websites www.maimane.com, www.lookingforwardto.co.za, the DA national Facebook Page, National Twitter account and Twitter feed as well as its YouTube Channel. The www.barackobama.com website, press releases and news articles also formed part of this analysis.
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction
This chapter summarises the study and gives an overview of the empirical findings. This study focuses on political communication using online communication means, with a specific focus on party political websites and social media. The case study focused on the national party political website of the Democratic Alliance, its social media accounts and the issues raised by the party in the messages it communicated during the election period.

4.2 Case Study: Democratic Alliance Social Media Strategy
The information used in this study was obtained through a content analysis of online sources, party political webpages and an analysis of selected online social media fora. The analysis of the webpages included the www.da.org.za website. The Democratic Alliance used several different forms of media to promote its 2014 election campaign online, including social media, video, television advertising and websites. The national DA website was updated on a daily basis with new stories and press statements that are issued by its public office bearers i.e. its Members of Parliament, Members of Provincial Legislatures, Party leaders in the different provinces and in different constituents and wards. The website is also updated with a weekly newsletter written by National DA party leader Helen Zille called SA Today and is distributed electronically and uploaded onto the website. Listed on the Democratic Alliance’s national website is a section on its election campaign which consists of its 2014 Election Manifesto, TV adverts, a Social Media campaign, as well as videos from the campaign itself (DA 2014). The vision of the DA is, ‘An Open, Opportunity Society For All’. The following sections are available on the DA’s current national website and consist of content used in the party’s 2014 election campaign:

- Overview – This section gives an overview of the election campaign.
- The Western Cape Story – This section details the launch of the Democratic Alliance’s Western Cape Story Campaign in Cape Town on 8 March 2014. The intention of this event was to showcase the DA’s delivery record in government in the Western Cape. The Western Cape Story booklet is also available on the website and highlights progress made in the province since 2009. The DA currently governs the Western Cape and has achieved economic transformation, provided relief to social ills and opportunities for youth development. On its website it lists the following as some
of the DA’s key successes in the Western Cape: highest access to basic services & lowest unemployment rate in SA; 98 327 people were given training opportunities; 4065 young people were given job opportunities in its Work & Skills Programme. The Western Cape has the highest access to water, flush toilets and electricity in the country.

- **#LookingForwardTo Campaign** – The DA launched its #LookingForwardTo advertising campaign on 28 February which integrated Television and Social Media platforms into a form of advertising. A website which can be viewed on [www.LookingForwardTo.co.za](http://www.LookingForwardTo.co.za) was also created to create public engagement with the campaign. On the DA’s current national website there are videos which feature DA Gauteng Premier Candidate Mmusi Maimane responding to public tweets made on Twitter in relation to the campaign.

- **Election 2014 TV Ad Campaign** – The DA Election 2014 Campaign television advertisements feature Helen Zille and Mmusi Maimane. These videos are embedded as YouTube videos on the website. The Elections 2014: Helen Zille TV Ad, show her as a teenager committed to fight against apartheid and states that the DA will create 6 million real jobs, cut corruption and grow the economy if given the chance to govern South Africa. The Elections 2014: Mmusi Maimane TV Ad is on Mmusi Maimane working towards bringing about change in Gauteng if he becomes the Premier of the province.

- **DA Manifesto 2014** – This is available in different formats for download as an A4 pdf, an A6 Booklet pdf, DA Pledge card which are in English and in a Braille Version. The DA launched its 2014 Election Manifesto; the blueprint for reviving the dream South Africans shared in 1994, on Sunday, 23 February 2014.

- **Campaign Speeches** – This section consists of the campaign speeches given by DA Leader Helen Zille and DA Gauteng Premier Candidate Mmusi Maimane. Two of the speeches that are listed are by Helen Zille titled ‘Voters should know who they are being asked to vote for’. This speech was delivered in Mangaung on 4 March 2014 at the launch of the DA’s plan for government in the Free State. This speech introduced Patricia Kopane as the Democratic Alliance’s premier candidate for the Free State. The second speech is titled ‘Together for Change, Together for Jobs’ which was delivered at the Launch of the DA’s 2014 Manifesto in Polokwane, Limpopo on 23 February 2014. The manifesto that was released was a ‘manifesto for jobs. This speech focussed on ‘The ANC of today is not Nelson Mandela’s ANC’ and that millions of people have become unemployed under Jacob Zuma’s leadership as president. It
also focusses on how public money was wasted on projects like Nkandla and billions of rands are lost to corruption and maladministration. The speech talks about what the DA would do if it became government, the improvements that have been made in the Western Cape since it was elected to govern the province in 2009 and the policies that it supports such as broad-based BEE, and issues such as land reform and social grants. The speech highlights that it is possible to bring change by voting for an alternative party such as the DA. The third speech is by Mmusi Maimane titled ‘Our Destiny is in Our Hands’. Maimane delivered the speech at Walter Sisulu Square in Kliptown, Soweto, during his Believe in Change campaign launch (DA 2014). This speech focusses on encouraging the people of Gauteng to join together to bring the change they want to see in their province, Maimane refers back to his past when ordinary citizens joined together to vote against the apartheid system and today they can join together again to change the current government system. He talks about voting for an alternative party ‘That is why we are making a different choice; we are choosing a party that will cut corruption and create jobs’ and refers to the DA as that alternative. He speaks on issues of Black Economic Empowerment that creates jobs, land reform and social grants.

4.2.1 Introduction to the DA 2014 Election campaign

The DA made use of agenda-setting and priming by relating Jacob Zuma and the Nkandla scandal to its key messaging used in the 2014 General Elections. The DA used the Public Protector’s findings which implied that the President had stolen taxpayer’s money and related this to corruption and jobs that could’ve otherwise been created. Corruption and jobs are aligned with the DA’s manifesto and its mandate as the official opposition to expose and fight against corruption and provide ‘6million Real jobs’. There is no doubt that tackling corruption will become a key issue around which the various political parties will campaign in the run-up to the 2014 election (Pondering Panda 2013).

The DA Election campaign slogan for 2014 was: Together for change. Together for jobs. In brief, Together for change is through a government that offers opportunities for all; and that a DA government will save R30 billion per year by cutting corruption and firing corrupt officials. The second part of the slogan Together for jobs is through an economy that grows at 8% to create 6 million real jobs (DA Manifesto 2014). In her introductory letter in the DA Manifesto, Helen Zille Democratic Alliance Leader and Premier of the Western Cape reiterates the phrase ‘Jacob Zuma’s ANC’, this reference thus becomes a link to the
current ANC Government and the accusations of corruption that are posed against Zuma during the pre-election period. In her introductory letter Zille writes: Jacob Zuma’s ANC is indifferent to the daily struggles of the millions of South Africans excluded from the economy. In another part of her letter she writes: The ANC changed. Jacob Zuma’s ANC has forgotten the hope and promise of 1994.

Forty four days before Election - Day in South Africa, Mmusi Maimane delivered a speech titled ‘Fight is on for Change and Jobs in Gauteng’ which he delivered in Johannesburg. His speech was also converted into a press statement and focussed on the DA’s 2014 campaign strategy and its provincial manifesto. Part of the DA’s strategy to win Gauteng was its Pledge to the People, the policy platform on which Mmusi Maimane ran for Gauteng Premier.

