THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICAL MARKETING USING SOCIAL MEDIA ON TRUST, LOYALTY AND VOTING INTENTION OF THE YOUTH OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

South Africa has witnessed a decline in youth voter turnout. Consequently, political parties are employing marketing strategies that aim to appeal to the young voter, such as social media. Notwithstanding the increasing studies on social media in political marketing, there is a dearth of such research in South Africa. Furthermore, no studies have explored the influence of political marketing using social media on voter trust, loyalty and voting intention of the youth in the South African political context. This research intends to contribute to the increasing body of research on the efficacy of political marketing using social media by political parties in South Africa to engage with the youth and improve their election turn out. The two main research objectives are to establish the influence of political marketing using social media and on voting intention, with voter trust and voter loyalty as mediators and to determine which mediator (voter trust or voter loyalty) has the strongest influence on the outcome variable (voting intention). Using a data set of 250 respondents, between the ages of 18 and 35 years, from Gauteng Province in South Africa, this study examines these relationships. The study outcome is that all the five hypotheses are supported. The results indicate that the relationship between political marketing using social media and voter trust, political marketing using social media and voter loyalty, voter trust and voter loyalty, voter trust and voting intention and voter loyalty and voting intention are all positive in a significant way. The research paper discusses both academic, political party and marketer's implications of the results and future research directions are suggested.

KEYWORDS: Political Marketing, social media, trust, loyalty, voting intention, Youth, South, South Africa.

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1.1. Research Background

The emergence of social media has significantly transformed not only personal communications but the business and political communications landscape across the globe. From a political perspective, social media has had a significant impact in the area of Political Marketing. Consequently, political leaders, political parties and politicians are increasingly employing social media to inform, communicate, and connect with citizens to stimulate political engagement and participation (Vesnic-Alujevic, 2012). The concept of Political Marketing relates to the employment of marketing principles and tools in political campaigns by political parties and leaders with the aim of positioning the party and its leader positively in the political or electoral market, so that it appeals to the electorate/voters, thereby garnering votes for the party (Newman, 2012).

The phrase social media refers to the diverse online tools that facilitate the initiation, creation, conversation and dissemination of information between users (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010). Social media provides users with the capability to develop online relationships or communities where people with common interests can interact, engage, share opinions and knowledge (Steenkamp & Hyde-Claarke, 2012). Social media has played an enormous role in different forms of political participation such as boycotts, mobilisation through community work, and other forms of political expression such as voting and election campaigns. The prominent examples of social media use for political mobilisation are the Arab Spring in 2011 and most recently the South African university student boycott against fee increases, dubbed "feesmustfall", which was mainly driven by Twitter. The well-known example of social media usage in elections is the 2009 and 2012 United States (US) elections where President Barack Obama secured electoral victory in both elections. Subsequent to Obama's victory, many countries followed the trend. The implementation of social media by political parties in elections following Obama's 2009 victory has been extensively researched (Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez 2011; Vergeer, 2012; Towner & Dulio, 2012; Flemming, Metag & Marcinowski, 2013; Marcinowski, Metag, & Wattenberg, 2014; Marcinowski & Metag, 2014; Bimber, 2014).

South African political parties also adopted the trend, with social media featuring in electoral campaigns of various political parties during the 2009 and 2014 elections. Notwithstanding that some researchers have explored social media usage during the 2009 and 2014 South African elections (Steenkamp & Hyde-Claarke, 2012; Ayankoya, 2013; Malherbe, 2015), there is still a gap in the literature in this field. The studies that have been conducted have focused on whether the political parties applied social media strategies effectively in their election campaigns. The current study, therefore, aims to add to the existing body of knowledge by exploring this subject further. The current study aims to investigate whether political marketing using social media influences trust, loyalty and voting intention by the youth of South Africa.

The concepts of trust, loyalty and intention are vital in this subject. Social media centres mainly on relationships, be it personal, business or political. Trust is an essential ingredient in all forms of relationships. Trust is a broad concept that has been defined differently by scholars from diverse disciplines such as psychology, marketing
and political marketing to name a few. In psychology literature, scholars have defined trust as “an expectation held by an individual or a group that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group can be relied upon” (Sherman, Schiffman & Thelen, 2008). Trust develops through the meeting of each other's expectations. Trust is enhanced when the parties deliver on each other's expectations and it diminishes when expectations are not fulfilled. Trust has a strong connection to loyalty. Intention also has links to loyalty in that when a party trusts another, that party is disposed to form a favourable behavioural intention towards the other party. In politics, when a voter trusts a political leader, loyalty to that leader and party develops. When a voter trusts and is loyal to a party, the voter becomes inclined to have a strong intention to vote for that political party. Empirical evidence has established that when voters have trust and confidence in the political party and candidate, they will vote for them. Conversely, when trust does not exist, the voters either vote for the opposition or simply do not vote (Ahmed, Lodhi & Shahzad, 2011; Hooghe, Marien & Pauwels, 2011; Rachmat, 2014). It is for this reason that the study seeks to investigate whether social media usage influences the trust, loyalty and ultimately voting intention. It is envisaged that the study will formulate / interests can interact, engage, share opinions and knowledge. As content is user-generated, social media lends itself to be perceived as being personal, genuine and transparent.

In the political arena, social media has offered users new channels for political information. Instead of receiving political information from the media such as TV, print, radio among others, users now receive political communication from familiar sources via postings of friends and acquaintances (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010). Because of this accessibility, politics become part of the daily lives of young people and thus enhances their interest in politics. Gillmor (2006) affirms this assertion and adds that since social media consists mainly of user-generated content, users are also able to find views that are not well represented in traditional news media, which enhances their curiosity and interest to seek more information online.

Social media provides political parties with the advantage of addressing voters directly and rapidly, as politicians themselves can now easily publish their opinions on personal websites, weblogs, micro-blogging sites and social networking sites, thus mobilising voters and circumventing the selection criteria of journalists (Vergeer, 2012).
Over and above that, political parties and leaders get to interact and engage with voters, thus creating closer relationship and connection with citizens (Dale & Strauss, 2009). South Africa has experienced a big proliferation of social media usage over the years. According to the SA Social Media Landscape 2015 report, Facebook is still the most popular social network in South Africa, with 11, 8-million (22% of the population), followed by YouTube with a user base of 7, 2-million, then Twitter’s with 6, 6-million users, Instagram has 1, 1-million users and LinkedIn has 3, 8-million users in South Africa (SA Social Media Landscape, 2015 report). This increase resulted in social media playing a significant role in election campaigns during the 2009 and 2014 South African elections.

For South African political parties, social media platforms presented a viable platform to reach the youth, who have been demonstrating a trend of political apathy and lack of interest in politics. This was evident from the declining youth voter turnout over the years (Mattes, 2011; Mattes & Richmond, 2014). Also, the low voter numbers during the 2014 registrations talked to that lack of youth political participation (Schulz-Herzenberg, 2014(b)). By using social media, the parties wanted to engage This was to avoid alienating the mature voters who do not have access to social media. Although parties concur that social media is a viable communication medium, a myriad impediments impacted its usage and potential expansion. The cost and lack of access to smartphones (which is where social media can be accessed from), cost of accessing data, and a deficient signal were some of the obstacles (Booysen, 2014). Furthermore, social media requires expertise and financial resources for its benefits to be fully exploited (Towner & Dulio, 2012), which many the parties did not have much with the youth where they were (on social media platforms), using their language to inspire a robust political discourse. In addition, this platform was aimed to serve as an information gathering tool for parties so that they are able to gain insights about the general attitudes of the youth electorate (Booysen, 2014).

Ahead of the 2009 general election, both the African National Congress (ANC) and the Democratic Alliance (DA) (amongst others) created Facebook pages as a part of their online campaign strategies in an effort to communicate directly to citizens. Although parties had social media presence, a study by Walton and Donner (2011) contend that social media did not facilitate electoral communication and thus did not allow for broader contestation or deliberation. During the 2014 elections, parties endeavoured to expand their social media usage. However, due to the demographic diversity of the supporters, parties were somehow compelled to find the right balance between traditional media (pamphlets, newsletters, speeches, door-to-door grassroots visits), intermediary electronic media (SMS and email), and social media (Twitter, Facebook, Mxit, WhatsApp, Google broadcasts, podcasts).

of. Lilleker, Pack & Jackson (2010) posit that the Internet offers new and less established political parties more opportunities to disseminate their ideas, thereby enhancing political competitiveness. The performance of the Economic Freedom Front (EFF) in the 2014 elections confirms this assertion. The EFF is the new party that was formed by former ANC Youth leader, Julius Malema. EFF’s campaign strategy focused mainly on the youth voters and used social media, particularly Twitter, to reach the youth. Although the party’s election results did not meet the party’s expectations,
if one considers that the EFF managed to attain over one million votes in a very short time after its formation, it can be inferred that their impetus benefitted from online conversations (Findlay & Janse van Rensburg, 2015).

The studies conducted by Steenkamp and Hyde-Clarke (2012), Ayankoya (2013) and Malherbe (2015) suggest that the party's strategies did not apply Integrated Marketing Principles (IMC) in their election campaign strategies. The concept of IMC recognises the strategic roles that various communication disciplines (advertising, public relations, sales promotions, etc.) play in providing clarity, consistency and increased impact to marketing campaigns when combined with a comprehensive communications plan that includes both online and offline channels.

1.3 Problem statement

Social media is still a fairly new trend and the knowledge and experience of how to apply this platform effectively still needs to be further developed. According to Booysen (2014), South African political parties still lack expertise and skills to use the social media platforms and thus understanding of social media in political marketing needs to be further developed among political leaders, political parties and politicians.

In view of the continuing apathy, and dwindling levels of interest and participation in election campaigns by the youth as investigated by Mattes, 2011a; Schreiner and Mattes, 2012; Mattes and Richmond, 2014), the current study therefore seeks to add to this existing body of literature of political marketing using social media in South African election campaigns, by not only focusing on the usage of social media by political parties but go further and investigate the influence of social media political marketing on trust, loyalty and voting intention by the youth of South Africa.

Empirical research strongly supports the application of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) principles in electoral campaigns for maximum effect (Patti, Luck & Chapman, 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Towner & Dulio, 2012; Thakur, 2014; Pich & Dean, 2015). The Obama campaign was extremely successful in applying IMC principles, which gave his campaign tremendous impact, great awareness and positive resonance with voters. All the 3 studies researched, Steenkamp and Hyde-Clarke (2012); Ayankoya, (2013) and Malherbe, (2015) affirm that political parties did not leverage on the voluminous benefits social media presents to deal with youth apathy and create stronger bonds between political parties and voters.

1.4. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the influence of political marketing using social media on voter trust, loyalty and voting intention by the Youth of South Africa.

1.5. Empirical objectives

Drawing from the purpose of the current study, five specific empirical objectives are therefore formulated as provided below:

- To investigate a positive relationship between political marketing using social media and voter trust.
- To investigate whether there is a positive relationship between political marketing using social media and voter loyalty.
- To investigate whether there is a positive relationship between voter trust and voter loyalty.
- To investigate whether there is a positive relationship between voter trust, and voting intention.
- To investigate whether there is a positive relationship between voter loyalty and voting intention.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical framework

2.1.1. The Information-Motivation and Behavioural skills model (IMB)

Building on TRA and TPB, Fisher and Fisher (1992) developed another model that explains behaviour using the constructs of information, motivation, and behavioural skills (IMB). The Information-Motivation and Behavioural skills (IMB) model suggests that performing behaviour is driven by an individual’s information, motivation, and behavioural skills related to the behaviour (Glasford, 2008). Empirical research on the voting behaviour of both adults and the youth underscores the pivotal role of information, motivation, and behavioural skills to voting behaviour (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). All these scholars contend that individuals who are more informed about politics and who have a greater number of resources and skills are all more likely to vote (Glasford, 2008). The model conceptualises the psychological factors required to encourage behaviour and provides a general framework of how to increase the specific behaviour in targeted populations. According to the IMB model, information is an initial prerequisite to performing a given behaviour. With regards to voting behaviour, it is clear that in order for a person to vote in a particular election, it is necessary to have information about how to vote, as well as information about the candidates. Motivation to engage in a behaviour is a second prerequisite for performing a given behaviour and is theorised to include both personal motivation (i.e. attitudes toward performing the behaviour), and social motivation (i.e. perceived social support for engaging in the behaviour).

Thus, the IMB model suggests that whether an individual is motivated to vote is determined not only by their own personal feelings regarding whether voting is a good thing to do or not but also whether friends and other important referents provide social support for voting behaviour. Finally, according to the IMB model, behavioural skills are a third prerequisite to performing a given behaviour (Glasford, 2008). Specifically, the model posits that an individual’s sense of ability regarding the behavioural skills essential to perform the behaviour help to determine whether the individual engages in the behaviour. Thus, in a voting perspective, an individual would need to perceive that he or she has the behavioural skills necessary to vote. Furthermore, according to the IMB model, the extent to which individuals will vote is determined by whether they are well informed and motivated to act, and whether they perceive that they have the behavioural skills necessary to vote (Fisher & Fisher, 1992; Glasford, 2008). Figure 2.2 below illustrates the IMB model.
IMB model also draws on the TRA and the TPB for its conceptualization of social motivation (Fisher & Fisher, 1992). Young adults will vote if they perceive that they have the ability to vote, the information needed to vote, and are socially motivated to vote (i.e. if they perceive that there is social support from significant others for voting). Thus, the IMB adds one similar construct (i.e., social motivation) and two unique constructs (i.e., information and behavioural skills) to the TRA and the TPB. Information and social motivation were significant predictors of voting behaviour, such that the more information and social motivation a person had, the more likely that person was to vote.

2.1.2. Relevance of this model to the study

If political parties want to galvanise and motivate the youth of South Africa to vote, social media is the appropriate platform that could reach to a larger section of the youth. This implies that the use of social media to engage the youth should not only be seen as a once off or only be applied during the voting period, but it must be a continuous tool that is used to educate, interact, engage, motivate and therefore galvanise the youth towards greater political participation. This does not only end with political parties but also extends to the usage of social media by the IEC educate about voter registration and provide all the information relevant to voting, which will ultimately build voter trust, loyalty and also enhance voting intention. The youth will vote if they perceive that they have the ability to vote, the information needed to vote, and are socially motivated to vote (Glasford, 2008).

2.2. The youth and political participation

According to the National Youth Policy 2009-2014, the youth falls within the age group of 14 to 35 years. This is based on the mandate of the National Youth Commission Act 1996 and the National Youth Policy 2000. The 35 years upper age limit was adopted in order to take into account the historical and present-day conditions of South Africa, where the country still faces a myriad of imbalances that stem from the past. This definition is also consistent with the definition of youth as contained in the African Youth Charter (African Union, 2006) which defines youth as those between the ages of 15 and 35 years, although the latter excludes the 14-year-olds. For the purpose of this research, the IEC classification of the youth of 18-35 years will be used.

The youth globally are referred to as the Generation Y (Gen Y), or the Millennials, as they were born after the year 1992. Because they grow up in an era of technology, they are very technologically savvy and display high levels of confidence with technological advancements and innovation. They are assertive, driven, ambitious, opinionated, liberal and challenge convention. Because of their free-spirited and adventurous attitude and outlook, Millennials have the
ability to influence brands, politics, religion and technology in a phenomenal way. The internet and social media is a very important form of communication for them.

South Africa has one of the lowest average ages of the population among numerous BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and the developed world, at 24.9 years, compared to the global average age of 29.1 years (Booysen, 2014). According to Booysen (2014), there are about 77.6% of people younger than 35 years, and 42% between the ages of 14 and 35 years in South Africa. Based on these figures, it is evident that the younger generation constitutes a significant percentage of the country’s voting population. This supports the imperative of involving the youth in the processes of democracy, in order to entrench democracy fully (Mattes, 2012). According to Statistics South Africa (2011), young people constitute 41.2% (percent) of South Africa's population.

2.3. Decline in youth political participation in South Africa

The situation is no different in Africa. A study conducted in 19 African countries on the determinants of African students’ political participation, reported that Africa’s youth vote less and demonstrate a lower level of political participation (Resnick & Casale, 2011). The decline in political participation among the youth is of great concern for two reasons. Firstly, research has suggested that early political participation predicts future electoral involvement (Glasford, 2008). Therefore, increasing voter turnout at a young age can potentially increase overall turnout in the future. Secondly, when large segments of the population do not vote, the democratic system itself is undermined. Therefore youth political participation is undoubtedly the catalyst to democracy and the means by which individuals use all their social resources to influence the government’s decision-making process which is pivotal to a democratic society (Amoateng, 2015; Resnick & Casale, 2011).

From all the studies that have been conducted on the subject of youth political disengagement and decline in political participation, the foremost issues seem to centre around the lack of participation in elections (voter turnout), which the current study focuses on.

South Africa also experienced a decline in youth voter participation during the 2009 and 2014 general elections (Booysen, 2014; Mattes, 2011; Schulz-Herzenberg, 2014). The participation of young people in South Africa’s electoral and democratic processes is an issue that is of great importance to future political trends in the country. In terms of the 2011 Census, approximately 20 million of South Africa’s 52 million citizens were in the 4 five-year age bands for South Africa’s 15-34 year youth category (Statistics SA, 2014). This constitutes roughly 36% of the South African population. Close to 50% of the potential electorate, including both registered and unregistered citizens are of the ages 18 to 35 years (Schulz-Herzenberg, 2014). A day before the 2014 South African elections, Statistics SA advised that South Africa’s voting-age population (VAP) was 32.6 million. Youth registration for South Africa’s 2014 general election was lower than figures for other age categories, as illustrated in voter registration breakdowns in the run-up to the 2014 election (Schulz-Herzenberg, 2014) in Table 2.1 below:
Table 1.1: South African Voter registration figures for 2014.

| Age category | StatsSA VAP | Age category Registered voters as of 11 November 2013 | Age category |
|--------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 18-19        | 1,926,127   | 434,370                                           | 22.6         |
| 20-29        | 9,481,294   | 5,168,441                                         | 54.5         |
| 30-39        | 6,895,947   | 6,018,575                                         | 87.3         |
| 40-49        | 5,301,005   | 4,912,242                                         | 92.7         |
| 50-59        | 3,867,469   | 3,692,158                                         | 95.5         |
| 60-69        | 2,255,911   | 2,189,719                                         | 97.1         |
| 70-79        | 1,172,634   | 1,136,477                                         | 96.9         |
| 80+          | 533,647     | 560,432                                           | 105.0        |

Note: VAP=Voting Age Population
Source: Electoral Commission (IEC), Hans Seidel Foundation: Background Report Elections 2014.

This sharp decline in youth voter turnout created an impetus for South African political parties to employ social media in their electoral campaigns in order to reach, appeal to and drive the youth voters.

2.4. Political Marketing

Copious definitions have been provided by numerous scholars for political marketing. The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines political marketing as “Marketing intended to persuade target audiences to vote for a particular person or party, while Shama (1976) defined political marketing as the process whereby political candidates direct their ideas at voters in an attempt to meet their potential needs and thus gaining their support for the candidate and ideas in question. Lees-Marshment (2001) and Henneberg (2002), regard political marketing as a fusion between marketing and politics, whereby marketing practices, strategies and concepts are broadly applied to politics. Nielsen (2012) considers political marketing to relate to mutual exchanges of value between political parties and their environments. Henneberg (2002) further proposes that political marketing seeks to establish, maintain and enhance long-term political relationships at a profit for society so that the objectives of the individual political parties involved are met. This is done by mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises.

According to Ediraras et al (2013), political marketing is the study of the processes of interactions between political parties and their environment with the aim of positioning the party and its communications, where voters are regarded as consumers whose needs have to be satisfied. Political marketing is not just about political advertising, party political newscasts and electoral speeches but its covers the whole area of party positioning in the electoral market. The definition by Lock and Harris (1996) focuses on political marketing’s role to communicate with the electorate, party members, media and funders while Wring (1997) delineates it as the manner in which a party scans and analyses the market and uses those insights to generate a competitive offering, which will aid the party to realise its objectives, satisfy the needs of the electorate, in exchange for their votes. A more
A comprehensive definition was provided by Newman (2012), who regards political marketing as the application of marketing principles and procedures in political campaigns by political organisations, which encompass the analysis, development, execution, and management of strategic campaigns by candidates or political parties with the aim advancing their own political ideologies and win elections. The main focus is on the strategic management of campaigns (Newman, 2012). While these scholars provide different definitions of political marketing, what is common in their definitions is that political marketing entails the application of marketing principles to politics (Stromback, Michael & Spiro, 2010; Gbadeyan, 2011). All these definitions reinforce the main similarities with regards to the application of product and political marketing. These similarities are found in what in marketing is regarded as the marketing mix.

It is important to note though that while the electorate is the primary target market in election campaigns, there are other markets or stakeholders that the political campaign must talk to. According to Kotler & Kotler (1999), the different key stakeholders or markets are the voters, media, contributors, party organisation and interest groups or organised constituencies. In order to furnish an even better perspective of the concept of political marketing and its resemblance to the marketing of products, O'Cass (1996) uses an Exchange Theory model which was developed by Kotler in 1975. The theory states that when voters cast their votes, a transaction takes place. In return for the votes, the party makes promises about the policies that it will implement when it assumes power as the government. When the party fails to deliver on the promises it made during campaigning, distrust and dissatisfaction occurs, which ultimately makes people not to vote for that party again. The same applies to products when a product fails to deliver on its promise, the buyer becomes dissatisfied and may never buy the product again. Negative word of mouth may also follow, which will damage the brand. The relationship between marketing and politics stems from the fact that both compete for the loyalty of the consumers/citizens. In political marketing, concepts are sold instead of products or services. Both use tactics such as advertising, PR, direct mail, online etc. While political marketing is growing as a lucid sub-area in its own right, it is part of modern politics (Newman, 2012). The purpose of political marketing is to acquaint voters with the party’s position on specific issues thereby influencing voter behaviour (Anyangwe, 2012).

Although the use of the marketing mix is highly advocated by various researchers
such as Ediraras et al, 2013; Arofah and Nugrahajati, 2014; Okan, Topcu and Akyuz, 2014, other authors are of the view that the evolution of political marketing entails a holistic approach to marketing by focusing more on building solid and valuable voter relationships through the application of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) practices and principles, in order to build and maintain brand relationships with voters and other important stakeholders (Pich & Dean, 2015).

A study conducted by Harris et al (2014) confirmed the mounting use, impact and importance of political consultants, the internet, social media, radio, print, billboard and television advertising among others, as evidence of this transformation in political marketing in South Africa. The study also recognised that the other forms of campaigning such as canvassing, rallies and door to door campaigns still play a vital role in South Africa in order to for the political parties to reach out to the communities at grassroots level. From the arguments put forward by various scholars, it is evident that political marketing has a significant role to play in modern politics and as media platforms change.

Cognizance must be taken of the fact that consumer needs and behaviour are rapidly changing, which necessitates the imperatives for political marketing evolution in order to ultimately play a central role in changing the behaviour of the youth worldwide. This will be through building trust and loyalty in government, which will result in greater participation in the democracy by the youth.

2.5. Social media

Social media is a part of Web 2.0 technologies, which include all online social networks, weblogs, and wikis. These technologies are focused on the concept of user-generated content, online collaboration, information sharing, and collective intelligence (Davidson & Yoran, 2007). Social media can, therefore, be seen as a peer-to-peer communications tool providing interactivity and content on demand, particularly with the use of mobile devices (Coyle & Meier, 2009). Several researchers define social media as a collection of Internet-based applications that follow on the technological foundations of Web 2.0, and enable the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Effing et al, 2011; Picazo-Vela et al, 2012; Joseph, 2012; Towner &
Web 2.0 is a “term that was first used in 2004 to describe a new way in which software developers and end-users started to utilize the World Wide Web; that is, as a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion” (Effing et al., 2011). There is always confusion about the difference between social media and social networking sites. In demystifying these concepts, Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) describe social media as the “tools of communication”, which enable individuals to transmit, reach and influence others while social networking is the use of “social media tools” to interact and communicate directly with people that one is already connected to or with one wishes to be connected with.