The core offerings made in their Pledge to the People was:

- **Entrepreneurs create Jobs** – We will support and subsidise entrepreneurs to lead job creation in Gauteng
- **Cut Corruption** – We will open tender committees to the public, introduce a new Ministerial Handbook for Gauteng and pass a law preventing officials from doing business with government
- **Fight E-tolls** – We are taking the fight against the E-Tolling Act all the way to the ConCourt. But we must win at the Ballot Box to call a referendum in which every Gauteng resident can vote directly against e-tolling
- **Urban Land Reform** – 30 years after the Apartheid government said blacks can only lease land we still don’t own it. Our plan is to roll out title deeds so that people can own and invest in their state-subsidised houses at a rate never seen before.
- **Fight Drugs and Crime** – We will pass a law putting Local Action Committees front and centre in the war on drugs; evict druglords from all public property and make Gauteng’s cities safe places to live and do business
- **Education for Jobs** – Public schools must offer quality education and empower our kids as digital citizens ready to enter the economy
- **World-class Healthcare** – We will put the best leadership in charge of public hospitals and eliminate long queues and poor service

A selection of press statements, speeches and the SA Today e-newsletter which were published by the DA between 1 January and 7 May 2014 was analysed. In total, this amounted to 152 press statements, 7 speeches and 7 SA Today e-newsletters. The
analysis looked at various issues and themes which the DA’s 2014 election campaign focused on. The issues identified included: *Fight for jobs, Advertising rallies, Load shedding crisis, Encouraging voters to register, Anti-gay laws, E-tolling, The fight against gangs and drugs, Using T-shirts as part of branding/creating visibility, Nkandla, Abuse of state resources, ANC failures to address water issues in different provinces, Housing title deeds, A strategy to win Gauteng.*

Keywords and phrases associated with each issue were identified in each press statement, speech and *SA Today* e-newsletter and manually counted. This was a very lengthy and tedious process as the press statements, speeches and the *SA Today* e-newsletter each had to be copied and pasted individually onto a word document for safekeeping and counted individually. Each issue was then clustered under one or more of the following themes: social, economic and political issues; depending on what segment of society it affected most. Table 4.2a below indicates the issues and themes identified in the 2014 election campaign of the DA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUE</th>
<th>Number of times this issue was published</th>
<th>THEME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA Today</td>
<td>Speeches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fight for jobs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising rallies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Load shedding crisis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging voters to register</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-gay laws</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-tolling</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fight against gangs and drugs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using T-shirts as part of branding/creating visibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nkandla</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse of state resources</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANC failures to address water issues in different provinces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing title deeds</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A strategy to win Gauteng</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.2a) Issues and themes identified in the DA 2014 election campaign*

This analysis revealed that the DA focussed on socio-economic and political issues as its core issues in its 2014 election campaign. The fight for jobs was the topic most discussed by the DA, followed by Nkandla which has been repeatedly linked to the abuse of state resources. The third issue was the DA’s strategy to win Gauteng. Mmusi Maimane was the DA Premier Candidate and face of the DA’s drive to win support in Gauteng. The DA tabled a Gauteng manifesto to make Gauteng a ‘job-creating powerhouse’ and aimed to
create over 2 million jobs in Gauteng. Maimane visited IEC registration stations across Gauteng prior to the 2014 elections to engage with voters and supporters.

4.3 DA Website layout pre and post elections


Screenshot 4.3.1b: The DA's Election Campaign 2014 as found on the party's current national website (DA 2014).

Screenshot 4.3.1a shows the look of the DA's 2014 website prior to the 2014 General Elections in South Africa. The website was used to involve, mobilise, inform and connect with its voters it shows the use of press statements on the website and video use with a video that was pulled through from the Times Live online news site. The website consisted
of downloadable pdf documents on the DA’s policies and manifesto. There was a section under which people could ‘get involved’ through the donation of money, volunteering or working for the DA. Information was also provided under the ‘our people’ section which gave information and a brief bio on the MPs, MPLs, leaders of the DA and how to contact them. Press statements and speeches were also freely available on the website. A contact button was also available which provided all the relevant contact details of the DA provincial offices and national office. Screenshot 4.3.1b shows the DA’s current website which underwent a website overhaul and changed in design and layout post-elections. The party’s latest design as seen in screenshot 4.3.1b consists of all the same features as the previous website used in the 2014 elections as well as the additional ‘Donate’ button, a clear political party logo on the top left-hand corner of the website banner, the use of a large impactful photo that shows the leader of the party engaging with and addressing the everyday ordinary citizen, as well as a how to ‘get involved’ dropdown menu which includes a link to a page on the site which allows supporters to donate to the party and to receive more information on the party and its campaign. There is a transparent black strip on the left-hand side of the homepage which is also linked to the how to get involved in the campaign.

4.4 DA 2014 elections, website and social media strategy
On the website of the Democratic Alliance there are links to its social media accounts, a link to its newsroom with news related to the party, a list of national candidates, a section to make donations under ‘donate now’, a section to get involved with subcategories to join, volunteer and join its young leaders programme, there is a section on why choose the DA and its people i.e. public office bearers for the party.

The DA launched its ‘The Western Cape Story’ video campaign on 8 March 2014. The intended purpose of this campaign was to showcase the DA’s delivery record in government in the Western Cape. A booklet on The Western Cape Story is available on the DA website which highlights progress made in the province since 2009 and lists some of the DA’s key successes. As part of promoting the Western Cape’s story, the DA also published the following two infographics on social media, detailing the success of the DA government from 2009 – 2014. The statistics were gathered from a number of sources which includes the Auditor General, Stats SA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey, SAIGA Reporting Awards and the Department of Performance Monitoring & Evaluation.
4.4.1 Lookforwardto campaign

The DA’s #Lookingforwardto campaign aimed at the general public, was an attempt to create public engagement. On the DA’s Lookingforwardto website found on
**www.LookingForwardTo.co.za**, the public is invited to send through matters of public concern such as job creation, how the DA will cut corruption or address current societal issues and what they would like to see under a DA government as seen in screenshot 4.4.1a. The videos uploaded on the website feature Western Cape Premier Helen Zille answering some of the submissions made on the website to what people are #Lookingforwardto, DA Gauteng Premier Candidate Mmusi Maimane also responds to public tweets made on Twitter in relation to the campaign. This is a good example of two-way communication in the Excellence Theory approach. This approach builds a ‘narrative’ around an issue or current context in which South Africa finds itself in and in which voters can relate to. This approach speaks to citizens by allowing them the chance to voice their concerns and is available on the political party website and YouTube channel.

Screenshot 4.4.1a: Western Cape Premier Helen Zille and DA Gauteng Premier Candidate Mmusi Maimane respond to some of the submissions made by citizens via the website and via Twitter

Screenshot 4.4.1b: The [www.LookingForwardTo.co.za website](https://www.LookingForwardTo.co.za) that the DA created, allowed Western Cape Premier Helen Zille and DA Gauteng Premier Candidate Mmusi Maimane to respond to some of the submissions made by citizens via the website and via Twitter.
The #LookingForwardTo campaign was re-emphasised on the DA Twitter profile background with the same wording and the link to the website provided.

The DA’s social media strategy included the use of its national party political website, creating a candidate website for DA Gauteng Premier Candidate Mmusi Maimane and using Facebook and Twitter. The DA cross-reference their communication platforms to grow its supporter base, get its message out, and get the conversation going on what voters wanted to see happen for South Africa on issues such as growing job opportunities, cutting corruption and improving service delivery. The DA also applied some of Foot and Schneider’s framework for website campaigning as examined in the literature review.

### 4.4.2 Candidate centred website

The DA created a candidate website for Gauteng Premier Candidate Mmusi Maimane with a personalised url [www.maimane.com](http://www.maimane.com). There is a section on the website where a user can find out more about the candidate under ‘Who is Mmusi Maimane’. Positive words that trigger thoughts of progress and change are used as in the case of Obama’s 2008
website. The DA used words such as ‘Believe’, ‘change’ and words of such as ‘together’, ‘we’ and ‘you’. Mmusi Maimane was also seen as likeable, charming, intelligent and represented positive change and was also someone of colour like Obama. South Africa’s historical past has been marred by apartheid where the black population was oppressed by a former white government; the DA historically only had white individuals representing their leadership, Mmusi Maimane is one of the first black male public representatives who was vying to fill one of the highest positions in the DA’s leadership.

‘My name is Mmusi Maimane and I believe in the potential of the province. I’d like you to believe in Gauteng too. I believe that we can make change happen, that jobs can be created. Together we will make Gauteng great.’ – Gauteng Premier Candidate Mmusi Maimane

In screenshot 4.4.2a social media ‘buttons’ have been added onto the www.maimane.com website which allow website users to share the video of ‘Who is Mmusi Maimane’ on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. Further down on the homepage of the website there are ‘share buttons’ for each of the press statements that Maimane has issued. On the right-hand-side further down there are also social media ‘buttons’ for Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn that allow people to e-mail him directly, ‘follow’ him on Twitter, ‘Like’ his official Mmusi Maimane page on Facebook or sign up for RSS feed to receive a notification every time something is posted on the website. The upward looking image of Mmusi Maimane’s face used in the website banner in screenshot 4.4.2b is similar to the Barack Obama photo used on the Obama website (see screenshot 2.6.b). The upward look is ideal as it
represents moving forward or an upward progression as if looking to the stars and into a bright future filled with hope.