There are five pillars of social media, namely, a) participation, which entails sharing of opinions between users, b) openness, which centres on the fact that social media is about exchanging information and collaboration, c) conversation which is about dialogue between the different users, d) community, a group of people sharing the same interests and e) interconnection, creating an interconnection by creating links to other websites, resources or people (Welhoff, 2012). Table 2.2 below presents an overview of the social media platforms that are prevalent in South Africa.

Table 2.2: Social media platforms in South Africa

| Platform       | Description                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Twitter        | • A free microblogging service that lets registered members disseminate short posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices. It only allows the use of 140 characters. |
| Facebook       | • Free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and videos, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. |
| Google Plus +  | • Google Search Engine platform that provides various features such as Facebook and additional Google linked personalised services. It is designed to replicate the way people interact offline more closely than is the case in other social networking services. |
| LinkedIn       | • Social networking site designed specifically for the business community and professionals. The goal of the site is to allow registered members to establish and document networks of people they know and trust professionally. It provides opportunities for blogging, promotion of services and sharing of professional and business information. |
| **Instagram** | A platform where users can connect and share images. Instagram's goal is to help companies and individuals to reach each other through sharing captivating imagery in a rich, visual environment. Instagram has proven itself a powerful platform for marketers to reach their customers and prospects through sharing pictures and brief messages. Product/services images/facilities are accessible with through the smartphones. |
| **YouTube** | Online public communications site. The site allows for registered users to upload and have available for the public their videos for viewing. Anyone who goes to the site can view the videos that are posted on this site. |
| **Whatsup** | Proprietary cross-platform instant messaging client for smartphones that operates under a subscription business model. It uses the Internet to send text messages, images, video, user location and audio media messages to other users using standard cellular mobile numbers. As of September 2015, WhatsApp had a user base of up to 900 million, making it the most globally popular messaging application (We are social, 2015). |
| **We Chat** | WeChat provides text messaging, hold-to-talk voice messaging, broadcast (one-to-many) messaging, video conferencing, video games, sharing of photographs and videos, and location sharing. It can exchange contacts with people nearby via Bluetooth, as well as provide various features for contacting people at random if desired. As of August 2015, WeChat has over a billion created accounts, 600 million active users (We are social, 2015). |
| **Pinterest** | A social curation website for sharing and categorising images found online. Pinterest requires brief descriptions but the main focus of the site is visual. Clicking on an image will take you to the original source, so, for example, if you click on a picture of a pair of shoes, you might be taken to a site where you can purchase them. An image of blueberry pancakes might take you to the recipe; a picture of a whimsical birdhouse might take you to the instructions. |
| **Mixit** | Free instant messaging application developed by Mxit (Pty) Ltd. in South Africa that runs on over 8,000 devices, including feature phones, Android, BlackBerry, iPhone, iPad, Windows Phone and tablets. |
| **Snapchat** | Video messaging application which allows users to take photos, record videos, add text and drawings, and send them to a controlled list of recipients. |
| **Blogs** | Regularly updated web page, typically run by an individual or small group that is written in an informal or conversational style. Platforms such as LinkedIn create an environment for companies and clients to connect online. Companies that recognise the need for information, originality and accessibility employ blogs to make their products popular and unique, and ultimately reach out to consumers who are privy to social media. |

### 2.6. South African digital landscape

The use of social media in South Africa has increased (SA Social Media Landscape 2015 report). This increase resulted in social media playing a significant role in political campaigning, leading up to the 2014 May elections. According to the SA Social Media Landscape 2015 report, Facebook remained the most popular social network in South Africa, followed by YouTube and Twitter. Facebook is the first high-tech platform in South Africa that has
seen exactly equal take-up by males and females, with 5.6-million males and 5.6 million females using the platform. In a total of 11.8-million South African users – 22% of the population – 8.8-million access Facebook on their mobile phones. The 13-18 age group remains the single biggest on Facebook, with 2, 5-million users (SA Social Media Landscape 2015 report).

The number of YouTube and Instagram users in South Africa increased, respectively, by 53% and 65% over the past year. By August 2014, YouTube had a user base of 7.2-million South Africans, making it second only to Facebook’s 11.8-million. Instagram grew from 680,000 active users in 2013 to 1.1-million in 2014. Twitter’s previously dramatic rise has slowed down, although still growing healthily by 20% in the past year – to 6.6-million users. LinkedIn has grown by 40%, to 3.8-million users in South Africa (SA Social Media Landscape, 2015 report). The usage of the mobile phones and smartphones to access the Internet has been a major driver of the penetration of the Internet in South Africa.

2.7. Social Media for political participation

Communication between political parties and citizens has traditionally taken the form of one-way communication method with parties delivering a strategic and expounded message to potential voters (Chadwick, 2006; Xifra, 2010). Social media has steered major transformations in the political communication sphere and has continued to transform both the global and local political terrain since it was introduced by the Obama campaign team during the 2008 US presidential elections and has emerged as a potent political organising tool since then. Consequently, political parties and citizens can now establish and manage their own spheres of public political communication independent of the involvement of journalists. Subsequently, this medium was adopted by many countries to augment their political marketing strategies with the objective of fostering more profound public political participation and engagement, in particular with the youth (Zang et al, 2009). Social media undoubtedly has brought a renewed perspective in the political trajectory of the 21st century, not only for campaigning but for galvanising the public to engage in the political discourse (Steenkamp & Hyde-Clarke, 2012).

The benefits offered by this platform in the political arena are boundless. It’s cost effectiveness in the dissemination and retrieval of information (Steenkamp & Hyde-Clarke, 2012), changing the “user’s role and engagement”, as users also become participants in the content creation, (Bimber, 2014), the potential to reduce citizens’ apathy and increase participation together with the massive potential to attract citizens, widen participation, which stimulates the feeling of belonging to a certain group and contributes to an easier construction of collective identities (Vesnic-Alujevic, 2011; Steenkamp & Hyde-Clarke, 2012; Joseph,
The benefits that different researchers have found include social media’s ability to foster the involvement and public participation in the political discourse (Vesnic-Alujevic, 2011), and because of the existing large user base that many social media platforms have, it can be used to target sections of the population efficiently, while using little resources in order to create a sense of personalised communication with the electorate (Bimber, 2014). Social media has also become very useful to read and gauge people’s sentiments, hence Biswas et al (2014) have coined this a change from “dipstick” research to “tweetstick”, implying that platforms such as Twitter are now useful for gauging citizen sentiments.

It is very clear from the above benefits that political participation and engagement could be fortified through the use of social network sites, for mobilising and galvanising the youth around deeper political participation. They can also act as the cornerstone to profound political discussions and opinions in ways that can achieve and sustain shared and cooperative political discourse and trajectory across the globe. According to Biswas et al (2014), the relationship between social media and politics is rooted in the desire for change as citizens are using the online information and social networks to find change.

Other than its recent extensive usage in election campaigns, social media has played an immense role in civic action such as boycotts, mobilisation through community work, unconventional political activities, and digitally facilitated forms of political expression. This creates opportunities for people who belong to social movements and political groups to build relationships with one another, disseminate mobilising information and expanding their opportunities to engage in political activities (Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2011).

The well-documented examples of effective and powerful usage of social media for political mobilisations are the 2011 Egyptian uprising, known as the "Arab spring" and the October 2015 South African student boycotts, known as "feesmustfall" demonstrations. The use of social media in the Egyptian revolution changed the dynamics of social mobilisation. Social media introduced speed and interactivity that were lacking in the traditional mobilisation techniques, which generally include the use of leaflets, posters, and faxes. For instance, social media enabled domestic and international Egyptian activists to follow events in Egypt, join social-networking groups, and engage in discussions.

A major advantage of social media in the Egyptian revolution was its capacity for swiftly exchanging and disseminating information to millions of people inside and outside of Egypt. For instance, as Egyptians were carefully watching events unfold in Tunisia while also planning their own movement, activists from both countries were exchanging information, ideas, and words of encouragement online.

The "feesmustfall" demonstrations referred to the protests that were driven by tertiary students who took to the street after the announcement that tertiary fees will increase by 10.3%. The protests started at Wits University in Johannesburg and within days, they had spread across the country, with almost all universities in South Africa also joining in on the protest against the fee increases. The student campaign was driven social media, in particular, Twitter, via the hashtag "feesmustfall” and also Instagram.

For social media to be effective, an understanding of which platform is most effective for which type of messages is significant. Some empirical research on social media platforms confirms that social media platforms such as Twitter are
expedient for sharing relatively one-dimensional and occasionally insubstantial information and have a relatively short lifespan (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, & Chowdury, 2009). Based on personal observations and on the fact that Twitter only provides space for 140 characters, the researcher concurs that Twitter facilitates rapid, brief conversations and engagement and therefore recommends that political parties use this platform for announcement. Twitter is, therefore, relevant for building brand awareness and is a straightforward and swift way for political parties to keep the electorate informed on short topics. The recommendation is to use Twitter to direct people to the party website or to other online content, such as a blog. Twitter is not the right tool for that conversation. A blog post or Facebook update which can be linked from Twitter could be a better solution. Platforms such as Facebook are appropriate for conveying and imparting meaningful, profound and richer information, which can be easily promoted to other networks with a single click (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, & Chowdury, 2009; Weinberg & Pehlivan,2011). Moreover, they possess mechanisms that encourage and heighten interaction, two-way communication, comments and responses, which in the long run strengthen trust and loyalty to a political party.

Platforms such as Instagram, which are gaining popularity and more users among the South African youth are fitting platforms to post and share photos of campaign activities, events, travels and people. The current study focuses on the role that social media plays in election campaigns (voting) and whether using social media enhances trust, loyalty and voting intention. Against this backdrop, the following section will review and expound on how social media has been used as a communication tool during elections.

2.8. Social media in election campaigns in South Africa

The South African political landscape has changed dramatically, from politicians campaigning door to door, holding rallies and public speeches to social media playing a pivotal role in persuading potential voters, particularly youth voters, about the party to vote for. During South Africa’s 5th democratic elections, parties embarked on vigorous campaigning, using social media as one of the key battlefields for votes, particularly the youth vote. With new parties such as the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook were used to make substantial headways in the battle for South African voters. Although parties have fully embraced social media as part of their campaign strategy, they still realise that they cannot abandon traditional media, to secure the adult voters, who are not on social media, cannot afford smartphones or are in remote areas where internet access is limited (Booysen, 2014). During the 2014 general elections, political parties included social media in their media strategies although the extent thereof differed as there was still a big imperative to achieve a proper balance with other forms of media. Research indicates that Twitter and Facebook were the
most prevalent platforms that were utilized by the parties during the 2014 elections (Booysen, 2014; Schulz-Herzenberg, 2014) and according to these researchers, the selection of platforms was influenced by cost, ease of use, ability of the medium to drive the message across, having some their party profiles; galvanising citizens to register for and vote in elections; encouraging supporters to attend campaign events and launching their campaign adverts. From this, it appears that when it came to using online and social media, the trend was to use these media to disseminate existing electoral messages rather than interacting with existing and potential supporters, which could have provided the parties space to make their voices heard in an uncontrolled manner (Duncan, 2014). During the 2014 elections, Twitter seemed to be the most popular mouthpiece amongst influential users including politicians, analysts and experts and news agencies (Findlay & Janse van Rensburg, 2015). Hence it formed an extensive portion of the DA and EFF leaders, Helen Zille and Julius Malema’s social media strategy. This may be attributed to the fact that Twitter, notwithstanding its fewer users than Facebook, has greater engagement per user (Facebook average per post: 19 likes & 1.5 shares; Twitter average per post: 0.4 favourites & 23 retweets) (Fuseware report, 2014).