4.5 The Democratic Alliance on Social Media

The Democratic Alliance primarily made use of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as part of its social media strategy that it adopted in the 2014 South African General Elections.

4.5.1. DA national Facebook page

On the DA’s official Facebook page under the ‘about’ section, the Democratic Alliance classifies itself as South Africa's official opposition, and a party of government in the Western Cape, the City of Cape Town, and elsewhere. It also provides a contact email, contact number, website address, the year the party was founded, an overview on the party and the party’s mission. This page features regular updates about how the DA is working to build an Open Opportunity Society for All and has the following features: videos, list of events, photos and work for us. The open DA discussion group administered by party activists and volunteers can be found on http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2226300562. There is also a direct link to party leader Helen Zille’s official Facebook page http://www.facebook.com/HelenZille?fref=ts.

From 1 January to 7 May 2014, the number of Facebook likes the official DA Facebook account had was 59,540. During this same period the DA made 81 original posts on the DA Facebook page. The topics that appeared as most ‘popular’, with the highest activity or most discussed, were 1. Ayisafani advert, 2. real jobs, 3. anti-gay laws, 4. e-tolls, Cape Town as the best-run municipality in the country and Nkandla. Through the tallying process of the number of times each topic was posted by the DA in an original post, there was some duplication in terms of jobs, e-tolls and Nkandla which appeared as separate topics on individual posts as well as under the Ayisafani Advert posts which were posted three times. This amounted to the higher number of likes, comments and shares as the topics were grouped under the one advert. Nkandla posts appeared to have the highest
number of likes, comments and shares out of the six main issues that were identified in the DA posts as indicated in Table 4.5.1.a.

Table 4.5.1 a. Issues identified as most ‘popular’ made by the DA on its Facebook page

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>No. of times the DA posted on Facebook</th>
<th>No. of likes in total</th>
<th>No. of comments in total</th>
<th>No. of shares in total shares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ayisafani advert</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2 574</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>1 090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real jobs, jobs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5 170</td>
<td>1 255</td>
<td>1 781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-gay laws</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 443</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etolls, e-tolling</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2 716</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>1 115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Town remains the best-run municipality in the country</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 952</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>4 162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nkandla</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12 650</td>
<td>2 299</td>
<td>8 341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>27 505</td>
<td>5 218</td>
<td>16 990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On average, the DA made one to two posts per day. There was no noticeable increase in the number of posts per day closer to election-day. The DA did not respond directly to any of the comments or queries made on its Facebook posts during the period analysed from 1 January to 7 May 2014.

4.5.2. DA national Twitter page

The official DA Twitter account can be ‘followed’ on Twitter under @DA_News. The bio states the following: ‘Working to build an Open, Opportunity Society for All in South Africa’. From 1 January - 7 May 2014, the number of twitter followers the official DA Twitter account had was 27 740. The DA uses this Twitter account to tweet links of DA news articles, DA press statements, speeches, DA photos that feature activists, party leaders and staff. It also retweets any DA related information from its ‘followers’ and the Twitter accounts which it follows. To stimulate conversation during the 2014 elections the DA used social media namely Twitter to create a simple form of ‘polling’ which was not scientifically based but was used to generate news articles, web hits on news sites, web searches and to get people talking. On 13 March 2014 the DA used its Twitter account to post an image of Helen Zille and Jacob Zuma. The message that accompanied this image stated: ‘RETWEET if you think it’s time for a #ZilleVsZuma debate.’ This message proposed a ‘face off’ debate between Zille and Zuma. The hashtag-line was #ZilleVsZuma and the request for a ‘retweet’ acted as a survey/poll for followers of the DA Twitter account on whether they thought a debate between the two politicians should take place before election time.
These are the Twitter followers of the National DA Twitter account that retweeted the original tweet onto their own Twitter timelines (Twitter 2014)

This post received 10 direct comments on the original Twitter post and was favourited 84 times directly and retweeted 804 times directly. Followers of those that retweeted the original tweet then went on to retweet the post onto their own timeline. Of the users that commented on the original post, 5 out of the 10 were in some way connected to the DA directly. Either as a Member of Parliament or the Provincial Legislature or as DA support staff while one commenter described himself as a ‘#DASupporter #DAVolunteer Democrat to the core’. The DA Twitter account @DA_News did not respond publicly to any of the Twitter users that commented on the post.

The DA’s Twitter campaign on #lookingforwardto is re-emphasised in the background used for the DA National Twitter account which acts as good branding and marketing for the party.

These are the Twitter followers of the National DA Twitter account that retweeted the original tweet onto their own Twitter timelines (Twitter 2014)

The DA, however, replied to two different tweets made by users on Twitter about the Ayisafani advert. The first was to an original post made by the Democratic Alliance
@DA_News on April 27: The #Ayisafani2 launch will be preceded by a march through Mamelodi in support of free elections and freedom of speech in South Africa. Twitter user TANKER FORCE @THABANGDIYO Apr 28 said: @DA_News I can't wait to see these one Ayisafani 2. The Democratic Alliance @DA_News responded with: Hi @THABANGDIYO No need to wait! Here it is --> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsirDxI8xqU ... #Ayisafani2. This post was retweeted three times and favourited once. On a completely new post made by karel marais @karelpaintmaker on April 28 he posted: @DA_News @helenzille When will the new ad be on YouTube? Democratic Alliance@DA_News responded: @karelpaintmaker @helenzille It is already on YouTube --> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsirDxI8xqU ... #Ayisafani2

4.5.3 DA national YouTube account
The DA’s official YouTube account is linked to its Google+ account which pulls through videos that are uploaded onto the DA YouTube account. The DA joined YouTube on Jan 11, 2011. It has 110 videos uploaded, 3 667 subscribers and has received 1 354 103 views. As part of the election campaign the DA uploaded 40 videos onto its official DA YouTube account. The public was also invited to submit through a query via the www.LookingForwardTo.co.za website and the DA twitter account using the hashtag #LookingForwardTo, to state what they are looking forward to under a DA government, Helen Zille responds to five of these queries and Mmusi Maimane responds to five via short individual videos. The issues discussed include police brutality, values of those standing for public office, dry coal that allows many competitors that can provide energy to South Africa, the assumption that the DA would bring back apartheid. This is another form of two-way communication in which the DA responds to the public using video and social media; Twitter and a public forum website.