The DA was the early adopter of social media platforms, in particular, Twitter with the ANC and EFF following suit. The data presented in a study conducted by Findlay and Janse van Rensburg (2015) posits that South Africa’s political conversation is now clearly a three horse race between the DA, EFF and ANC. Table 2.3 below illustrates the Political leaders Twitter activities during the 2014 general elections.

Table 2.3: South African Political Leader’s Twitter activity during the 2014 elections

| Candidate     | Political Party | Twitter          | Facebook       |
|---------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Jacob Zuma    | ANC             | 372,000 followers | 48,000 likes   |
| Julius Malema | EFF             | 478,000 followers | 129,833 likes  |
| Helen Zille   | DA              | 442,000 followers | 289,000 likes  |

Source: Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa South Africa Election Updates, Issue 8: //www.electionupdate.org.za/2014eu9editorial2.htm

It is still difficult however to see whether social media actually translates into votes. According to the study by Findlay and Janse van Rensburg (2015), the media coverage both media coverage and Twitter mentions but won the largest number of seats in parliament. Equally, the EFF received a lot of both media coverage and Twitter mentions; while the DA appears to have received exactly its fair share. The incongruence between seats won, media coverage and Twitter mentions can be and Twitter share of mentions of parties does not correlate with the final number of seats won in parliament. During the 2014 elections, the ANC received a lower share of attributed to the fact that Twitter and social media as a whole does not represent the rural vote; a stronghold of the ANC. However, it does point to potential momentum in the future as more voters gain access to social media and join existing political conversations, a big change in these patterns may be observed (Findlay & Janse
van Rensburg, 2015). It would be interesting to see if there will be any significant changes in these patterns during the 2016 local government elections.

2.9. Voter Trust

Consumer behaviour, an arena of marketing, has resemblances with politics and campaigning. The manner in which voters select political parties is analogous to how consumers make purchase decisions and has been researched extensively (Rachmat, 2010; Ahmed et al, 2011). Hence, the philosophies that pertain to marketing and selling products are easily transferred to the marketing of political parties and candidates. In applying the principles of product marketing to elections, political parties or candidates make promises to the electorate through election campaigns in a form of advertising, PR, events, social media, among other methods. From the knowledge that is acquired and the interactions between the party and voters, trust develops, which results in the voter voting for the political party. An election process can thus be viewed as the purchase process, the voter as the buyer and the political party as the product. In marketing, the role played by trust in developing and maintaining relationships during exchange processes, such as buyer-seller relationships is pivotal (Rachmat, 2010; Nguyen, Leclerc & LeBlanc, 2013). According to Chinomona and Dubihlela (2014), trust has become important in many business decisions involving uncertainty and dependence and for consumers to trust a product, they must possess enough product information and must have experienced the product on a number of occasions. Trust is a broad concept that has been defined differently by scholars from diverse disciplines such as psychology, marketing and political marketing to name a few.

In psychology literature, scholars have defined trust as an expectation that an individual or a group hold that the word or upon (Schiffman et al, 2008). Ahmed et al (2011) and Himelboim et al (2012) have defined trust as a situation when parties in a relationship believe that neither party would take advantage of the other. However, a definition that seems to have been used extensively in psychology literature is the one offered by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995), who defined trust as “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party”. Despite the different definitions, there seems to be some degree of convergence in the definitions of trust. All the definitions above underscore three issues. Firstly, trust is fostered when a customer amply believes in a specific promise made by another individual or group can be relied product or service. Secondly, trust relates to the level of confidence that one party has on another party that they would behave as expected. Thirdly, trust is a consequence of expectations being met by parties in a relationship.

Based on the marketing principles, expectations and promises, attached with the product, should be achievable because if a the product fails to meet the expectations of the consumers, they become disappointed and trust diminishes. If the product successfully meets the stated expectations and promises, the consumers are satisfied and when it exceeds the expectations, the consumers become happy and trust is strengthened (Kotler et al., 2009), (Ahmed, et al, 2011). These expectations are based on the company’s competence, integrity and
benevolence (Nguyen, Leclerc, & LeBlanc, 2013). Competence refers to ability and expertise and in a customer’s view, it signals the company’s capacity to run the business effectively and live up to the customer’s expectations. Integrity relates to honesty and the company delivering on its promises and benevolence represents the company’s empathy in its dealings with customers. Although these three dimensions are likely to be linked to each other, they each contribute separately to influence the level of trust in another within a relationship. However, ability and integrity are likely to be most influential early in a relationship, as information on one's benevolence needs more time to emerge. The effect of benevolence will increase as the relationship between the parties strengthens. Other authors opine that reputation plays a pivotal role in building trust and can also be a strong predictor of buying behaviour and the voters. High level of trust reflects voter confidence and belief that the political party will meet their expectations. On the other side, the low level of trust reflects that voters have no confidence in the political party (Ahmed et al 2011; Hooghe et al, 2011; Rachmat, 2013). When voters have trust and confidence in the political party and candidate, they will vote for them. Conversely, when trust does not exist, the voters either vote for the opposition or simply do not vote. Trust deficit leads to a general disconnect by citizens from the political system and also has direct electoral consequences, such as a decline in voter turnout. In the political marketing realm, the trust construct has focused on voter or political trust, trust in candidates, election trust and government trust among others. It has been referred to as either “political trust” or “voter trust”. Although the words “voter trust” and “political trust” are used interchangeably, as the current study focuses on elections, for the purpose of the study, the term voter trust will be employed. The following definitions have been put forward for voter trust:

✓ “The confident expectations of the voters on the candidate’s reliability and positive intentions” (Rachmat, 2010).
✓ “The citizens’ or voters’ sense of trusting of political candidates, political officeholders or their trust of local, state or national level governmental institutions or bodies” (Hooghe, Marien & Pauwels, 2011).
✓ “The ratio of people’s evaluation of government performance relative to...
their normative expectations of how government ought to perform” (Hetherington, 2005).

✓ “Positive evaluation of government and parties to serve the public interests well, coupled with optimism and confidence in their intentions to do ‘good’ (Dermody & Hanmer-Lloyd, 2004).

✓ “An expectation held by a voter or a group of voters that the words or promises of a political candidate (or officeholder) can be relied on” (Schiffman, Thelen & Sherman, 2010).

According to Delgado-Ballester (2004), trust reflects two reliability and predictability. Reliability is usually based on the voter’s belief that a party will deliver on its campaign promises. Predictability represents the ability to consistently meet the needs of voters. Predictability reduces uncertainty and risk. This describes aspects that make individuals feel that the behaviour of one party is directed or motivated by positive intentions towards the welfare of others.

This argument holds true and it is when performance of the leader against their pre-existing set expectations. Hetherington and Ruddolphy (2008) suggest that performance, process and probity are the three major components of trust in politics. These components talk to the ability, integrity and benevolence already aforementioned. Numerous studies have been conducted on the issue of the decline in voter trust across the world (Hooghe et al, 2011; Levi & Stoker, 2000).

Empirical research undertaken has also confirmed that the absence of voter trust has a profound impact on voting behaviour (Hetherington, 2005; Hetherington & Husser, 2012; Pauwels, 2010). Distrust leads to discontent, which manifests itself in a number of ways. Firstly, discontented citizens will cease to participate in institutionalised politics such as voting, the party does not act reliably and as predicted that distrust arises. Schiffman et al., (2010) contend that the party incumbent is also very important in developing trust to a political party. The party leader is always the “face” of a party and is the one who mainly has direct interaction with the public. Trust of a political leader is important in election campaigns because people generally trust someone whose vision they buy into. It is improbable that leaders who are not trusted can successfully mobilise and get citizens to commit to a vision. If people do not have confidence in the leader, they will not support his vision. Once the party is in government, the leader is actually the frontline facilitator of the government policies and provision of services. This interaction results in the fluctuation of the voter trust as service provision is significant (Kotler et al., 2009). Incumbent trust is therefore based on the relationship between the citizens and an incumbent and is purely dependent on the actions of government officials and also on how the citizens perceive the performance of the leader against their pre-existing set expectations. Hetherington and Ruddolphy (2008) suggest that performance, process and probity are the three major components of trust in politics. These components talk to the ability, integrity and benevolence already aforementioned. Numerous studies have been conducted on the issue of the decline in voter trust across the world (Hooghe et al, 2011; Levi & Stoker, 2000).

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satisfied consumers. Nowadays, voters are more socially linked with each other via social media. Due to this strong social linkage, voters tend to spread information more rapidly. This is the result of cynicism that voters have a tendency to switch their affiliations from one candidate to another. This demonstrates the potency of social media in political marketing and its potential influence on voter trust. The study seeks to add to the limited literature of how political marketing, using social media can influence the trust that voters have in the party and ultimately their intention to vote for that party.

2.10. Voter loyalty

The voter loyalty concept derives from the traditional marketing concept of customer loyalty. Research on customer loyalty continues to be of primary interest in the academic sphere. On reviewing existing literature on the subject, the most research available centres predominantly on brand or product loyalty, (e.g., Aaker, 1996; Uncles, Dowling, & Hammond, 2003), store loyalty store (e.g., Corstjens & Lal, 2000) and organizational loyalty among others (Brown & Peterson, 1993). There is still a big lacuna of research of loyalty from a voting context. Customer loyalty is regarded as one of a company’s most valuable assets in marketing. By creating and maintaining customer loyalty, a company develops a long-term, profitable and mutually beneficial relationship with its customers. Attaining and maintaining customer loyalty is what companies aspire for (Harris & Goode, 2004). Loyalty has a big impact on organisational performance as loyal customers are less price sensitive, they may increase the number of purchases or the frequency of purchases or even both, they talk positively about the product or company which results in positive word of mouth, they also become advocates for the organisation concerned by encouraging others to purchase and influence their In a political context, voter loyalty refers to the voter’s favourable attitude towards a party resulting in repeat voting behaviour (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). According to Chiru and Gherghina (2012), voter loyalty decision-making and are willing to forgive other minor mistakes that a company may commit in the service delivery process. These outcomes are enviable and have an impact as they also yield effective word-of-mouth advertising for the company (Rowley, 2005). Retaining customers also makes it difficult for competitors to enter the market or to increase their market share, and loyal customers often refer new customers to the service provider, which is very beneficial, as there is no expenditure in gaining the new customers (Du Plessis, 2010; Van Vuuren, Roberts-Lombard & Van Tonder, 2012). Loyalty has been defined as “the strength of a customer’s dispositional attachment to a brand (or a service provider) and his/her intent to rebuy the brand (or repatronize the service provider) consistently in the future” (Pan, Sheng & Xie, 2012). The definition of loyalty outlines two key elements. The first is the behavioural component, which refers to buying behaviours repeated over time. The second is the affective component which refers to the emotional bond of an individual towards something, which, in this case, is the selling point. Key components in the development of affective loyalty are attitude, satisfaction, trust and commitment. Loyalty is assessed and created over time, in a chronological manner following a process consisting of four phases (i.e., cognition, affection, conation and action).

In a political context, voter loyalty refers to the voter’s favourable attitude towards a party resulting in repeat voting behaviour (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). According to Chiru and Gherghina (2012), voter loyalty denotes mainly electoral choice in two consecutive elections. This implies that voters are loyal when they vote for the same political party in different consecutive elections. Bauer (2010) refers to loyalty as
when an individual maintains their partisan identity even when the party does not provide them with benefits. The author further posits that Individuals may attempt to express dissatisfaction with their party through behaviours such as not voting for it or even boycotting the polls. The authors posit that even though electoral competition may play a role in swaying voters to consider other parties, issues such as party identification and individual inclination towards short-term policy preferences and evaluations still do influence voter choice (Chiru & Gherghina, 2012). Individuals who identify with a party tend to support it in elections. Some authors suggest that trust and loyalty are sustained by the party performance. The study conducted by Chiru and Gherghina (2012), confirms that voter loyalty is affected by the voter's evaluations of the performance of a party. Furthermore, Chiru and Gheghina (2012), also concluded that party identification has a significant relationship with loyalty. Party identification is part of a socialisation from childhood and is one of the means by which people are familiarised to the political world. By the time an individual reaches voting age, party loyalties have been formed and at times are extremely difficult to change (Bauer, 2010). Party identification is an important attitude that influences the voting behaviour, perceptions of and participation in the political arena. Party identification predicts individual voting, their levels of political participation and how they receive political information (Bauer, 2010).

Currently the majority of South Africans vote on the basis of party loyalty instead of alternative policy choices (Cilliers, 2014). Other authors hold a different view about the impact that party identification has on electoral behaviour and loyalty. According to Abramson, Aldrich and Rhode (2003), the direct influence of party identification on the vote is minor and insignificant in presidential elections. However, party identification indirectly influences evaluations of candidates, assessments of government performance, and perceptions of political events. Party identification may be somewhat less important now than in the past, but it is still a very significant factor in explaining political orientations and behaviour (Abramson et al., 2003).

It was also an interesting insight to learn that researchers are finding that in many established democracies, party ties are eroding as voters are changing their party allegiance. According to Dalton (2014), evidence indicates a considerable erosion in partisan loyalties and this has become a continuing feature of contemporary politics. This may be attributed to the abundance of information that voters have access to and based on that can form their own opinion and also hold the government to account. The trend is also prevalent in South Africa as demonstrated by Schulz-Herzenberg (2006; 2009) that the levels of party ‘partisanship’ are declining, which implies a shift towards a more open political landscape. According to Van Riet (2010), voters can be divided into habitual voters and high-involvement voters. Both groups require different approaches to creating loyalty. With habitual voters, loyalty is increased by creating brand awareness, through the use of all marketing tactics, including social media. High-involvement voters are affected less by brand awareness, and respond more to a strong brand image. Parties can create a strong brand image by being distinct and unique, but also act consistently, which builds trust (van Riet, 2010). With the voter loyalty that has been demonstrating a decline around the world and the decreasing participation and involvement of youth political participation, political parties are starting to utilise social media to try and connect with the electorate. They are starting to become centres of community that support common ideologies and providing venues for social interactivity. Through this, political parties are starting to give voters a voice and provide a sense of
belonging that supports group identity. This type of community formation of politically connected individuals equates to an attempt of fostering voter loyalty.

In the past, initial patterns of support for political parties were likely to be shaped by family, but the process of detachment from these formative social settings appears to be intensifying and changing with more exposure and access to information (Needham, 2006). The political landscape has changed and is characterised by intense competition. In an atmosphere of declining party membership and voter dealignment, political parties cannot assume that the positive impressions that brought them to victory will keep their winning voter coalitions together until the next election. They must build relationships with voters in order to secure positive endorsements. Relationship marketing is a useful focus for politics because it moves away from a transactional focus on the point of sale, i.e. the election. It recognises that political parties, like companies, must retain existing supporters as well as converting new ones. Fulfilling promises that have been made is equally important as a means of achieving customer satisfaction, retention of the customer base, and long-term profitability. Marketing as a discipline is evolving, with an emphasis on the co-creation and co-existence of value, relationships, and connectivity (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). As a result, political parties are recognizing the need to reflect and adapt to these changes, adopting new approaches and technologies into their marketing strategies developing communication that resonates with the youth and also aggressively utilise communication that they prefer, not only to engage with the youth during voting period but to encourage sustainable participation that will build trust and loyalty and also enhance voting intention.

2.11. Voting Intention

Hsu (1987) pointed out that purchase intention referred to certain exchange behaviour created after consumers' general evaluation of a product. It is a perceptual reaction taken towards one's attitude to an object. That is, consumers' purchase intention is formed by their evaluation of products or attitude towards a brand combined with external stimulating factors. Dodds et al. (1991) suggested that purchase intention represents the possibility for consumers to buy a product. Engel et al. (2001) proposed that purchase intention involves subjective judgment for future behaviour. Purchase intention stands for what we would like to buy in the future. According to Shao et al. (2004), purchase intention covers several essential meanings, firstly it refers to the possibility for consumers to be “willing” to consider buying, it represents what a person “wants” to buy in the future and it reveals the decision of a consumer to “buy” a company’s product “again.”

Grazioli and Jarvenpaa (2000) suggested that trust imposes direct or indirect influences on internet users’ purchase intention under an e-commerce environment. Koufaris and Hampton-Sosa (2004) studied the causes and effects
influencing customer trust in a website and found that the interactions between customers and websites influence customer trust through related website beliefs. Meanwhile, customer trust further manipulates purchase intention (Lin & Lu, 2010). Voting intention refers to a person’s desire to vote for a particular candidate or party (Rachmat, 2010). Trust is key as voters will inevitably fortify their intention to vote for the candidate and party they trust. Trust and loyalty are the main drivers of this decision, and thus lead to intention (Gefen, 2000). Jones and Kim (2010) argue that trust leads to future intentions and that high trust would lead to brand loyalty. Therefore, when trust increases, the perceived risk of consumers decreases, and the impact would lead to behavioural intention (Kim et al., 2008). When the voters have a high degree of trust on a particular candidate, they intend to vote for that particular candidate. Due to the risk in the general election, voters strengthen their intention to vote for the candidate whom they trust. According to Gefen (2000), trust reduces the undesirable complexity. Trust is the main mechanism affecting the decision, and thus leads to intention (Gefen, 2000). This means, the higher the preference, the more would be the increase in intensity (Komiak & Benbasat, 2006). Komiak and Benbasat (2006) explain that according to TRA, intentions are determined by attitude. When the voters have a high degree of trust on a particular candidate, they intend to vote for that particular candidate. It is argued that due to high trust in the candidate or political party, perceived risks will decline, and the voters will strengthen their commitment to vote. In essence, voters will vote for the candidate or party that meets their expectations. It is a reflection of the reliability and positive intentions held by the voters towards the party. This is supported by the empirical findings of various studies on trust and brand trust (Gefen, 2000; Jones & Kim, 2010; Kim et al., 2008; Komiak & Benbasat, 2006). Some empirical literature demonstrates that media usage and voting behaviour are related; finding that exposure to television news, radio and newspapers and social media engagement has significant effects on the two key electoral behaviours: turnout (Aarts & Semetko 2003) and voting intention (Della Vigna & Kaplan, 2007). Existing empirical studies on patterns of web use indicates that the Internet is a medium where users frequently encounter content that challenges their previous preferences.

3. THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

In order to statistically test the relationships between the study constructs, a conceptual model or the theoretical framework on which the study is based is illustrated in figure 2.4 below, adapted from Chinomona & Dubihlela (2014). The current research will investigate four variables, namely political marketing using social media, voter trust, voter loyalty and voting intention by the youth of South Africa. In this conceptual model, political marketing using social media is the predictor variable and influences voting intention (the outcome variable) indirectly through voter trust and voter loyalty (which are mediating variables). Voter trust can affect voter loyalty and subsequently result in intention to vote. The next section will elucidate on the relationships between these constructs and the hypotheses are developed thereafter.
3.1. Hypothesis Development

As a manifestation of the cumulative significance of trust in social media use, this study proposes that political marketing using social media is a predictor variable to the intention to vote. It is postulated, therefore, that the more the users engage with a political party or leader on social media, the more trust and loyalty are enhanced and the more likely their intention to vote for that party increases.

The literature relevant to our research was reviewed. On the basis of the review, the key constructs of the framework were defined, and existing evidence supporting the relationships contained in the framework are discussed below.

3.1.1. Political marketing using social media, voter trust and voter loyalty

The relationship between social media and trust has been studied extensively and from different perspectives by numerous researchers. It has been studied as an important factor in e-commerce. Hsiao, Lin, Lu and Yu (2010) in a study that examines the relationship between trust in recommendations and trust in websites, and also investigate the effect of each kind of trust on the intention to purchase products from a website, found that customers’ intention to buy products online was also influenced by trust in the web vendor. Hence online vendorsunceasingly improve and update their websites to ensure positive user experience, which enhances buyers’ trust. The results of the study showed that trust in product recommendations will influence consumers’ purchase intentions. Past research argues that in online communities, trust is dynamic and distinct at different stages of a relationship (Panteli & Sockalingam, 2005).

A study by Håkansson and Witmer (2015) sought to investigate the existence of any research about the relationship between social media usage and trust and whether trust can be created through connections on social media. They did not find any studies that confirmed a negative relationship between social media and trust. Most of the studies they found indicated that social media has a positive effect on trust. Monforti and Marichal (2014) studied digital skills and generalised trust in different ethnic groups: Latinos, African-Americans and Anglo-Americans in the US. In this study, they found that digital skills were connected to generalised trust for African Americans but not for Latinos or Anglo-Americans. Valenzuela, Park and Kee (2009) conducted a random web survey of college students across Texas that examined whether Facebook use is related to attitudes and behaviours that enhance individuals' social capital. They identified a positive relationship between the intensity of...
Facebook use and college students’ life satisfaction, social trust, civic engagement, and political participation. They found that intensity of Facebook use is positively associated with social trust.

Prolific studies have also been conducted in the social media political environment. Shah, Cho, Eveland and Kwak (2005) indicated that acquiring political information on the internet is associated with political discussion and online civic messaging, which are associated in turn with participation. Xenos and Moy (2007) demonstrated direct effects of online information on political knowledge and differential effects on participation moderated by political interest. A study by Vaccari et al. (2015) aimed to assess whether respondents’ use of social media for political information and expression – which are relatively easy ways to engage politically on these platforms – are associated with increased probabilities that they participate in more demanding activities such as e-mailing politicians, campaigning for them on social media, and attending offline political events after receiving an online invitation. They tested the hypotheses related to these relationships with data from an online survey of a representative sample of Italians who discussed the 2013 general election campaign on Twitter. In contrast with the most critical views of new forms of political information and expression afforded by social media, they found a positive and statistically significant relationship between the lower threshold and higher-threshold activities that were tested. They also found that individuals who intensely use social media to both publish and read political messages and those who post high amounts of messages while reading fewer are the most likely to also engage in higher-threshold political action. These findings suggest that, by enabling individuals to express their political views and to learn political news, social media can meaningfully contribute to political action.

This supposition is congruent with a finding by Kim, Chung and Lee (2011), who concluded that recurrent interactions and long-term relationships are key in developing trust. Likewise, relationship augmentation befalls concomitantly with information sharing and dissemination between different elements of the brand. It can then be inferred that the information and engagement of citizens with political parties via social media, leads to trust, as with social media, users can experience politics on a more familiar, personal level through the postings of friends and acquaintances. Such experiences would make politics more accessible, bringing it into the daily lives of young adults and affecting their interest in political situations. Moreover, as social media consist primarily of user-generated content, users may be able to encounter ideas and opinions not well represented in traditional news media which likely increases their interest and their trust in political parties and leaders (Gillmor, 2006).

Information received through social media may carry more weight than that acquired by other media as it comes from personal sources that the recipient knows and trusts. Thus, Bond et al. (2012) observed that exposure to Facebook posts indicating that friends and acquaintances had voted exerted small but statistically significant effects on the individual’s likelihood of voting.

The overall impact of engaging, interacting, listening, and collaborating with voters as part of the political participation process is to build more solid and enriched relationship with voters. By creating deeper relationships
with voters, parties can increase loyalty, encourage advocacy and increase membership (Castronovo & Huang, 2012; Erragcha & Romdhane, 2014). The impact of social media activities on the customer's decision-making process is also hugely influenced by closeness of relationship and the bond between the information seeker and the source. The stronger the bond, the more effective the social media activity will be. Therefore good relationships and bonds with customers are indispensable in business (Nevin & Torres, 2012). The same view applies to politics. Customer relationship oriented activities in both the business and political arena can help to develop loyal customers/voters and loyal customers/voters are valuable ambassadors for a business/political party on social media (De Vries, Gensler & Leeflang, 2012; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). Loyal customers/voters not only become influential advocates but also increase sales and improve profitability if used correctly in social media (Castronovo & Huang, 2012; Hudspeth, 2012; Verheyden & Goeman, 2013). Social media has a potential of creating an affinity and connection between customers/voters and companies/political parties and these connections are parallel to purchase/voting intention and increased sales/votes (Baer, 2013).