There are six videos of ordinary South Africans stating what they are #LookingForwardTo under a DA government which relates to at least one of the DA’s policies. For example, in the Thato is #LookingForwardTo video, he says he is looking forward to an internship to gain work experience, this ad promotes the DA’s policy on creating 1 million government internships and partnering with business on this. Both the #LookingForwardTo video and the response to tweets from Helen Zille and Mmusi Maimane are an excellent example of two way communication between the political party and voters and a good example of asymmetric communication as part of Excellence Theory.
There are five videos featuring former Finance MEC Tim Harris being interviewed and which focus on how he got into politics, a profile on him as a politician, one where he announces the Talk with Tim winners and the DA’s view on the liquor law and justice against women abuse. The content of the rest of the videos consisted of a number of issues but primarily focussed on how the DA will create 6 million real jobs, cut corruption and that it’s time for a change in government. The number of shares and likes varied depending on the issue however the ANC Ayisafani advert and the ANC Ayisafani 2 advert received the most likes, views and number of comments. It was also found in the analysis that these were the only two videos in which the DA responded to on their YouTube account. Table 4.5.3a indicates the breakdown for the videos that were uploaded in terms of issue, content, number of likes/dislikes, comments and views.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Content of videos</th>
<th>No. of likes</th>
<th>No. of comments</th>
<th>No. of views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#DAYSpeakOut</td>
<td>Political parties speak for the youth but not to them</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSFASsit in protest by DA Youth</td>
<td>DA youth stage a 24 hour sit-in for the NSFAS budget to be increased. NSFAS assistance is to qualifying students who cannot afford to study further</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen Zille is #LookingForward</td>
<td>Helen Zille explains how Agang was going to be incorporated into the DA and how Mamphele Ramphele agreed to join the DA to become their presidential candidate but then changed her mind to not join. Helen explains that success is not final and failure is not fatal, but this is how it is in politics.</td>
<td>73 likes and (1 dislike)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#RegisterToWin - Mmusi Maimane</td>
<td>Mmusi Maimane encourages South Africans to register to vote on the final registration weekend (8 – 9 Feb 2014)</td>
<td>43 likes and (1 dislike)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA March for #REALjobs</td>
<td>This video makes use of key DA spokespeople who discuss how the DA will create 6 million real jobs</td>
<td>18 likes and (1 dislike)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA Manifesto Launch Polokwane 2014</td>
<td>Mmusi Maimane officially launches the DA’s manifesto in Polokwane</td>
<td>60 likes and (2 dislikes)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elections 2014: Mmusi Maimane TV Ad</td>
<td>This advert showcases the DA’s delivery record in government in the Western Cape and highlights progress made in the province since 2009.</td>
<td>203 likes and (9 dislikes)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elections 2014: Helen Zille TV Ad</td>
<td>Helen Zille explains how as a teenager she was committed to fight against apartheid and states how the DA will create 6 million real jobs, cut corruption and grow the economy.</td>
<td>301 and (16 dislikes)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Western Cape Story</td>
<td>This advert showcases the DA’s delivery record in government in the Western Cape and highlights progress made in the province since 2009.</td>
<td>318 and (12 dislikes)</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>15818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#FightingForJobs Rally</td>
<td>Mmusi Maimane explains the vibe and setup of the manifesto launch in Gauteng</td>
<td>92 and (1 dislike)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANC Ayisafani - DA TV ad</td>
<td>This advert was the DA’s trademark ad which gave it a lot of media coverage as it became controversial when the SABC tried to ban it. This advert speaks on the leadership of past leaders that took SA forward but under Jacob Zuma’s ANC millions have lost their jobs. Mmusi Maimane refers to the ANC as corrupt and for the connected few as well as R200 million being spent on Nkandla.</td>
<td>5 078 and (439 dislikes)</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>720573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nomthandazo is #LookingForwardToUniversity</td>
<td>Nomthandazo says she is looking forward to going to university. This ad promotes the DA’s policy on ensuring higher education to all qualifying matrics.</td>
<td>16 and (3 dislikes)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thato is #LookingForwardTo</td>
<td>This advert Thato says he is looking forward to an internship to gain work experience, this ad promotes the DA’s policy on creating 1 million government</td>
<td>23 and (4 dislikes)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3303</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.5.3a indicates the breakdown for the videos that were uploaded

The DA created two election advertisements which were to be aired on traditional television media and on radio using the public broadcaster platform, the SABC (South African Broadcast Corporation). The DA’s first advert ANC Ayisafani was released on 8 April 2014 it received 714 810 views and 778 comments. In an official letter written to the DA by the SABC, Mmusi Maimane stated in an opinion piece on the Daily Maverick (Daily Maverick 2014) that the four reasons given for the ban were that the DA was inciting violence against the police; the DA can’t publish ‘false’ information that over R200 million was spent on Nkandla, because this ‘had not been tested by a court of law’; the advertising standards say you can’t attack another product and this should apply to politics as well and the SABC will not tolerate parties engaging their opponents on the airwaves. The DA had chosen to focus on the negative aspects of what the ruling party i.e. the ANC had done wrong instead of what it had done right or on what the DA would do should it take over as government. Studies show that a focus on a negatively worded advert has more impact and becomes more memorable in the minds of its viewers and listeners. People say they hate negative advertising, but it works. They hate it and remember it at the same time (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland 1991: 15).

The DA ANC Ayisafani - DA TV advertisement makes reference to issues covered in the DA Manifesto, such as fighting corruption, e-tolls which primarily affects road users in Johannesburg and Pretoria and the misuse of public funds in the Nkandla saga involving President Zuma. The text included below the advert reads: Help the DA fight corruption, eTolls and Nkandla. Excerpts from the script of the advert and read by Mmusi Maimane,
that refer to the banning includes ‘… since 2008, we have seen Jacob Zuma’s ANC. An ANC that is corrupt… R200 million spent on upgrading the President’s private house… We’ve seen a police force killing our own people. An ANC where 1.4 million more South Africans lost their jobs. Where are the jobs President Zuma?’ In the advert, an image of police firing rubber bullets at residents at point blank range on 13 March 2014, in Bekkersdal, Westonaria is used. It was a scene where residents protested by blockading streets and pelted police cars over an election campaign planned by the ANC. The picture was taken by Alaister Russell of The Citizen Newspaper. The DA’s adverts inform and create awareness of the ruling party, the ANC and the areas in which the party has failed to deliver services.

The response received from YouTube users who watched the advert triggered animosity towards the political parties mentioned in the advert and the political history of South Africa. Hate speech by users erupted which created a forum of anger, frustration and words which created division as opposed to unity. The debate started about the advert and the need for dialogue and access to information but quickly spiralled into a thread of hate speech. A selection of comments which touch on freedom of speech, access to information and media censorship which pose a threat to democracy is provided below.

Mandy de Waal Shared on Google+ • Apr 15, 2014: Ayisafani ANC - The advert the SABC and the ANC doesn’t want you to see. This comment received 21 likes.

danieb52 Apr 16, 2014: +Mandy de Waal Yes the SABC is clearly being biased against the DA. This comment received 2 likes.

Mandy de Waal Apr 16, 2014: In a democracy what's needed is the contestation of ideas, policies and politics. Not the suppression of them. I am not a supporter of the DA, but I believe that this move by the SABC is bad for democracy. Regardless of our political affiliation we need to fight against it and against all censorship. This comment received 6 likes.

The DA also delivered an integrated media campaign with #Ayisafani TV and YouTube campaign being a big hit, and the initial barring [by the SABC] of its flighting worked in the DA’s favour as the public went online to view it (Blue Grass Digital 2014). A comment that substantiates this view and came out as a favourite in terms of likes, was made by SA PROMO Magazine Shared on Google+ • Apr 19, 2014: The DA’s advert (http://ow.ly/vWnnQ) originally banned by the ANC sorry sorry SABC, has nearly half a
million views on YouTube. Talk about shooting yourself in the foot and helping the advert go viral. This comment received 30 likes.

Thus in this study certain trends and messages, made by users of online social media and online video was identified in the comments fora aka the online public sphere. Several comments made by users appeared to be in support of the same issues such as that the ANC is no longer the same as before and is not the ANC of Mandela, that it was time for a change in government and that the DA should be given a chance to govern as well as on corruption in South Africa. The following comments appeared in the comments forum in regard to the Ayisafani advert that are in support of some of these issues mentioned: gudani sigama Apr 17, 2014: i'm all for DA!!!, they deserve a chance to rule seeing what the ANC(under the leadership of ZUMA) has done to this beautiful country. if they mess it up further then we give another deserving party a chance. South Africa was fine with De Klerk, Mandela and Mbeki. Then we gave it to Msholozi.....crappy leaders must not be allowed to govern the country....

cdts20 Apr 22, 2014: Calling all South Africans, BLACK AND WHITE who are tired of a corrupt ANC and who want a better South Africa, Vote DA and keep Mandelas dream going!!!!!!!!!!

Michelle Janse Van Vuuren Apr 23, 2014: Well done DA! Finally, the world is being shown the truth! Corruption is not acceptable in Government!