Based on the above literature, the following hypothesis has been put forth:

**H₁**: there is a positive relationship between political marketing using social media and voter trust.

**H₂**: there is a positive relationship between political marketing using social media and voter loyalty.

### 3.1.2. Voter Trust and Voter Loyalty

In relationship marketing and any business or personal relationships, trust plays a pivotal role and remains an essential component in developing customer loyalty towards an organisation (Ganeshan, 1994; Rachmat, 2010). A relationship between trust and loyalty has been appraised in numerous studies, and there are contrasting views about the relationship between trust and loyalty. Some studies have confirmed that trust is one of the main antecedents of loyalty and that trust has a direct, positive and significant impact on customer loyalty (Chiu et al, 2010; Hong & Cho, 2011; Ki-Han Chung & Shin, 2010; Kim et al, 2011; Roland & Werner, 2010). Furthermore, some studies have further confirmed that brand trust has been argued as one of the important predictors of customer loyalty in the marketing literature (Belaid & Behi, 2011; Jones & Kim, 2010; Nguyen et al, 2013; Sung & Kim, 2010). Chinomona and Dubihlela (2014) in a study that investigated the influence of customer satisfaction on customer trust, loyalty and repurchase intention in the African retailing context, also posited that customer trust and their loyalty, customer loyalty and their repurchase intention and customer trust and their repurchase intention are positive in a significant way. Other studies have found that there is no significant relationship between trust and loyalty (Van Vuuren et al, 2013).

Numerous definitions of trust have been presented by different authors. Although there are some variations in these definitions, what seems to be common and universal is that trust entails the anticipation of positive outcomes based on the meeting of expectations that one party makes to the other party. Other authors postulate that trust is a process that emerges and develops over time, whilst others regard it as a trait (Burke, Sims, Lazzara & Salas, 2007). Trust is usually linked to expectations and the capacity to assume those obligations and meet those expectations. It can, therefore, be construed that the meeting of expectations materialises over a period. With more interaction and consistent fulfilment of needs, trust develops and is further reinforced by consistent and positive evaluations of the experience. This supports the notion of trust emerging over time. Trust
results in the formation of both rational and emotional bonding. Trust has three components, namely, competence (credibility), integrity (honesty) and benevolence (empathy). A rational bond results from competence and reliability and an emotional bond results from confidence that is generated by feelings developed by the demonstration of care by the other party over time.

Based on the aforementioned, it is posited that in a political context, voter trust develops based on the citizen’s assessment of whether the government is fulfilling its pre-election promises and obligations. Furthermore, it is based on whether the delivery is according to the expectations of the citizens. According to Hetherrington and Ruddolphy (2008), the overriding factors that determine whether government is delivering or not are performance, process and probity. If the government is delivering on its promises, trust is enhanced and if it doesn’t, colossal trust deficit prevails. Just as much as trust plays a pivotal role in the business arena, it also plays a huge role in the political arena and is a cornerstone of citizen support, it enhances citizen co-operation and compliance with government demands such as taxpaying and fortifies political participation through elections (Hetherington & Husser, 2012).

The concept of customer loyalty has occupied centre stage in marketing literature as it is regarded as one of the company’s most enduring assets. By creating and maintaining customer loyalty, a company develops a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship with the customers. Customer loyalty has been defined in a number of different ways, however, in general, the definition of customer loyalty outlines two key characteristics: Firstly, loyalty encompasses attitude and behavioural intention, and secondly, loyalty is assessed and created over time (Boohene & Agyapong 2011; Walsh et al., 2008). As discussed above, trust has strong linkages to loyalty. Credibility, integrity and empathy play a role in fostering trust.

Intention also has links to loyalty in that when a party trusts another, that party is disposed to form a favourable behavioural intention towards the other party. In politics, when a voter trusts a political leader, they are inclined to have a strong intention to vote for that political party. Lastly, commitment also possesses connections with trust and loyalty. According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), cited by Van Vuuren, Roberts-Lombard and Van Tonder (2012), commitment arises from trust, common values and the confidence that very few partners can offer the same value. Commitment encourages partners to collaborate in order to preserve what they have both investments in the relationship (Morgan & Hunt 1994).

Drawing from the above discussion above and empirical evidence, it can be hypothesised that:

**H3⇒ there is a positive relationship between Voter Trust and Voter Loyalty**

3.1.3. Voter Trust, Voter Loyalty and Voting intention

There are various studies that confirm a strong relationship between consumer trust, loyalty and repurchase intention (Ang &
Buttle, 2006; Singh & Khan, 2012; Thompson, 2005; Van Vuuren et al, 2012; Vesel & Zabkar, 2009). According to Grewal, Hardesty and Iyer (2004), a high level of repurchase intention will exist in a consumer with trust. Also, where trust exists, there is an intention to accept flaws based on positive expectations. Some researchers, Garbarino and Johnson (1999) and Jones and Kim (2010) argue that trust leads to future intentions. Thus, when trust increases, the perceived risk of consumers decreases, and the impact would lead to behavioural intention (Jones & Kim, 2010).

Trust plays a significant role in developing long-term relationship with voters. Various studies have proven the existence of a positive relationship between political trust and voter turnout and that political trust has very strong influence on the voting intention (Ahmed et al 2011; Hooghe et al, 2011). When voters have trust and confidence in the political party and candidate, they will vote for them. Conversely, when trust does not exist, the voters either vote for the opposition or simply do not vote (Schifman et al, 2007). In the voting context, when trust increases, it leads to intention to vote, as Kim et al. (2008) posit. This result confirms the previous research findings, e.g., Garbarino and Johnson (1999); and Komiak and Benbasat (2006). This was also confirmed by the results of the study by Rachmat (2014). Voter loyalty denoted mainly electoral choice in two consecutive elections.

Few studies have been conducted that investigate the relationship between loyalty and intention in the political arena. Chiru and Gherghina (2012) and Rachmat (2013) have found a relationship between the two and have found that voters are loyal when they vote for the same political party in different consecutive elections. Chiru and Gherghina(2012) and Rachmat (2013) concur that voters will vote the candidate who meets their expectations of performance. This confirms that voter loyalty is affected by the voter's evaluations of the performance of a party.

The relationship between loyalty and intention is important because loyalty is generally positively related to the profitability and long-term growth of a firm, the possibility of attracting more customers, customers are prepared to forgive minor service mishaps, they are not sensitive to price increases, spread positive word of mouth and are a major source of retail profits (Helgesen, 2010). Voting intention is defined as a person’s desire to vote for a particular candidate (Rachmat, 2010). Due to the risk in the general election, voters strengthen their intention to vote for the candidate whom they trust.

According to Gefen (2000), trust is the main driver for the decision and thus leads to intention (Gefen, 2000). Thus, when trust increases, intention also increases. When voters have a high degree of trust on a particular candidate, they intend to vote for that particular candidate. Rachmat, (2013) argues that due to high trust in the candidate, built over time by the meeting of expectations, the voters will strengthen their commitment and intention to vote. It is an indication of the reliability and positive intentions that voters have towards the leader or the party. This assertion is backed by empirical research on trust, loyalty and intention (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Gefen, 2000; Jones & Kim, 2010; Kim et al., 2008; Komiak & Benbasat, 2006).

Drawing from the above discussion above and empirical evidence, it can be hypothesised that:

\[ H4 \Rightarrow \text{there is a positive relationship between Voter Trust and Voting Intention} \]

\[ H5 \Rightarrow \text{there is a positive relationship between Voter Loyalty and Voting Intention} \]
4.0. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

A research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data. A choice of research design reflects decisions about the priority being given to a range of dimensions of the research process (Bryman, 2012). This study will be a quantitative study, which employs a questionnaire to gather data. The justification for this selecting a questionnaire will be discussed under the data collection instrument section below.

4.1. Target population

Target population is regarded as a group or universe of units where a sample is selected from (Bryman, 2012; Malhotra, 2014). The population that was targeted by the study are students, employed and a few self-employed individuals who represent the youth. For the purposes of this research, the classification of youth by the IEC of 18-35 years was utilised. The students sample was selected from Wits University and the University of Johannesburg in Gauteng and the employed individuals sample was from different private companies in Johannesburg. Other respondents were selected randomly using personal contacts and events where the youth was likely to be present.

4.2. Sampling method

The sampling strategy that the study committed to is the convenience sampling method, which is defined as a non-probability sampling technique that is based on the judgment of the researcher and the easily accessible units are usually the ones selected for inclusion in the sample (Saunders & Phillip, 2012). What this definition suggests is that convenience sampling is when the researcher uses those who are easy to obtain rather than because of the appropriateness. The selection of respondents for the current study was based on a convenience sample, which always raises questions about the external validity of the findings. The sampled population were mainly students in the two campuses and the youth who are employed in different companies. Convenience sampling ensured that the researcher surveys people who invariably use social media for interacting with different users on different subjects. This made data collection process more efficient and very quick.

4.3. Sampling Frame

A sampling frame is a list from which the sample was drawn (Bryman, 2012). For this study, the sampling frame was students in the two campuses and the youth who are employed in different companies.
4.4. Sampling size

The sample for this study was made up of 350 respondents. The target was to get 250 responses. The 350 sample size was to accommodate spoilt questionnaires or non-responses. 280 responses were received, with 30 of those being spoilt. The 250 was sufficient for the AMOS software which was utilised for data analysis and requires at least 250 sample size.

4.5. Data collection instrument

The constructs that the study seeks to test are the major determining factor of the data collection tool that a researcher uses. Based on the objectives of the study, a self-administered questionnaire was the apstem data collection tool to employ. The fact that the questionnaire was self-administered helped to alleviate the issue of low response rate as the researcher was on many occasions physically present during the completion of questionnaires and could wait for them and collect them. All the measurement items were measured on a 7 point Likert scale (using 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree). A 7 point Likert scale was used because previous similar studies used a 7 point Likert scale. A 7-point scale also provided respondents with more options to choose from and resulted in a higher response rate.

4. DATA ANALYSIS RESULTS

The results for both descriptive statistics and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) are provided below.

5.1. Description of the respondents

The study targeted the youth as defined by the IEC, 18 -35 years, all racial groups and in Johannesburg, Gauteng. Initially, the researcher attempted to cover a diverse category of respondents (i.e. university students, high school students in townships, employed individuals of all races) in order to see whether there are any differences in the views of the youth based on their life stage and social economic circumstances.

Unfortunately, the few questionnaires obtained from high school students in the township were spoilt and could not be used in the analysis. With regards to gender, female respondents had a slightly higher representation in the study (54.90%) than the male respondents (45.20%). This is in line with the national population figures as per census 2011, where females constitute more than males (Statistics South Africa, 2011). The study focused on the youth and the IEC classification of youth of 18-35 was used in the study.

The population of the study was mainly university students (University of Witwatersrand and University of Johannesburg), hence a large percentage (59.60%) of the research population is between the ages of 18-24 years. The other respondents were made up of individuals who are employed. It was essential to check the highest level of education in this study. While the respondents' qualifications were diverse, they somehow correlated to the age profiles in that the majority (46%), those in the lower age groups (18-25 years) had high school as their highest level of education.
This is plausible considering that those would be the young university students. The other higher age groups had degrees and postgraduate degrees, as they are either employed, self-employed or even students undertaking postgraduate studies. Qualifications were important to measure as some studies have indicated that educated citizens are likely to demonstrate more interest and involvement in politics (Rosenberg, 1988).