The number of posts and responses received by the DA to these comments were not directly related to the themes identified but rather on ways in which to improve the video to make it more user-friendly. The advert ANC Ayisafani received a total of 778 comments. The DA posted a total of 4 comments with two replies to user comments on YouTube. The frequency of the replies from the DA occurred either on the same day or the day after.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>User</th>
<th>Democratic Alliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date Posted</td>
<td>12-Apr-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of replies to original DA comment posting</td>
<td>3 from followers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of 'likes', +1’s</td>
<td>11 likes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of shares</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response time</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original DA Comment</td>
<td>Reshare!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of comment</td>
<td>to create awareness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5.3.b. Direct DA comment
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YouTube</th>
<th>Additional comments by other users on original DA post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>User</strong></td>
<td>Democratic Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date Posted</strong></td>
<td>16-Apr-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No. of replies</strong></td>
<td>6 (This post received 6 replies to which the DA responded to 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No. of 'likes', +1's</strong></td>
<td>14 likes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No. of shares</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response time</strong></td>
<td>Same day or following day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Original DA Comment</strong></td>
<td>The Ayisafani advert now has 388 414 views on YouTube! The video is now available for download on MXit. #ANC #Zuma #southafrica #corruption #democraticalliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>billidp</strong></td>
<td>Glad to see that democracy is alive and well. I just think that the DA should take the suggestion on one of the comments here and provide subtitles on the video so that the deaf can also see what the ad is about. Democratic Alliance - That is a really nice idea. billidp - Great, please push for it! Democratic Alliance -billidp - If you open the YouTube video and click the captions button next to the settings button, you will be able to get subtitles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose of comment</strong></td>
<td>To create awareness and to inform. To inform on platforms in which the advert is available, it can be viewed and shared. The hashtagged words are to get the advert trending and to boost its ranking in SEO terms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5.3.c. Direct DA comment

There is a link to donate to the DA which is linked to online fundraising for the party- Support our campaign with a donation at [http://donations.da.org.za/?r=ytb](http://donations.da.org.za/?r=ytb). At the end of the advert there is a request to donate to the DA included as text on the advert. Fundraising played a crucial role in the success of the Obama 2008 campaign. This advert thus acts to inform, create awareness, to mobilise YouTube and Google+ users by encouraging the sharing of the video online with other users and to fundraise for the party.

**4.6 How the DA used the agenda of the media in its election campaign**

The DA took advantage of the issues that were being covered in national and local news during the election period, by focussing on issues such as Nkandla and e-tolls. Both matters were of high concern to voters in South Africa as they heavily affected public funds collected by the South African government. Both issues were also highlighted in the news media as being related to some form of corruption and abuse of public money. Furthermore the Nkandla matter showed President Zuma in a very negative light and the DA portrayed him as a ‘criminal’ by sending out an SMS to over 1.5 million Gauteng voters accusing Zuma of stealing public money. The SMS read: ‘The Nkandla report shows how Zuma stole your money to build his R246m home. Vote DA on 7 May to beat corruption. Together for change.’ The e-tolls on the other hand directly affected Gauteng voters, the province with the highest number of registered voters. Gauteng is also the business hub of...
South Africa and the erecting of e-tolls on the national roads between Johannesburg and Pretoria would heavily affect the public pocket as these roads are used on a daily basis by thousands of commuters, many of which could not necessarily afford to pay the e-toll fees. The DA’s focus on the Nkandlagate scandal and the e-tolls in its election campaign and how it drove these issues in the news, are discussed in detail below.

4.6.1 Nkandlagate scandal
One of the major issues the South African media focused on in the 2014 General Election year included the Nkandlagate scandal involving President Jacob Zuma’s homestead. Brosius and Kepplinger (1990) states that agenda-setting is the process in which changes in media coverage lead to or cause subsequent changes in problem awareness of issues. An investigation was conducted by Public Protector Thuli Madonsela after receiving seven complaints which were lodged with the Public Protector between 13 December 2011 and November 2012. The first complainant requested an investigation into the allegations that were published by the Mail and Guardian newspaper on 11 November 2011 in the article titled: ‘Bunker, bunker time: Zuma’s lavish Nkandla upgrade’. According to this media report the improvements and upgrades were being done on the President’s private residence at an exorbitant amount and at the states expense (Mail and Guardian 2011). A report released by Public Protector Thuli Madonsela in March 2014, titled ‘Secure in Comfort’ found that the security upgrades done at Jacob Zuma’s private Nkandla homestead in KwaZulu-Natal, amounted to the value of R246 million (Public Protector South Africa 2014). The improvements allegedly included air conditioning, a clinic, gymnasium, additional security guards, underground parking, a helicopter pad, a playground and a Visitors’ Centre and a ‘fire pool’ which the government insisted would serve as a water reservoir from which buckets can be filled in the event of a fire (de wet 2014), although in the Public Protector’s report it refers to it being converted into a swimming pool (Public Protector South Africa 2014). According to McCombs and Shaw (1972: 176) consumers of news will not only learn about an issue ‘but also how much importance is attached to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position’.

The media coverage given to these allegations that involved the President’s misuse of taxpayer’s money for his own private security upgrades, spurred considerable public outrage and a call for a vote of no confidence in Jacob Zuma by the Democratic Alliance. The DA used these allegations as part of their #ImpeachZuma campaign and in a
controversial Nkandla-related sms which it distributed to over 1.5 million Gauteng voters accusing Zuma of stealing public money. The SMS refers to the public protector’s report which found Zuma had benefited excessively from an upgrade to his Nkandla homestead and said it was a ‘licence to loot’. The SMS read: ‘The Nkandla report shows how Zuma stole your money to build his R246m home. Vote DA on 7 May to beat corruption. Together for change.’

The DA posted an official press statement based on the ‘DA victory in Nkandla SMS case’ on its Facebook timeline and a photo of DA Gauteng Premier Candidate Mmusi Maimane leaving the High Court in Johannesburg. He was surrounded by members of the media and DA supporters that were dressed in DA attire and holding placards. This post received 2,023 likes on Facebook, 810 shares and 358 comments. The contents of the comments were in support of the DA for standing up as the opposition and holding the ruling party to account for their actions. Another popular theme was that the court’s judgement was a victory for democracy in South Africa and freedom of speech. The most popular comment based on the number of ‘likes’ received was by Bulelani Phopho Manku whose comment received 229 likes, he states that: This is what one expects from an opposition party. I will show my love on the 7th of May, my vote is no secret. Bye ANC hello DA. Halala DA Halala.Amandla!!! Phambilinge DA phambili!!! AMANDLA!!! (Facebook 2014)
This press statement was also placed on the DA’s national website and also shared and reposted on to the DAEC Facebook page. The official press statement was also sent out to the media nationally. The increasing number of internet users that retrieve their news from the internet will click onto websites from conventional media outlets (Takeshita 2006). News24 placed a video on YouTube titled ‘DA welcomes Nkandla SMS court victory’ while iol (independent online) also uploaded a video onto their website titled ‘Nkandla SMS case in court’ both of which shows Mmusi Maimane leaving the High Court in Johannesburg where he speaks on behalf of the DA and its welcoming of the ruling. Iyengar and Kinder (2010) state that agenda-setting can be used to prime voters by giving specific attention to certain issues while disregarding others. This in turn can influence the way people cast their vote.

In another attempt to impeach Jacob Zuma, an online petition was created by the Committee for the Impeachment of the President. The intention of the petition was to have the President impeached or fired for personally benefitting from public money (without proper tender) during the upgrades to his Nkandla homestead. Information technology enables new forms of online social movement actions, also called cyberactivism and cyberpolitics (Ribeiro 1998). The petition required 50 000 signatures before it could be sent through to The Speaker of Parliament as at 18 August 2014 it had just over 44 250 signatures. To legitimately sign the petition one needed to fill in their name, surname, email address and provide a reason which is optional, as to why this issue is important to you as the signatory (change.org 2014).
The online petition consisted of the following information:

**Nkandlagate has now come to be symbolic of the rot in President Jacob Zuma’s ANC. Indeed, it is the gold standard for the increasing corruption and nepotism our country has witnessed over the last five years.**

Corruption, no matter the position, kills jobs, undermines service delivery and makes South Africans poorer. Our President should be leading the way in the fight against it, not participating in it so blatantly. The DA has done everything within our power to ensure accountability – for all those responsible – since the details first came to light. South Africa needs to know that this will not be tolerated and action will be taken against even the most powerful perpetrators. Sign this petition to call for President Zuma's impeachment.

To:
The Speaker of Parliament
Sign this petition to call for President Zuma's impeachment
Sincerely,
[Your name]

The most popular comment posted on this petition which received 103 ‘likes’ focused on having a credible leader for the country. Warwick Chapman from Cape Town stated: *We need to be led by a credible and trusted leader in South Africa.* While other popular comments that were made referred to corrupt public servants that should be held accountable for their wrongdoings. (Change.org 2014)

The DA also placed a post on its Facebook timeline with a link to the online Impeach Zuma petition on change.org

This Facebook post was made on 19 March 2014 it received 1 539 likes on Facebook, 171 shares and 216 comments. The contents of the comments were in support of the DA.
4.6.2 E-tolls

The DA also focussed part of their election campaign on the fight against e-tolls. Mmusi Maimane DA Premier Candidate for Gauteng at the time, spearheaded the campaign to challenge the controversial e-tolling Bill in the Western Cape High Court, declaring it unconstitutional (SABC 2014).

Transport Minister Dipuo Peters announced that e-tolling would start on December 3 2013. Unregistered motorists that did not have an e-toll account were warned by Sanral that they faced a hefty bill if they failed to pay for e-tolls within a week. The DA challenged the constitutionality of the Transport Laws and Related Amendment Act in the Western Cape High Court on 4 March 2014 and stated that it was prepared to take it to the Constitutional Court. As the Democratic Alliance’s (DA) national spokesperson, Mmusi Maimane said he was confident that the courts would declare the law allowing e-tolls to be unconstitutional. The Amendment Act allowed for the implementation of e-tolling in Gauteng, where Maimane was the DA’s premier candidate in the 2014 elections. The DA argued that the bill should have been labelled as a Section 76 bill when it was introduced in parliament as provided for under Section 76 of the South African Constitution. This section outlines how bills affecting provinces are dealt with (SABC 2014).

The DA had started its campaign against e-tolls pre-2013 already with Shadow Minister of Transport Ian Ollis issuing a statement titled: Sanral To Spend Millions On E-tolls Propaganda. The statement was in response to a Parliamentary reply received stating that ‘Sanral has budgeted R85 million for advertising related to the e-toll system in Gauteng, which will be spent on both alternative sources of funding campaigns as well as corporate campaigns’. The statement also revealed that Sanral had increased its advertising spend by 200%. The statement goes on to say that: E-tolling will serve no benefit to the people of the Province, and will hit the poorest the hardest by increasing the price of doing business, resulting in food price increases and inevitably undermining economic growth and job creation. The DA said that it would continue to fight against e-tolling where they currently govern and where they were elected to govern in 2014.

Further to this the DA issued several press statements on e-tolls and focussed part of their election campaign on e-tolling in Gauteng. This included the DA’s Ayisafani advert and the Mmusi Maimane election advert. Maimane issued a press statement titled E-tolls: DA seeks Consumer Court order against SANRAL. The press statement focussed on the DA
submitting hundreds of e-toll billing complaints from Gauteng residents to the National Consumer Commission. Maimane also launched billboards in Gauteng with the message: “A vote for the DA is a vote against e-tolls”. The intention behind the billboards along the Gauteng highways was to mark the start of a campaign to mobilise Gauteng voters against the government’ that implemented the e-tolls. Maimane said: ‘I will take information on the costs of travelling all major routes in Gauteng directly to the people as part of a mass mobilisation campaign against e-tolls”. He stated as fact that people can’t afford e-tolls, no matter how much SANRAL says they can.

The DA’s Ayisafani advert published on 8 April 2014 and the Mmusi Maimane election advert published on 28 February 2014, speak about e-tolls and have a donation link to the DA website to donate to the party to ‘Help the DA fight corruption, eTolls and Nkandla.’

Screenshot 4.6.2 Reference is made to Nkandla and etolls on the ANC Ayisafani – DA TV ad and the Mmusi Maimane TV advert

In the ANC Ayisafani - DA TV ad a YouTube user Simon Ndlamlenze, made the following comment: Apr 16, 2014: Government for the people by the people, the people clearly said and with a very load voice that we do not want the e-tolls but e-tolls are forced down our throats and pockets (Not Paying that).
4.7 Discussion of the Findings

The application of Excellence Theory together with stakeholder theory with the analysis of agenda setting formed the basis of this study. From the analysis of the DA’s social media usage and the amount of interaction between the political organisation and its stakeholders i.e. followers of its social media pages and accounts and its websites, two-way asymmetrical communication was predominantly used as there appeared to be many original posts made by the party itself and often hundreds of responses to each post from its online users however the DA only selectively responded to some posts. In the few instances that it did this would include its YouTube account which was linked to its #lookingforwardto website where Helen Zille and Mmusi Maimane did video responses to public tweets made on Twitter that asked the DA about its polices or how it would govern if it became the ruling party. These video responses were also uploaded onto the DA’s YouTube account. The #lookingforwardto video responses are an excellent example of two way communication between the political party and voters and a good example of asymmetric communication as part of Excellence Theory.

On another occasion the DA posted and shared the link of its Ayisafani advert on its YouTube account and responded to a comment made by a YouTube follower on including subtitles to the video to cater for people with a hearing impairment. This shows that the DA social media team may or may not have considered people with a hearing impairment to fully understand or grasp the message of the advert in their video platform of choice until it was pointed out by a normal online user. The DA also replied to two different tweets made by users on Twitter about the launch of its #Ayisafani2 advert. However closer to election time direct replies from the DA on social media to individual posts became little to none. The party however still made original posts that encouraged participation from social media users by asking if users agreed on the statements they made in their posts but there was no direct feedback from the party following these initial posts.

In November 2012, the DA’s Facebook page had 21 414 ‘likes’. The cover photo on the page featured DA leader, Helen Zille, parliamentary leader Lindiwe Mazibuko and Cape Town mayor Patricia De Lille with the slogan: Working for change, working for jobs. The DA’s 2014 election slogan was: Together for change. Together for jobs. This reflects a slight adaptation of the slogan used in 2012 to promote its campaign, but with a focus on the same core issues in its 2014 campaign, i.e. bringing change and creating REAL jobs.
The Democratic Alliance utilised a mix of social media platforms to promote its 2014 election campaign online; this included the use of social media on Facebook, Twitter and video via YouTube, television advertising which were cross referenced using its YouTube channel and its party political and candidate websites. On the Democratic Alliance’s national website there is a section on its election campaign which consists of its 2014 Election Manifesto, TV adverts, a social media campaign, as well as videos from the campaign. The case study conducted on the DA’s use of social media platforms revealed the different means in which the organisation was able to communicate its message to stakeholders and gauge the general feeling of the media and stakeholders towards the party in terms of popularity and how they felt about the socio-political situation in South Africa. The identification of specific themes was not the core focus of this paper although related themes seemed to surface in the comments made by online users such as in the DA’s election campaign messaging which focused on corruption, jobs and Jacob Zuma’s ANC. This stirred feelings of apathy by the public and towards the ANC under the leadership of Jacob Zuma and the need for ‘change’.

In the literature review the DA’s replication of many of the strategies used in the 2008 Obama campaign (namely on its party political website) illustrates the fundamentals dictated by Foot and Schneider’s (2006) framework for web campaigning practices. This framework looks at informing, connecting, involving and mobilising communication strategies. The DA’s 2014 website prior to the 2014 General Elections in South Africa was used to involve, mobilise, inform and connect with its voters. Press statements and video was uploaded onto the website and in some cases linked to other news sites such as the Times Live online news site. For mobilisation purposes the website consisted of downloadable pdf documents on the DA’s policies and manifesto. Share buttons were also available on the website which allowed press statements, speeches and other news content and information from the website to be shared. The public could also get involved in the party through the donation of money, volunteering or working for the DA by clicking on the ‘get involved’ section. The news feed section on the homepage where press statements and speeches were published provided information on actions taken by the party or the exposing of what can be termed as ‘news worthy’ issues that would attract media attention and coverage. Under the ‘our people’ section information was provided on the MPs, MPLs, leaders of the DA and their direct contact details. Under the ‘contact’ tab all the relevant contact details of the DA provincial offices and national office was also provided. For connecting purposes the website also consisted of links to its other party
affiliated sites such as its DA Youth website and links that would take it to external provincial and local websites for the DA offices situated in other provinces. Information on voter registration was also given at the time. The following activities were identified on the DA website which utilised the web campaigning practices as suggested by Foot and Schneider (2006):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Informing’ activity</th>
<th>‘Mobilising’ activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- A candidate biography</td>
<td>- Sending links as email from the campaign site to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Issues positions</td>
<td>- Availability of online material produced for offline dissemination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Campaign news</td>
<td>- Downloadable electronic paraphernalia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Candidate speeches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Involving’ activity</th>
<th>‘Connecting’ activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Donation information</td>
<td>- Party affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Contact information other than email</td>
<td>- Link to political site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Email address</td>
<td>- Voter registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Volunteer sign-up</td>
<td>- Link to party site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Email list sign-up</td>
<td>- Link to any other site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Photos of campaign events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Visitor comments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of agenda-setting, Lippmann (1922) argued that the press serves as a window on the distant political world that shapes our political beliefs. Two issues that received major national and local media attention prior to and leading up to the 2014 General Election was the Nkandlagate scandal involving President Jacob Zuma’s Nkandla homestead and the e-tolls. Based on the analysis in this chapter it illustrates different ways in which both issues were covered by the media and how the DA then repeatedly used these issues in its statements and speeches, its social media platforms and website and in its communiqué that it made available to its stakeholders as these issues received more focus just before Election – Day. Iyengar and Kinder (2010) state that agenda-setting can influence voting behaviour. Therefore this issue may or may not have impacted on the voting decision of voters on the 7th May 2014 which may or may not have affected the final results. The role of the media in covering this issue substantiates Takeshita’s (2006) findings that ‘the increasing number of internet users that retrieve their news from the internet will click onto websites from conventional media outlets’.

Media survey and polling companies such as Pondering Panda added to the newsworthiness of the issues raised by the party such as the rifeness of corruption in South Africa. The DA also linked this to a prime reason for the lack of jobs, ‘jobs for pals’ and that should the party take over as government that it would expose and fight corruption and create ‘6million Real jobs’. The DA Election campaign slogan for 2014 was
therefore fitting for the key messaging: Together for change. Together for jobs. This slogan formed part of the DA’s 2014 Manifesto and was re- emphasised by Democratic Alliance Leader Helen Zille in her speeches, letters and media statements.

The DA used a method of cross-referencing by cross-publishing the same content across their social media platforms and YouTube channel, as well as on their website. They therefore integrated all of their campaign messages through their selected online communication channels. For instance, all of their media statements that they published on their website were posted onto their Facebook page and in some cases with a photo relevant to the topic of the statement. The press statements on their website however did not contain any photos.

The difference however in the DA’s use of its social media platforms and YouTube channel, is that the party used its social media platforms to reply almost directly to its voters en masse or individually. This certainly was the case with its #lookingforwardto campaign where it utilised its YouTube channel to respond to tweets made on its twitter feed and questions posted on its #lookingforwardto website. Although the party responded to these questions via the videos and embedded some of its video replies onto its national website, there was no two way fora in which voters could respond directly on the website. The website therefore did not have this feature for two way communication whereas the DA’s social media platforms allowed for this to happen. Although this study found that the DA did not frequently respond to the comments made by social media users that followed the DA’s Facebook page, Twitter account or YouTube channel.

4.8 Summary and Conclusions
The Democratic Alliance utilised several forms of online communication platforms which has allowed for it to communicate its message through to its stakeholders that being the media, its voters and potential voters. Stakeholder Engagement Theory examines how an organisation builds and maintains a relationship with its stakeholders and what strategies it applies to ensure that it grows over time. As stated by Edelman (2012) that for an organisation to improve the quality of its stakeholder relationships it needed to make a conscious effort to encourage its stakeholders to buy into the organisation’s vision. This study looked at how the DA used online video and social media networks to connect and engage with its stakeholders. It has also applied cross-utilisation of the different platforms with the same information, but presented in a format relevant to that audience and
communication platform. Social media has featured prominently in its 2014 Election campaign as well as webpage use concerning its main websites on a national level for both its organisation and candidate elect. The DA used several online communication strategies used in the 2008 Obama Presidential campaign and applied it to its own election campaign in 2014. Many of Perloff’s (2014) seven main characteristics of Presidential campaigns featured in the DA’s online election campaign which included the use of images, videos, text and audio. Candidate focused websites were created as well as YouTube videos and adverts were created such as ANC Ayisafani.
CHAPTER 5 Conclusion, Summary and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises each of the chapters in this paper and gives an overall view on each section and the overall findings. Limitations that were encountered are included in this chapter as well as a concise conclusion and recommendations for future research.

5.2 Research Objective and Questions

5.2.1 Primary Research Objective

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the way in which the DA used social media platforms and the type of content used in its messaging.

5.2.2 Research Questions

The DA applied several social media tools quite effectively in its 2014 Election campaign however there is still room for improvement for future campaigns.

- How has the Democratic Alliance used social media tools in the 2014 South African General Elections to engage with its stakeholders?

The organisation utilised Facebook and created a national Facebook page that was regularly updated, as well as a national Twitter account which served different purposes such as to retweet press statements issued by its public office bearers and constituencies, to news that directly affected the party, to using it as a poll to gather the opinion of Twitter users and to get the conversation going in the media. The DA would also pose a question on their posts asking social media users what they thought of the issue. This practice therefore agrees with Perkett’s (2010) view, that social media enables professionals to maintain ongoing, quality relationships with influencers, media, customers and partners regardless of where they are. The DA used social media to report on issues that affected the public and were of concern to them. In some cases they used this to gain favour and build support by showing what they were doing about these issues. Such as with the use of its #lookingforwardto website which allowed for online users to post their thoughts. The DA also used this campaign strategy to create YouTube videos and replied to some tweets made by Twitter users through the video platform. This all forms part of the sharing of information and of mobilisation as the messages of the party were then reinforced as
supporters shared it amongst their own Facebook friends, Twitter and YouTube followers. This therefore agrees with the theory by (cf. Berman & Mulligan 2003; Bennett 2003b), that these ‘spaces’ created via the internet play a key role in establishing communication links between ordinary citizens and politicians aka the public sphere, which acts as a medium for citizen concerns to be expressed and debates to take place and therefore acts as an online platform for two-way communication. The DA used video platform YouTube to showcase its election videos but also to use it as a form of free advertising for the party especially with the controversial release of its Ayisafani advert that was banned by the SABC. Therefore cross-referencing occurred for issues such as Nkandla, e-tolls and the fight for jobs. A single message would be used many times over on several different platforms but primarily on the channels that the DA focussed on i.e. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. The media would then make use of these messages in their news reports.

- What role does Excellence Theory play using non-empirical research methods, in the Democratic Alliance’s social media engagement with its stakeholders?

The DA applied a certain level of Excellence Theory together with Stakeholder Engagement Theory although this became primarily a one-way form of communication closer to election time as the DA would post a status, photo or press statement on its social media accounts and allow the public to comment but would not respond directly to any of the comments. This practice aligns with Tench and Yeomans (2009:151) theory that the two-way symmetrical communication model is ‘too idealistic and impossible to carry out in reality’. Although in some instances the party did reply as mentioned in the findings in chapter four using the different mediums it chose to communicate through, which is what Ambler and Wilson (1995) found, i.e. that firms do not respond to each stakeholder individually; but rather, to the interaction of multiple influences from its stakeholder pool. Part of the DA’s social media strategy is also consistent with some of the strategies used in the study on Obama’s 2008 election campaign. This includes similarities of the website layout of his candidate website with that of the website for Mmusi Maimane as well as the imagery and photos used and the wording in both of their personal quotes. The DA also applied some of Foot and Schneider’s 2006 framework for Web Campaigning Practices on its official DA website. Suggestions have been made under the recommendations section on how the DA can make full use of these practices in future.
What type of content does the Democratic Alliance use in its messaging and forms of communication online?

The DA used various forms of digital formats to communicate to voters in the 2014 elections this includes its website, social media accounts and online video which it used to communicate its speeches, media statements, adverts, newsletter, requests for fundraising, recruitment of members and volunteers. The DA also utilised these platforms to respond to some queries made on its social media accounts and affiliated websites. Agenda setting was effectively utilised by the DA where it related its manifesto message of cutting corruption with the issue of Nkandla involving the President and leader of the ANC, Jacob Zuma. Focussing its campaign on cutting corruption and releasing its election manifesto around the same time as the release of the Public Protector’s report on Nkandla was perfect timing for the DA to jump on the issue of exposing corruption and holding office bearers accountable which put the ruling party and its leader in a negative light. The DA put the spotlight on the ANC through its statements in the media and on its website and social media platforms. The DA’s media agenda strategy therefore aligns with McCombs (1972) theory which states that news media yields the power to set a nation’s agenda and focus public attention on a few key public issues that the media deems important. The DA posted content mostly on exposing and cutting corruption, e-tolls as well as creating 6 million Real jobs. This was part of its election slogan.

What type of responses and comments does the Democratic Alliance receive in its online fora i.e. its Facebook account, Twitter account and YouTube account?

The content of the comments made by online users that follows the DA’s Facebook, Twitter and or YouTube account, touched on issues such as corruption; that the ANC is no longer the same as before and is not the ANC of Mandela, that it was time for a change in government and that the DA should be given the opportunity to govern. In this way the DA’s constant communication on issues which concerned citizens most, were covered in the traditional news media and were discussed on the social media fora of the DA by online users. Through the analysis of the online posts, the content revealed certain trends and phenomena, this aligns with content analysis used as a research method to systematically and objectively describe and quantify phenomena (Krippendorff 1980, Downe-Wamboldt 1992, Sandelowski 1995).
5.3 Future Research
A survey could be conducted on what online social media users thought of the DA’s use of social media in the 2014 elections. Or a mixed method research approach that includes interviews and a survey could be conducted in future or a comparison study on the DA’s use and the ANC’s use of social media in the 2014 campaigns.

5.4 Limitations
This study did not include any live interviews or surveys with the DA’s content and social media managers therefore the accuracy of the information is based on the analysis of one researcher. The information used in this study was information that the researcher found publicly available on the internet.

5.5 Conclusions
In conclusion, this research has found that the use of online political communication using a primary website and social media can be used to connect, inform, involve and mobilise with an organisation’s stakeholders. An organisation needs to be able to communicate online to gather and maintain support to ensure the success and longevity of the organisation. Without stakeholder support it serves no purpose and will cease to exist. This study was based on the use of webpages and online digital media and social media platforms in political communication. The case study section focused on how the Democratic Alliance used social media and its party political website to communicate its key messaging to its stakeholders during the six month period leading up to the 2014 General Elections. The sample of this study involved a content analysis of literature comprising party political websites, webpages and online communication, social media, political communication documents, press releases, news articles, e-journals and scholar studies found on the internet. The DA’s national party political website is easy to navigate, user-friendly and relevant information about the organisation i.e. how to join, volunteer, get involved, work for them, what the party’s goals are and what it has been up to are all easily and freely accessible. A website can also be used as a strong marketing tool for an organisation if it is updated frequently with relevant information that appeals to online users and does not remain static, but also makes use of multimedia such as video, images, social media and share links.

The research in this study also found that the use of a party political website in election campaigns plays an important role in informing, educating, mobilising and connecting with
stakeholders essentially support and voters of that political party. As Foot and Schneider (2006) found that the integration of the Internet has made it a space in which ‘it is necessary for all kinds of political actors to have a presence – at least in order to be credible among the growing population of Internet users...’ this includes candidate websites for candidates that are standing for office. The research in this study also found that many of the online web based strategies used in Obama’s 2008 campaign was duplicated in the DA’s 2014 election campaign although not all functions were fully applied. The DA used words that would touch on human emotion and that focused on issues that were of concern to South Africans such as jobs and corruption. To challenge this, the DA said that if they became the government they would bring hope, change, cut corruption and they would provide jobs for the unemployed. The party used social media primarily to inform and educate its voters however it also made use of agenda-setting in its own election campaign and in the messages and key words used in communicating its election campaign videos, manifesto, press statements and Facebook and Twitter message posts. The party in its campaign also made use of identifiable and credible political candidates to garner online support similar to an online movement and a tactic used by Obama’s team in 2008.

5.6 Recommendations

5.6.1 Two-way communication

The analysis in this study revealed that the DA primarily made use of two-way asymmetrical communication as there was a lot of consistent information and content that the party posted which related to its campaign, these received a high response from online social media users. However in response to many questions and comments posted by the online users, the DA only selectively responded to a handful of these. To make full use of two-way symmetrical communication in its future election campaigns, the DA could engage with its online supporters more by being more responsive to many more of the questions that are posted. Taking into consideration the comment posted by a YouTube follower on the DA’s account, the DA could in future also consider including actual subtitles on its videos to cater for people with a hearing impairment, as the transcript of videos on YouTube don’t always make sense. The DA should also look at catering for people of the other official South African languages as most of their photo and text posts and videos were in English although in a few media statements and YouTube videos there was some IsiXhosa and Afrikaans used.
Other areas in which it could engage more with its stakeholders for dialogue in political discourse include applying Perloff’s (2014) seven main characteristics of Presidential campaigns as the party only made use of images, videos, text and audio in its online election campaign. The DA could also use its party political website to apply more of Foot and Schneider’s (2006) framework for web campaigning practices. The DA used three methods for Mobilising activity but did not use the online structures that supported sending letters to editors of publications, the way the website had been originally built could possibly have not supported this function as this option was not visibly available on the 2014 election website. There were also no links to its opponent’s websites, citizen sites nor civic or advocacy group sites. There were also no visible features that indicated the party’s position alignments or comparisons to its opponents. Going forward the DA could look at ways in which to include these features on its official website to increase its ‘connecting’ activity with its supporters and potential voters.

Should the party wish to interact even more with its stakeholders using its online media platforms it could look at implementing live discussions, forums and webinars around societal issues and on how it proposes to address them should it take over as national government. The DA provided links to donate to the party and hosted its own fundraising events, however the party did not encourage voters to create their own fundraising projects in support of the DA election campaign as the Obama campaign had done. The DA did not implement a stakeholder (voter) website which encouraged voters to share how the DA has made a difference in their life but only what they would like to see happen in future, i.e. through the looking forward to website. Although the DA is not the governing party in national government currently but only in the Western Cape, should the DA in future become the governing party it is suggested that a website be created that allows voters to state how the policies of the DA has changed and improved their lives.

In terms of the DA’s use of agenda setting, it focussed on issues that were of societal concern. The DA could in future listen more to what the people (its voters) are saying by engaging them more directly on what concerns them and possibly asking them how they think the DA should go about improving on things such as service delivery, cutting corruption, creating more jobs, etc. To also drive the agenda in the news, the DA should opt to be more proactive as opposed to reactive to when news stories break and rather set the agenda for the news. The DA could choose to publish more good news press statements that are solution- oriented as opposed to constantly highlighting what the
governing party is doing wrong. The DA could propose or even give examples of what they would do or have done to better lives and bring positive change to South Africa.

The DA could also make better use of its website by introducing live forums and have a web content administrator monitor the comments but at the same time use these forums to draw voters to their website and engage them live. The DA could also open up the comments section on each of their press statements that they post on their website to allow its website visitors to comment on them. This would include the process of listening to their voters if the DA took cognisance of the conversations being had on these website fora in addition to the conversations happening on its social media fora.

In terms of the DA’s online reputation management, the party should analyse the comments that were made on its social media fora from the 2014 election campaign and identify any trends or themes as to the issues that may have brought negative publicity to the party during this period. The party should analyse the comments and identify whether it was on issues that the DA had solutions to or not and in future seek to provide these solutions and take a more proactive approach towards monitoring and responding frequently to comments made on their social media accounts whether negative or positive.
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