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|------------|
| Male   | 137       | 54.80%     |
| Female | 113       | 45.20%     |
| **Total** | **250** | **100%** |

| Age Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| 18-24        | 149       | 59.60%     |
| 25-30        | 65        | 26%        |
| 31-35        | 36        | 14.40%     |
| **Total**    | **250**   | **100%**   |

| Marital Status | Frequency | Percentage |
|               |           |            |
| Single        | 200       | 80%        |
| Married       | 33        | 13.20%     |
| Divorced      | 6         | 2.40%      |
| Other         | 11        | 4.40%      |
| **Total**     | **250**   | **100%**   |

| Qualification | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| High school   | 115       | 46%        |
| Diploma       | 46        | 18.40%     |
| Degree        | 54        | 21.60%     |
| Post Grad     | 35        | 14%        |
| **Total**     | **250**   | **100%**   |

| Occupation   | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Student      | 146       | 58.40%     |
| Employed     | 79        | 31.60%     |
| Self Employed| 23        | 9.20%      |
| Unemployed   | 2         | 0.8%       |
| **Total**    | **250**   | **100%**   |

| Racial Group | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Black        | 157       | 62.80%     |
| Coloured     | 17        | 6.80%      |
| Asian        | 29        | 11.60%     |
| White        | 37        | 14.80%     |
| Other        | 10        | 4%         |
| **Total**    | **250**   | **100%**   |
On the subject of race, in South Africa, research has shown that different racial groups’ political affiliation and engagement is still mainly on racial basis and political identity, with the majority of black people identifying and voting for the ANC (Southall, 2011). Leighley (1995) further states that various evidence regarding race-related differences in participation rates varies, controlling for socioeconomic status, minorities are sometimes more and sometimes less likely than the majority race to engage in political participation.

5.2. Structural Equation Model (SEM)

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was utilised in this study to analyse data. Suhr (2006) delineates SEM as a method for representing, estimating and testing a connection of relationships between variables (measured variables and latent constructs). Mac Callum and Austin (2000) and Grace (2006) also confirm one of the salient features of SEM as being its ability to test the hypothesised patterns of directional and non-directional relationships among a set of observed (measured) and unobserved (latent) variables. Confirmatory Factor Analysis was performed first and the measurement instruments were assessed for reliability and validity. Path modelling was done thereafter CFA in order test the proposed hypotheses.

5.3. Assessment of Reliability and Validity of the Measurement Instruments

In order to ensure the credibility and integrity of the study, the Cronbach’s Alpha value (Cronbach α), Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were performed to appraise the reliability of the measures. Cronbach’s Alpha assists with confirming the existence of reliability, while CR and AVE confirm and validate the presence of discriminant reliability. This ultimately ensures that there were no significant inter-research variables cross-loadings. The results of the reliability and validity assessments that were performed are depicted in Table 4.3 and are discussed henceforth.
5.3.1. Cronbach Alpha

The figure of 0.6 is usually used as a rule of thumb to indicate an acceptable level of internal reliability (Bryman, 2012, p174). As illustrated in Table 4.3 below, the Cronbach Alpha values for this current study exceed the threshold of 0.60 (i.e. PMSM = 0.892, VT = 0.868, VL = 0.838 and VI = 0.882).

5.3.1. Composite Reliability (CR)

Internal reliability was assessed by performing a Composite Reliability test. An acceptable threshold for composite reliability index that exceeds 0.6 signifies the existence of internal reliability. The Composite Reliability of the constructs for the current study are PMSM=0.9, VT=0.83, VL=0.74 and VI=0.83, which exceeds the threshold of 0.6. The CR is also illustrated in Table 4.3 above.

5.4. Validity Measurements

Validity assessments were performed and Convergent and Discriminant validity were evaluated. Convergent and Discriminant validity assessments are discussed in the section below.

5.4.1. Convergent validity.

Convergent validity measures and establishes the degree to which a construct converges in its indicators by giving explanation of the items’ variance (Sarstedt, 2014). Convergent validity of the current study was examined by evaluating item correlation estimates and factor loadings. Nusair (2010) suggests that items indicate satisfactory convergent validity when they load strongly on their shared construct. In addition, to confirm Convergent Validity, a loading that exceeds 0.5 is essential. For the current study, the final items loaded well on their corresponding constructs, with the values ranging from 0.599 to 0.938, as illustrated in table 4.3 above. This denotes that measurement instruments are converging well on the construct they intended to measure and that there is convergent validity.

Table 4.3: Reliability Measures
5.4.2. Discriminant validity

Subsequently, the measurement model was further evaluated to confirm the distinctiveness of the constructs measurement instruments. Average variance extracted (AVE) and inter-construct correlation matrix were used for this purpose. Values of AVE must be above 0.50 (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). The AVE for this study are PMSM=0.58, VT=0.57, VL=0.67 and VI=0.57. Therefore, the threshold for acceptable AVE of 0.50 was exceeded hence confirming the existence of discriminant validity. As indicated in Table 4.4 below, the inter-correlation values for all paired latent variables are less than 0.8, which validates the existence of discriminant validity.

Table 4.4: Correlation matrix

| Constructs                | PMSM | VT  | VL  | VI  |
|---------------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| PMSM                      | 1    |     |     |     |
| VT                        | 0.272** | 1   |     |     |
| VL                        | 0.367** | 0.512** | 1   |
| VI                        | 0.113** | 0.555** | 0.628** | 1   |

Significance at 0.05. Note: PMSM=Political Marketing Using Social Media; VT=Voter Trust; VL=Voter Loyalty; VI=Voting Intention
5.5. CFA Model Fit assessment

Model fit assessment is conducted for the purpose of determining how well the conceptual model is signified by the sampled data. Model Fit indices are observed for this assessment. The $\chi^2 < 3$; NFI= Normed Fit Index; TLI= Tucker-Lewis Index; IFI= Incremental Fit Index; CFI= Comparative Fit Index all > 0.9 and RMSEA= Root Mean Square Error of Approximation < 0.08 were used to assess the model fit for the CFA and Path model. The results indicated that the data fit both the CFA and Path.

5. PATH MODELING RESULTS

| Proposed hypothesis relationship | Hypothesis | Factor loadings | P value | Rejected/Supported        |
|----------------------------------|------------|----------------|---------|---------------------------|
| PMSM VT                          | H1         | 0.594          | ***     | Supported and significant |
| PMSM VL                          | H2         | 0.467          | ***     | Supported and significant |
| VT                               | H3         | 0.316          | ***     | Supported and significant |
| VT                               | H4         | 0.459          | ***     | Supported and significant |
| VL                               | H5         | 0.353          | ***     | Supported and significant |

6.1. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The study proposed that there is a positive relationship between political marketing using social media and voter trust. The results of the study have confirmed the existence of this relationship and that it is significant. The coefficient of H1 was 0.594, and this suggests a strong relationship between PMSM and VT. The P value indicates a 0.01 level of confidence which therefore means that the hypothesis is supported and significant. The arguments as put forward under hypothesis development hold true.

According to Byrne (2001) and Nusair et al. (2010) SEM asserts that particular latent variables directly or indirectly influence certain other latent variables with the model, resulting in estimation results that portray how these latent variables are related.

For this study, estimation results elicited through hypothesis testing are indicated in Table 4.6. The table indicates the proposed hypotheses, factor loadings, p values and whether a hypothesis is rejected or supported. Literature asserts that p<0.05, p<0.01 and p<0.001 are indicators of relationship significance and that positive factor loadings indicate strong relationships among latent variables (Chinomona, Lin, Wang & Cheng, 2010). The hypothesis testing results are discussed below.

The study proposed that there is a positive relationship between political marketing using social media and voter loyalty. The results of the study have confirmed the existence of this relationship and that it is significant. The coefficient of H2 was 0.467, and this suggests a strong relationship between PMSM and VL. The P value indicates a 0.01 level of confidence which therefore means that the hypothesis is supported and significant. The arguments as put forward under hypothesis development hold true.

The study proposed that there is a positive relationship between Voter Trust and Voter...
Loyalty. The results of the study have confirmed the existence of this relationship and that it is significant. The coefficient of H3 was 0.316, and this suggests a strong relationship between VT and VL. The P value indicates a 0.01 level of confidence which therefore means that the hypothesis is supported and significant. The arguments as put forward under hypothesis development hold true.

The study proposed that there is a positive relationship between Voter Trust and Voting Intention. The results of the study have confirmed the existence of this relationship and that it is significant. The coefficient of H4 was 0.459, and this suggests a strong relationship between VT and VI. The P value indicates a 0.01 level of confidence which therefore means that the hypothesis is supported and significant. The arguments as put forward under hypothesis development hold true.

The study proposed that there is a positive relationship between Voter Loyalty and Voting Intention. The results of the study have confirmed the existence of this relationship and that it is significant. The coefficient of H5 was 0.353, and this suggests a strong relationship between VL and VI. The P value indicates a 0.01 level of confidence which therefore means that the hypothesis is supported and significant. The arguments as put forward under hypothesis development hold true.

6.2. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY
The current study has numerous practical implications that are political business, academic and legal in nature. Previous studies have concluded that South African political parties are still not well versed on how to leverage the benefits provided by social media. This study will provide political parties with some practical examples and a roadmap to follow to exploit this platform.

Companies are increasingly affected by communication in social media. Customers now have the power to share information and customer experiences among each other. The importance of public sentiments on a product, brand or organisation is significant and has great impact on consumers’ purchase decision processes. Because of the influence of sentiment and the fact that social media content rapidly becomes viral, companies should proactively analyse consumer sentiments related to their brands on social media. A lot of what is usually shared on social media is negative and can result in negative electronic word of mouth (EWOM) if not vigilantly and timeously managed. Electronic word of mouth (both positive and negative) in social media is viewed as cheaper and more effective than traditional media. Companies could capitalise on this by being proactive in social media and not only react to negative comments. They can use this platform to position their brands positively in consumer’s minds through content that triggers positive sentiments and has a potential of being shared. On the academic arena, this study significantly contributes to the literature of political marketing by exploring the impact of political marketing using social media on voter trust and voter loyalty with the outcome of achieving voting intention of the youth in South Africa. In particular, the current study findings support the proposition that political marketing using social media, through voter trust and voter loyalty should be recognised as antecedents that precipitate an intention to vote the election.

There is no legislation that explicitly deals with social media in South Africa, other than the Constitution, Employment law, Consumer protection laws and Intellectual property law.

This lacuna needs to be addressed as the legal framework will indisputably offer another mechanism to manage the ethical risks of social media. This unprecedented proliferation of social media usage in the world and within Africa necessitates that stringent laws be put in place and users of social media be educated in order to circumvent the potential and corollary
damage of irresponsible usage of this medium.

6.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

As discussed previously, social media presents enormous opportunities for political parties and their leaders and the strength of this medium needs to be harnessed to ensure it delivers positive outcomes for political parties. The following recommendations are put forward:

Adequate resource allocation

It is recommended that for parties to make huge strides in this arena and successfully compete in today's online political ecosystem, it is essential to commit apposite and adequate resources towards their digital strategy. These resources must consist of both financial and human resources.

A clear digital marketing strategy

Political parties must consider engaging services of very senior individuals with extensive experience in Marketing and the digital media, who will develop and implement a comprehensive, cohesive, highly focused and continuous digital strategy. The Obama election team in 2008 and 2012 are testament to a fully funded and well-resourced campaign which achieved phenomenal results for the Democrats.

Value of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)

Political parties and marketing managers must include social media as part of their IMC strategies. This is congruent with the views of scholars such as Boone and Kurtz (2007) and Thakur (2014), that Integrated Marketing Communications coordinates all promotional activities such as advertising, public relations, sales promotions, direct marketing etc. to produce a unified, clear, consistent and focused promotional message with increased impact when combined with a comprehensive communications plan. Through application of IMC, the political party will be in a position to drive consistent messages across both traditional and non-traditional marketing channels.

Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning (STP) are crucial.

For political parties who desire to appeal and attract votes of the millennials and thus deriving enormous value from employing social media successfully in their campaign strategy, it is pivotal to possess a comprehensive understanding of this segment or group. This understanding entails knowing what their needs, hopes and aspirations are, how they receive, process, and interpret political information and how they evaluate political parties and then decide to vote. It is recommended that parties divide the electorate into segments or groups, based on their similarities with those in the same group and divergence with those in other groups. In the marketing arena, the segmentation approaches that are employed are geographic, demographic, behavioural, and psychographic segmentation approach. However, Cwalina, Falkowski & Newman (2010) also suggest that in political marketing, market segmentation goes beyond these approaches and more complex models are used. Regardless of the approaches that are employed to define voter segments, the superseding and paramount goal is for political parties to know the voter intimately and in the best possible manner. This will steer the tactics, messaging, tone, and relevance of the message to persuade and sway the voter to make a choice of the political party to vote for. Through this, the political party will be in a position to leverage on the social media platforms that are aligned to the different segments.
This study found that the majority of the participants use Facebook. Based on this, it can, therefore, be concluded that political parties need to utilise Facebook extensively to reach the millennials.

Certain forms of social media serve specific marketing objectives

One of the most prevalent social media oversights within the South African political landscape is transmitting the same message in the same way across all the social media platforms. The political parties who used social media during the 2014 elections simply used social media, without necessarily understanding the real intricacies of the different platforms. There are stark disparities between the different platforms, from the motivations for using them and the manner in which they are utilised. Appreciation of each platform’s mechanisms will aid political parties to create and generate messages that will reverberate with the specific audiences.

Engagement through mobile communications

Smartphones are ubiquitous and thus enable political parties to reach an entirely new audience and involve them in the political process. According to a survey conducted by "We are Social" (2015), South Africa has a total number of 79.1 million mobile subscriptions. By enabling people to access information and social networks on the go, this technology speeds up the news cycle and places more of a premium on electronic resources.

Online Reputation Management strategies

One of the major risks of social media is reputation management. Reputation is a very important asset, notwithstanding its intangibility. The political party must always be aware of its online reputation. Building personal, business or even political reputation requires time, tremendous effort and a detailed strategy. In social media, which is an environment that’s open 24/7, this reputation can be damaged instantaneously. Online Reputation Management (ORM) entails tracking, assessing and monitoring online media to identify what is being said about an entity, such as a business or a political party in order to rectify undesirable or negative mentions online (McDonald, Deveaud, McCreadie & Ounis, 2015). A good reputation of a political leader would encourage voters to trust the candidate, while bad reputation would decrease the voters’ trust in the candidate (Rachmat, 2013). The incident of the DA leader, Dianne Kohler Barnard who forwarded a racist tweet bears testimony to this fact.

Images and videos drive impact on social media

Social media platforms are becoming increasingly visual, and to grab attention, political parties must also follow this trend with their posts. With social media, political parties are fighting for the audience's attention, therefore informative graphics grab attention and have a potential of being shared and are also memorable. Even on Twitter, tweets with visuals receive more clicks, comments and retweets. The recommendation, therefore, is that political parties must invest in graphic designers who would be in a position to create graphics that draw conversation, sharing and continuous engagement. The idea is for a political party to make the audience come back, engage and interact, which build a relationship, trust, loyalty and increases the intention to vote for that party.
Developing a social listening strategy

Social media in politics is a platform for political parties to connect more with the electorate. Connecting is about listening more than talking. This will provide the party and its leaders better insights of what the audience, in particular, the youth regards as important to them. The recommendation is that political parties must develop a social listening strategy to help the leaders keep abreast of what's trending or being said, participate in the conversations that matter, and measure the pulse and temperature of the audience, to better respond, refine and direct the party's social media and content strategy. As empirical evidence has pointed out, South African political parties are not utilising social media efficiently. By involving voters, asking their views and giving them a chance to provide feedback, the citizens will develop trust in government and encourage the youth to be part of shaping the country's political trajectory and discourse.

Data analytics

The recommendation is for political parties to utilise and implement social media analytics to diagnostically and systematically scrutinise and monitor user-generated content on social media platforms.

Clear social media policies

Mitigating the risks of social media

One of the risks of social media is that of hacking. This can have negative ramifications on the party or its leader's reputations. It is recommended that political parties need to focus on this and mitigate it by employing the services of individuals or organisations that are well versed with social media channels. This individual or service provider can ensure that the party's social media site are kept safe from hackers or false social media identities.

Evaluation and monitoring

In order to ensure that social media is used to build the brand of a party instead of destroying it, certain fundamentals have to be in place regarding the manner in which members conduct themselves on social media. The recommendation is for political parties to develop a clear social media policy which will guide the entire organisation's key figures' behaviour on social media. The policy must articulate clear and well-defined guidelines on the dos and don'ts for the use of social media. Furthermore, it must illuminate on who can and cannot act as a spokesperson for the political party. Because of the reputational risk involved with social media posts and content, it is recommended that this policy also extends to the appropriate and ethical use of personal social media accounts.

It must be borne in mind that political parties can have their social media profiles and political leaders (as individuals) also have their own personal profiles. In politics, audiences or users usually do not extricate an individual from an organisation, and thus individual comments by political leaders can be construed to reflect the views of the political party. This juxtaposition of the individual and the party induces numerous ethical and reputational issues pertinent to social media, hence the recommendation of the social media policy extending to the individual’s personal social media profiles or accounts.

It is recommended that the measurement of success be clearly defined and linked to the objectives for the implementation of social media. The benefits of social media can be tangible or intangible. Social media platforms provide tangible measurements like the number of followers, number of people talking about a profile and how viral content went on the platform. It is recommended that these measurements be monitored and interpreted based on the objectives of the organisation. Measuring the success will not only provide an indication of the return on investments, it
will also help the parties to learn and improve. Success metrics should be connected with specific campaign goals and be shared within the campaign team and party observers.

**Leverage the power of YouTube and Instagram**

It is evident from the study that although the youth, still uses Facebook as their main social media platform, there is a mounting trend of utilising Instagram. This is also supported by the fact that Instagram grew from 680 000 active users in 2013 to 1,1-million in 2014. Also, political parties did not fully leverage the power of YouTube during the 2014 General elections. According to the Consumer Barometer (2014), there has been more than 90% growth of YouTube views in South Africa. It is recommended that political parties supported all the five research hypotheses that were put forward in a significant way. Another important thing to note about the study findings is the fact that political marketing using social media has an influence on voter trust and voter loyalty in achieving voting intention. This denotes that political marketing using social media is the main factor in voting intention. For many candidates, the capability to tap into the millennial demographic is an important component of their efforts on social networks. Millennials are the bulk of users on many of the most popular social sites and thus being on this platform gives political parties and leaders access to this segment. They also are able to engage with them where they are, in their own time, using the right language that resonates with them.

Millenials also appreciate photos and images, and these forms of media can make candidates more memorable to people in that demographic. If a candidate’s message resonates, millennials are likely to share with people in their networks. It is important though to stress that digital media will not replace traditional media. It may be a platform that is used to engage with a certain segment such as the millennials/ youth but include YouTube as a key social media platform to engage with the youth. Its value for sharing campaign policy and other information which may be more difficult to put in writing is immense and the researcher highly recommends leveraging this platform during the 2016 local government elections.

**6.4. CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of political marketing using social media on voter trust, voter loyalty and voting intention by the youth of South Africa. In particular, five hypotheses were postulated. To test the proposed hypotheses, data were collected from Gauteng Province in South Africa. The empirical result because of access, other media platforms still need to be used extensively. Undoubtedly, social media has resulted in metamorphosis in electoral campaigns, revolutionising the manner in which candidates campaign, and transforming the manner in which citizens learn and participate in politics.

Social media has become a ubiquitous communication media and social networking sites are here to stay, and campaigns would be wise to efficiently integrate them into their campaign strategy. Social media presents new opportunities in political marketing. However, adapting and implementing these instruments successfully is crucial. Identifying the factors decisive for successful implementation is thus needed. Campaigns should stick to the basics, and instead of throwing out the old tactics to adopt the new, candidates and campaigns would be wise to integrate social media campaigning into the rest of their campaign plan. The campaigns that best integrate their communications strategies as a whole, including TV, radio, direct mail, print, the Internet, e-mail, and social networks, will be the campaigns that reap the biggest rewards from tools like Facebook and Twitter.
Balance is therefore still significant in the political party’s communications efforts and the campaign strategy must still include conventional and established campaigning methods such as rallies, door to door campaigns, posters etc. It all still boils down to the power of IMC. Social media as part of politics is here to stay- either for mobilisation, citizen engagement, holding the government to account or protest organising and elections, despite the fact that some countries are attempting to introduce laws to limit its use. For example, Egypt's recent controls on the mandatory licensing of group-oriented text-messaging services may be viewed as Egypt's attempts to add new restrictions on press freedom. Similarly, South Korea's requirement that citizens register with their real names for certain Internet services is an attempt to reduce their ability to surprise the state with the kind of coordinated action that took place during the 2008 protest in Seoul.

6.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The limitations of this study can also be viewed as avenues for future research. An important limitation is the geographic scope of the study which only concentrated on a single city and province. Subsequent research should contemplate replicating this study in other provinces of South Africa or even in other African countries. Moreover, the study was limited to students at two universities in South Africa. Future studies should, therefore, consider expanding data collection to include other virtual community members who utilise social media platforms. Finally, further research could also investigate the effects of other constructs such as "perceived enjoyment" of social media platform use as a possible predictor of the intention to use social media platform and information sharing for education and recreational purposes. Through highlighting the limitations of this study in the section above, it is prudent to provide some suggestions for future research, which were primarily extricated from the limitations and the delimitations of this study. While this study makes substantial contributions to research knowledge and practice, it had some limitations, therefore suggesting some future research avenues. First, the data was gathered from Gauteng Province and the sample of 250 is relatively small. Conceivably, with the availability of resources, the results would be more informative if the sample size is large and data gathered from all the nine provinces in the country. This would also be relevant in view of the number of youth who use social media. Secondly, possibly future studies should consider extending this research to other African countries for results comparison.

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**SECTION D: POLITICAL INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION:**

| To what extent do you disagree or agree with each of the statements below: | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly disagree | Neutral | Slightly agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| D1 | In general, I am interested in politics |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| D2 | I am a member of a political party |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| D3 | I have voted in the previous general elections |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| D3 | I think the government has my best interest at heart. |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**SECTION E: ONLINE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

| How often do you use social media to: | Never | Very rarely | Occasionally | Often | Very often | Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| E1 | Search for political information | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| E2 | Read humorous content related to politics | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| E3 | Watch a political video | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| E4 | Forward political information to others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| E5 | Participate in/read political discussions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| E6 | Post political information on their profile page | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| E7 | Post a 'like', message or a comment on someone else’s message on the political party profile page. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

**SECTION F: ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR INTERACTIVE POLITICAL COMMUNICATION**

| To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements: | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Slightly disagree | Neutral | Slightly agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| F1 | I believe social media is a better source of information than other media platforms (e.g. TV, Radio, Newspapers etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| F2 | I think social media provides | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

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useful and objective political
information.

F3 I believe social media is a good
place for political engagement of
citizens

F4 I believe politicians should pay
more attention to their followers' attitudes on social media

F5 I believe politicians should act
according to their followers' attitudes communicated through
social media

SECTION G: VOTER TRUST

Please indicate to what extent you disagree or agree with each statement below.

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Slightly disagree | Neutral | Slightly agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|------------------|---------|------------------|--------|---------------|-------|---------------|
| G1 | I think that the information offered by political parties and leaders on social media is sincere and honest |
| G2 | I think I can have confidence in the promises that a political party and leader makes on social media |
| G3 | I think that political parties and leaders fulfil the commitments they make on social media |
| G4 | I think that political parties and leaders are concerned with the present and future interests of their followers on social media |
| G5 | I think that political parties and leaders take into account the repercussions that their actions on social media could have on their followers |

SECTION H: VOTER LOYALTY

Please indicate to what extent you disagree or agree with each statement below.

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Slightly disagree | Neutral | Slightly agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|------------------|---------|------------------|--------|---------------|-------|---------------|
| H1 | The more I engage with a political party on social media, the more I become committed to it |
| H2 | My interaction with a political party leader on social media increases my faithfulness to that party |
**SECTION I: VOTING INTENTION**

| Please indicate to what extent you disagree or agree with each statement below. | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Slightly disagree | Neutral | Slightly agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I1 I would vote for the party and leader whose social media messages make sense to me. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I2 I think the party I want to vote for is concerned with the issues of the country. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I3 Engaging with a political party, leader and politicians on social media would encourage me to vote |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I4 Voting gives me a choice to have a say about the country’s policies and plans |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I5 Voting gives me you a good feeling |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |