THE POWER OF FAKE NEWS!

A TRIANGULATION STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF FAKE NEWS ON THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (ANC) IN CAPE TOWN DURING THE ELECTION PERIOD.

ALI MAHOMED

BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONOURS) in STRATEGIC BRAND COMMUNICATION

COURSE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY (RESM8419)

RESEARCH SUPERVISOR: CHARL VAN LOGGERENBERG

RESEARCH NAVIGATOR: DR FRANCI CRONJE

VEGA SCHOOL OF BRAND LEADERSHIP – CAPE TOWN

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DECLARATION.

I, Ali Mahomed, hereby declare that:

- *The content of this research project represents my own independent work;*
- *All sources used or referred to have been correctly referenced and documented;*
- *This research project has not been previously submitted for assessment to another University or Higher Education for degree purposes.*
- *The opinions expressed within this document are solely that of the researcher and are not necessarily that of my supervisor and/or Vega School of Brand Leadership*

Sign: _____

    ALI MAHOMED

     01.10.2017

ABSTRACT.

The core of fake news has surrounded itself amongst the greed for power and politics. It has become a political conspiracy in using technology, predominantly social media and fake news websites masked as authentic sources. Whilst fake news is largely about politics rather than journalism, the industry is becoming seriously tarnished (Daniels, 2017).

The African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa has taken serious strain over the past decade with the political unrest in the nation. This is due to, but not limited to, the perceived poor leadership as well as rise of opposition parties within the country (Green, 2017). The rise of fake news in South Africa could further deter the brand image of the ANC with unfounded news articles circulating amongst the publics. The ANC has also been accused of using fake news as a weapon to undermine their opposition (Hansrod, 2017). But what is true and what is fake?

The purpose of this study was, 'to explore the influence of fake news on the ANC whilst assessing the correlational relationship between the ANC, consumer perceptions and behaviour of their brand', which will be put under the spotlight in order to create a strong foundation for further research to be conducted.

The main theory used in this study was the **_Media Dependency Theory_**. This theory is based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory and ties into the Agenda Setting Theory (Communication Theory, 2015)

From the literature reviewed, the researcher discovered that as time has evolved, technology has revolutionized the world we live in and has impacted the political sector in the majority of the countries around the world. When reviewing the theories used within the study, it is ever apparent that individuals and political parties can take advantage of platforms such as social media to persuade large populations with carefully crafted messages. Fake news has become ever more apparent within the last year and its impact on society could be extremely detrimental in the short term by corrupting voter's minds and misleading them.

The study has proven that since the inception of Fake News, individuals are susceptible to articles across all forms of mainstream media. Most individuals use the news to make important life decisions and can easily make the wrong decision based on an alleged Fake News article that they come into contact with

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background:

The year 2016 will go down in history as one where the new buzz word, 'fake news', took off. It played a crucial role in key historic events such as the US presidential elections and Brexit amongst others. The world has trenched itself in the throes of disinformation through the likes of alternative facts, post truth as well as fake news (Daniels, 2017).

The core of fake news has surrounded itself amongst the greed for power and politics. It has become a political conspiracy in using technology, predominantly social media and fake news websites masked as authentic sources. Whilst fake news is largely about politics rather than journalism, the industry is becoming seriously tarnished (Daniels, 2017).

The African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa has taken serious strain over the past decade with the political unrest in the nation. This is due to, but not limited to, the perceived poor leadership as well as rise of opposition parties within the country (Green, 2017). The rise of fake news in South Africa could further deter the brand image of the ANC with unfounded news articles circulating amongst the publics. The ANC has also been accused of using fake news as a weapon to undermine their opposition (Hansrod, 2017). But what is true and what is fake?

There is no previous research to determine the effects of fake news on the ANC as a brand and how consumer's in South Africa have reacted to this new phenomenon.

1.2 Rationale:

The year 2017 will be marked as decisive for the ANC as they must elect a new leader for the upcoming elections in South Africa. This will spark interest from other parties and the public as the ANC have experienced turmoil over the past few years. Fake news could play a pivotal role in deciding which way the pendulum swings in terms of the elections as it is being used in intra-party wise and causing factions amongst the ruling party themselves.

The debacle all surrounds the black and white issue of binary oppositions. One group opposing the white corruption (White Monopoly Capital) but are standing to black corruption in the form of 'Zupta'. This has caused splits within the ruling party and the public as fake news articles are springing about with no clear indication of what could be deemed 'truthful' (Daniels, 2017).

Although the ANC have suffered from negative publicity through fake news articles, they have also been accused of using fake news to discredit opposition parties as well as the media. This has created serious consequences for the public. It has had devastating effects on people's constitutional rights – to have access to reliable information – as in the Protection of Access to information Action of 2000 (Hansrod, 2017). This Act was set in place to allow individuals to make important decisions which affect their lives, for example, who to vote for (Daniels, 2017).

Fake news has sprout about in different manifestations ranging from fraudulent social media handles professing to be *Talk Radio 702, The Huffington Post SA and the Sunday Times,* amongst others (Green, 2017). Prominent individuals as well as some political parties who have fallen victim to fake news have one underlying factor in common – they have been involved in some way of exposing 'state capture' and the corruption of the ANC (Daniels, 2017).

Political campaigns are losing their impact in persuading voters and are now turning to more elusive methods, ranging from paid social media accounts (Twitter) to fake news to manipulate voter sentiment (Daniels, 2017).

The victim of this new phenomenon is the wider public as individuals are persuaded to believe the post truth. Perceptions of political parties and those individuals in charge are changed because of these parody accounts. The real problem occurs now that the publics don't know what to believe anymore as the truth being broadcasted in the media is also being questioned.

1.3 Key Theories

The main theory used in this study will be the **Media Dependency Theory**. This theory is based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory and ties into the Agenda Setting Theory (Communication Theory, 2015). The Uses and Gratification theory identifies how people use the media and become dependent upon it. Individuals use the media for various reasons. This includes using it for information, entertainment and for par asocial relationships just to name a few. The *Media Dependency Theory* suggests that the more an individual becomes dependent on the media to fulfil their individual needs, the media plays a more crucial role in their lives, hence having more of an influence and power over them. As a person becomes more dependent on the media for information, it is easy for the media to set the agenda. The individual becomes more susceptible to fall victim to Agenda Setting. It becomes every apparent that these three theories are all intertwined (Communication Theory, 2015).

1.4 Key Concepts

Fake News/Alternative News – Fake News, also known as alternative facts or post truth, has risen as a new phenomenon globally and is playing havoc amongst the media industry. Fake news articles are usually far from the truth and are intended to defame a certain individual or organization. Politicians have jumped on the bandwagon and are either using fake news or being targeted by it hence causing confusion amongst the wider public. This study will look at the influence of fake news on the ANC as a brand and how consumer perception and behaviour are persuaded by it (Carson, 2017).

Persuasion – Persuasion plays a pivotal role in this study as the main aim of fake news is to persuade large publics. It is the process of changing consumer's beliefs about a certain topic. Persuasion falls hand in hand with fake news and in the political sphere where consumers are regularly targeted in order to win their support for a specific political party (Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Consumer Perception & Behaviour – The perceptions consumers have on a specific organization or business plays a crucial role in their purchasing behaviour. In this study, consumer perception of the ANC will be analysed as this determines their behaviour in terms of voting trends. Fake news could alter the perceptions of consumers and deter their behaviour (Communication Theory, 2016).

1.5 Problem Statement:

The aim of this research is to investigate the influence of fake news on consumer's perceptions and behaviour in terms of their support for the ANC and the impact on their brand image.

1.6 Research Goal and Research Questions:

What is the influence of Fake News on the ANC brand image during the election period?

- o Are consumers persuaded by fake news articles about the ANC?
- o Do the consumers believe that the ANC create fake news articles to combat opposition parties?
- o To what extent do consumers rely on digital media to obtain factual information to make important decisions?

1.7 Objective:

The primary objective of this study is to explore the influence of fake news on the ANC and how it persuades consumer perception and behaviour. Whilst gaining an understanding of the effects of fake news, we can decipher if consumer voting trends will differ from previous years in the upcoming elections.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction:

The following literature refers back to the research objectives and can consequently be seen as the first set of information that informs the research findings. With the rise of fake news during the latter part of 2016, it has quickly become a new phenomenon that has had a significant impact in key historic events. The core of fake news has surrounded itself with the greed for power and politics. It has become a political conspiracy in using technology masked as authentic sources (Daniels, 2017).

The purpose of this study is, 'to explore the influence of fake news on the ANC whilst assessing the correlational relationship between the ANC, consumer perceptions and behaviour of their brand', which will be put under the spotlight in order to create a strong foundation for further research to be conducted.

The researcher will link the relevant theories to the study and draw direct underlying relationships between the two. The researcher will then unpack the key aspects in the study - being fake news, the African National Congress (ANC) and also review the concepts of consumer perception and behaviour concerned to the study.

Further literature linked to the above-mentioned research purpose is discussed to create an understanding of the study and will describe the need for further research to be conducted.

2.2 Theoretical Framework:

The main theory used in this study will be the **Media Dependency Theory**. Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur proposed the 'Dependency' Theory in 1976. This theory is based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory and ties into the Agenda Setting Theory (Communication Theory, 2015). It was one of the first theories which regards the audience as an integral part in the communication process. In this section, the researcher will explain the Media Dependency Theory and also analyse how the Uses & Gratification theory as well as the Agenda Setting theory. Research has been generated from this model that tends to be more descriptive rather than explanatory or predictive.

2.2.1 Media Dependency Theory:
Core Assumptions

According to the Media Dependency Theory, it states that there is an internal link between the mass media, the target audience and the large social system. The target audience gaining insight from the real world is limited, so they use media sources to fulfil their need of gaining information. As individuals extensively use the media, it generates more dependency in relation to the target audience on the media. With media power, organisations are able to achieve their goals by creating dependence relationships amongst society (Communication Theory, 2015).

There are two main factors that influence the degree of media dependence. Firstly, an individual will become more dependent on a media source that meets a number of their needs rather than one that fulfils a few. The second factor of dependency is social stability. When conflict within a region escalates, practices, beliefs and institutions are challenged, forcing an individual to re-evaluate and make new choices. At this time, individual's reliance on the media for information will increase significantly. On the contrary, during stable times, an individual's dependency on the media will reduce (Communication Theory, 2015).

2.2.2 Relationships:
Dependency on the media emerges from three relationships explained blow:

Society and the Media: Within this relationship, the accessibility and availability of the media is held in high regard as it forms the basic background of an individual's experience (Communication Theory, 2015).

Media and the Target Audience: This is a key relationship within this theory because it affects how the audience use a mass medium. The more noticeable the information, the stronger the motivation to seek mediated information and increases the dependency on medium (Communication Theory, 2015).

Society and the Audience: The societies influence on an individual's needs for media use, provides a norm, value, and laws for their members. Social systems can play a role as an alternative to the media by offering similar services to them (Communication Theory, 2015).

2.2.3 The Effects:

Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur suggest that there are cognitive, affective and behavioural consequences of mass media use are premised upon characteristics of both the audience and their social environment (Communication Theory, 2015).

Cognitive

There are five different types of cognitive effects that can be applied on audiences. They are - ambiguity, agenda-setting, attitude formation, belief systems and value clarification and conflict. Each effect will be briefly described below:

Ambiguity arises when the target audiences receive incomplete or inadequate information about their social space. When there are high levels of ambiguity, anxiety is created amongst the public, and individuals are more likely to turn to the media to resolve ambiguity. Ambiguity is heightened during times of conflict and social change (Communication Theory, 2015).

The second aspect is **agenda-setting**. As stated above, media dependency theory incorporates the entire theory of agenda-setting within its framework. This will be elaborated further in the later part of this section.

Attitude formation is the third effect. The media exposes us to new people from different demographics, such as political characters from across the globe. Media dependency does not propose that the media are monolithic in their ability to change attitudes, but it does suggest that the media does play a crucial role in selecting a criterion for which people form their attitudes. If an individual is experiencing greater media dependency, it would be expected that an individual would be more complacent in their attitudes about subjects in question than those will low media dependency (Ball-Rokeach, 1976).

The media also play a crucial role in expanding the people's **belief systems**. The media can broaden an individual's beliefs by broadcasting information about a certain category. These beliefs are met and incorporated into an existing value system. As an individual's belief system can hardly be changed, the media use it to further their knowledge or use it to manipulate their belief (Ball-Rokeach, 1976).

The last aspect is **value clarification and conflict.** The media helps individuals elucidate their values often by showering information about value conflicts. When such conflicts are portrayed in the media, the value conflicts are identified, resulting in the publics forming their own value positions. This can be a very difficult position as it forces a choice between dissenting goals and the means for obtaining them (Ball-Rokeach, 1976).

Affective

There are numerous possible affective media effects that are more likely to transpire during times of extensive media dependency. The first being **desensitization**, which explains that prolonged exposure to content of a violent nature can have a 'numbing' effect on an individual. This promotes user insensitivity towards helping others when such events happen in reality (Ball-Rokeach, 1976).

Secondly, the exposure to media messages such as news or TV programmes that represent crime-stricken countries can increase the anxiety of an individual to visit or live in a certain place (Ball-Rokeach, 1976).

The media can also play a role in the moral and feelings of alienation of individuals. Whether being positive or negative, mass media can cause variations in an individual's sense of morale in belonging to a particular group or their alienation from that group.

Behavioural

There are two main categories within this section. The first category is the **activation** effects. This refers to occasions in which the target audience act in a specific way. This would not be the case in everyday life and is a direct consequence of receiving mass media messages (Communication Theory, 2015).

The second category is called **deactivation**. This refers to occurrences in which the target audience would have acted in a certain way, but because of being exposed to mass media messages, they decide not to take any action (Communication Theory, 2015).

2.2.4 Conceptual Model:
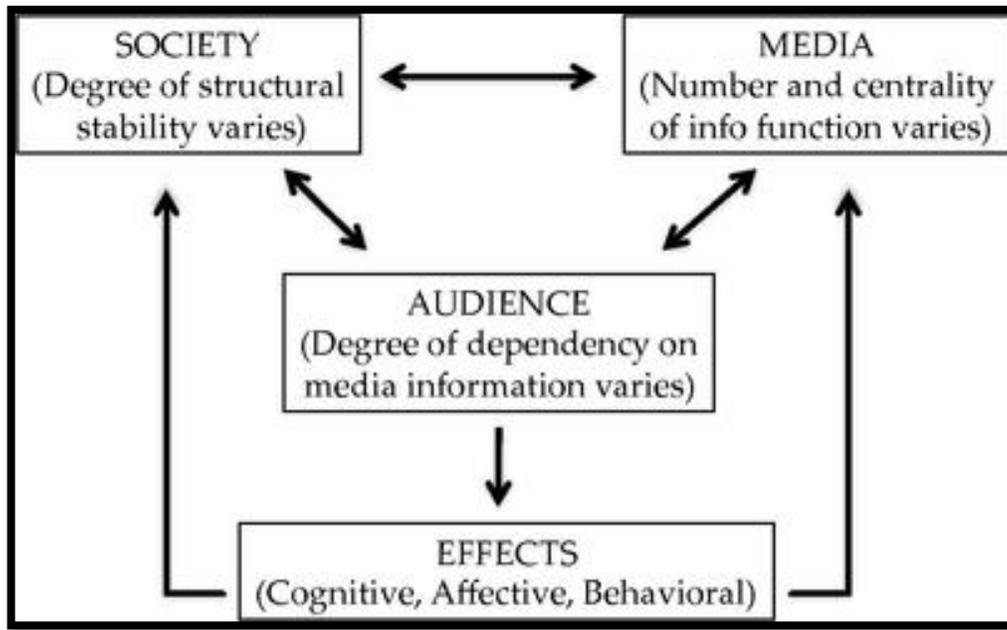
Figure 1 shows interrelationships between Society, Media and Audience

(Ball-Rokeach, 1976)

2.2.5 Agenda Setting Theory:

News outlets and organisations both play a key role in affecting the order of presentation in reports, events and issues in the audience mind. The more importance the news is – the more importance it is attributed by society. The media prioritises what people should think and how they should think about it (Communication Theory, 2016).

There are two levels in the agenda setting theory:

The **First Level** describes how media uses a subject or issues to influence what individuals should think about (Communication Theory, 2016).

The **Second Level** depicts how the media focuses on the characters of issues and how people should think about that (Communication Theory, 2016).

The agenda setting theory is mostly used in political campaigns and public relations.

The main aspect that is associated with the theory is the concept of '**gate keeping**'. This is the control over the selected content discussed in the media. Society puts importance to the product of media gate keeping. Editors are seen as the gatekeeper. They decide 'what' events to portray in the media 'gates' on the grounds of 'newsworthiness' (Communication Theory, 2016).

Another key concept of the theory is **framing**. This is the process of selective control. It can be seen as the way in which content is shaped within the same frame of reference. It could also be seen as how individuals attach importance to news and perceive it. Framing is used by the media to reinforce a certain agenda or to add importance to a certain subject (Communication Theory, 2016).

2.3 Themes:

The aim of this literature review is to examine if prior research has been conducted within this field and to what extent. Firstly, the researcher will define fake news and describe its consequences within society. The researcher will then discuss prior studies in relation to political marketing and discuss its impact through social media platforms.

2.3.1 Definition of Fake News:

Fake News, also known as alternative facts or post truth, has risen as a new phenomenon globally and is playing havoc amongst the media industry. Fake news articles are usually far from the truth and are intended to defame a certain individual or organization. Politicians have jumped on the bandwagon and are either using fake news or being targeted by it hence causing confusion amongst the wider public (Carson, 2017).

2.3.2 Consequences of Fake News on Society:

Today, we live in an era where information is readily available at our fingertips in every corner of the world. Information has become easy to post, instantly viewed by mass audiences and shared thousands of times. Whilst this phenomenon may have great advantages, the disadvantages that come with it are extremely worrisome. With a shift to online platforms within the last 2 decades, one great danger has risen, the introduction of fake news.

According to Stanford University, one of the main reasons fake news has become such a dangerous facet in society today is that it often masks itself under the presence of established, legitimate news corporations. A recent study conducted in the United States of America by Stanford researchers evaluated both middle school and high school students from 12 different states. The study was led over an 18month period to assess the student's ability to distinguish if they could decipher information they see online. The researchers were astonished with the results as students weren't able to tell the difference between an advertisement from a news story or even recognize biased sources from factual information (Stanford University, 2016).

The researchers have been quoted saying, "But in every case and at every level, we were taken aback by students' lack of preparation." "At present, we worry that democracy is threatened by the ease at which disinformation about civic issues is allowed to spread and flourish' (Stanford University, 2016)."

Students are not the only ones that are finding it difficult of accepting information as facts and sharing it with others. During President Donald Trump's campaign, he was noted for quoting facts and figures from various unreliable news sources. In one instance, President Trump referenced a highly controversial news outlet, The Centre of Security Policy (CSP) which said, "25 percent of those polled agreed that violence against Americans in the United States is justified as part of the global jihad." Trump went on to say that the CSP were a very highly respect organization which he knew very well (Trump Pence, 2015).

Shortly after this controversy, the CSP were discredited but the impact it already had could not be obliterated from the mass audiences it had reached. Ryan Daniels, a professor at UH Maui College went on to say that Donald Trump, being a figure of power and a source of information, gives legitimacy to fake news articles, more individuals are going to believe it even though its miss guiding (Trump Pence, 2015).

The real impact of fake news harming society become very apparent in Washington DC on December 4, 2016. Edgar Maddison Welch shot an assault rifle several times in Comet Ping Pong, a pizzeria. Authorities in the USA that investigated the incident cited that Welch's actions were in direct correlation to a fake news article stating that Hilary Clinton was hiding a child sex-trafficking syndicate within the area. This scenario raised many questions amongst journalist and authorities with some asking the question of who should be held accountable in situations like these? With Welch now facing criminal chargers, some are arguing that those responsible for the fake news article should be held liable too (Kang, 2016).

Besides the real danger behind these fake news articles, some individuals are using this as a platform to generate large amounts of profit. As fake news was the key phrase used in the election campaign in the United States of America, a team at NPR (National Public Radio) Plant Money decided to track a specific news article titled, 'FBI Agents Suspected in Hilary Email Leaks Found Dead in Apparent Murder-Suicide.' Within the first 10 days, the article has received over 1.6 million views. The story was published on the Denver Guardian, a website that looked incredibly legitimate and professional. Plant Money was able to track down the author of the article, Iestin Coler, and interviewed him about his gain from this story. Whilst Coler wouldn't share the exact figures which he profited from, he did admit that he was receiving $20,000 on average every month. The money generated from his website came in the form of advertisements that are featured (Money, 2016).

As Fake News started playing havoc within the United States, many key figures including Former President Barack Obama have denounced fake news sources. In Berlin in November 2016, Barack Obama said, "If we are not serious about facts and what's true and what's not, and particularly in an age of social media when so many people are getting their information in sound bites and off their phones, if we can't discriminate between serious arguments and propaganda, then we have problems (Harris, 2016)."

On the complete contrary, Jay McGregor from Forbes believes Fake News will play as a historical point of reference for society in terms of creating conversation about journalism, finding out the facts and around social media. He believes that there are two main reasons as to why Fake News can be good for society and they are both stated below (McGregor, 2017).

Saving Journalism is the most obvious of the two. It has forced many news outlets to invest both money and time in fact-checking which has in-turn reinvigorated journalism. Journalists are afraid of sharing inaccurate stories as it may affect their credibility whilst the reader is becoming ever more critical in the articles that the read. Rather than just skimming through the headlines, readers are using their critical analysis skills to determine what is true and what is not (McGregor, 2017).

Social Media have clearer defined Roles. Whilst both Facebook and Google don't create news per se, they serve as a platform to over 1.86 billion people who are able to create and share stories. Jay McGregor believes that if it wasn't for fake news, users of these social media platforms would be served with the same 'crap' all the time. Fake news has created excitement online and has opened the door to many readers to be involved in more critical issues around the world. Whether one believes the story or not, there is interest created. McGregor says that society will come out better after this difficult period. He believes that individuals will have a better consensus of journalism in the modern age and people will value good quality accurate news and will be more sceptical about what they are told (McGregor, 2017).

From the previous literature regarding the consequences of fake news on society, the researcher can distinguish the impact of fake news on individuals. Through the use of Social Media, Fake News has become easier to access and share amongst wide audiences. Though there may be long term benefits because of fake news, the initial impact that is has can cause devastating effects in the short term. Society are easily persuaded by these masked articles and both certain organizations and individuals are using this at a platform to gain from it.

2.4 Political Marketing:

Political marketing is the process by which political campaigns promote their candidates and their organizations to the public through well-crafted communications aimed at persuading and gaining support. In the business world, individuals may view political marketing that do not directly correlate with traditional marketing techniques, but while the construct being marketed may be different, there are lots of commonalities between political marketing and that of marketing of a good or a service (Woodward, 2015).

Both traditional marketers and in the political marketing sphere use media/news outlets to either inform, remind and persuade the attitudes, opinions and behaviours of potential consumers and voters. They both utilize similar tools and strategies when structuring their respective campaigns, such as conducting market research and statistical analysis (Hughes, 2016).

The main difference between traditional marketing and political marketing is that the latter intends to raise awareness and inform the public about key issues and leadership decisions within their constituency (Hughes, 2016).

As technology has evolved and news agency have become ever more accessible, individuals are able to view current news 24-hours a day on various platforms from different perspectives. In saying this, the wider public are still under-informed on political matters and news. Pew Research Centre in the United States of America conducted a survey of 3,147 individuals at random and only one third of them were aware that the U.S Supreme Court has only three women judges. Only half of those surveyed knew the correct number of seats held by Republicans and Democrats in the U.S Senate. This is why the ideology behind political marketing is so important. Individuals need to be aware on current issues so that they are able to make informed decisions when voting (Woodward, 2015).

"The ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all" John F. Kennedy (Hughes, 2016).

As time changes, the scope of politics has also transformed. Political campaigns once relied heavily on print media before word of mouth over the radio became politicians favoured tool to reach potential voters. When television came about, this then redefined the political hemisphere. The imagery this created persuaded more voters to become favourable to the political campaign advertising. In the last decade, the internet revolutionized the way everything in the world ran, especially these campaigns, allowing political parties to quickly reach large audiences in a matter of seconds. **Social Media** is the new form of political marketing and had redefined the way everything works (Campaign On, 2016).

In a recent study, it was discovered that over 56% of Americans have a registered social media site, up from 48% in 2010. Whilst many may believe that it's the younger generations that have social media profiles, there are actually 55% of Americans that are aged 45-54 who are registered. This is the fasting growing age group in terms of social media activity and usage. With over 22% of Americans using social media platforms more than 5 times a day, it has become very apparent why all types of organizations, even politicians have begun to use social media (Campaign On, 2016). "Political campaigns is not just about the potential reach, it's about the numbers," said Ethelbert Ouano, Legal consultant lawyer at Cebu Bloggers Society Inc (Campaign On, 2016).

What are the benefits of Social Media in Political Campaigns? Firstly, Social Media helps politicians reach large numbers of voters in a short amount of time. This increases their **reach.** Social Media has created a platform which allows politicians to **engage** with their voters and even potential voters, surpassing the monologue which was present in television and radio marketing. Politicians are able to **share their beliefs, accomplishments and goals** directly with their voters, without an intermediary changing the message. This leads to them feeling more involved. Social media has created a space where politicians can portray their everyday lives to their voters by giving them a **behind-the-scenes** experience. Having a large digital following one accomplishment, but politicians are actively using social media to turn their following into active voters. Every message sent and every post is tracked (Woodward, 2015).

Social Media, through the form of **analytics**, allows political campaigns to track all engagements and to discover which demographics behave to which type of interaction (Campaign On, 2016).

During former President Barack Obama's Presidential campaign, he fully embraced the social media movement and this proved to be decisive in him winning the election. Below are the figures of Barack Obamas following compared to his opponent, Mitt Romney (Campaign On, 2016):

	Barack Obama	Mitt Romney
Twitter	20,420,000+ Followers	1,225,000+ Followers
Facebook	29,101,000+	7,993,000+
YouTube	233,000+	21,000+
Pinterest	42,000+	12,000+
Instagram	1.4 million+	38,000+

2.5 Conclusion:

From the literature reviewed in this section, the researcher has discovered that as time has evolved, technology has revolutionized the world we live in and has impacted the political sector in the majority of the countries around the world. When reviewing the theories used within this study, it is ever apparent that individuals and political parties can take advantage of platforms such as social media to persuade large populations with carefully crafted messages. Fake news has become ever more apparent within the last year and its impact on society could be extremely detrimental in the short term by corrupting voter's minds and misleading them.

The researcher believes that political marketing has become an important facet in election campaigns, not only in America. Whilst this may have several advantages to political parties, the researcher believes that through the use of social media, fake news has able to take the form of political marketing campaigns and corrupt the mind of voters. This could in-turn hurt political parties in the long run or even persuade voters not to anymore (Campaign On, 2016).

The larger societies around the world are facing a constant battle between deciding what information they are exposed to is true or not. Publics are easily being swayed by fake news articles and organizations are using this to their advantage to gain more support and tarnish their competitors. Social Media has become the hub of fake news and individuals need to be more vigilant in what they read and must be able to critic everything so that they can make informed decisions rather than just believe everything that they are exposed to.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Paradigm:

This research study is embedded in a mixed method of both positivist and interpretivist nature.

Positivist researchers believe that they should take a controlled and structured approach when conducting research. The researchers believe that the world is external and every research phenomenon has a single objective reality. Positivist researchers believe that they should detach themselves from participants that are partaking in the research. This is important to remain emotionally neutral during the study in order to make clear concise distinctions between reason and feeling. By detaching themselves, they believe there is little or no bias involved as their emotions will not get in the way of the facts (Edinburgh Napier Research Module, 2012).

Positivist researcher aim to make a concise distinction between science and personal experience as well as fact and value judgement. It is also crucial for them to be objective and make use of consistent rational and logical methods (Difference Between.com, 2017).

Measurable methods are essential and central to positivist research. These methods include, quantitative questions and observations as per this study. According to the positivist tradition, it is crucial to carry out quantitative research to have a complete view of the society the researcher is studying. Quantitative research provides facts and figures and observations are used to have a broader picture of the state of a community and their behaviours (Difference Between.com, 2017).

Positivist researchers concentrate on descriptions and explanations of the area that they are studying. They aim to make use of a coherent, rational, logical and verbal approach in their study. Positivists try to uphold clear distinctions between facts and value judgments. In positivist research, researchers have a tendency to look for correlations between two or more variables (Difference Between.com, 2017).

The interpretivist nature is the opposite of the positivist nature.

Interpretivists believe that reality is multiple as well as relative. This means that one cannot practice methods that are rigid and cast in stone as every person, group or community is different. Interpretivists also adopt more flexible and personal research structures, a complete contrast from positivist researchers. Interpretivists stay away from rigid structural frameworks and they believe they should not be alienated from the subjects they are studying. Interpretivist researchers believe that the community or subjects studied should be mutually interactive and collaborative whereby the researcher attaches and absorbs himself into the study and subjects. This is done to give a more holistic picture of the state of society. The aim of interpretivist research is to therefore understand and interpret the behaviours of the people they are studying instead of generalizing and predicting the causes and effects of their behavior. Interpretivists researchers aim to understand meanings, motives and reasons as well as other subjective experiences that are context and time bound (Difference Between.com, 2017).

Interpretivists, by being actively involved with the subjects being studied are aware that they will influence as well as be influenced by the research. They are also aware that the relationship between them and the subjects will develop beyond the research. This relationship occurs naturally because the researcher absorbs himself into the community over a period (Edinburgh Napier Research Module, 2012).

Additionally, interpretivist researchers believe it is important for them to analyze how people interpret activities. This is achieved by conducting research that is qualitative by nature (Edinburgh Napier Research Module, 2012).

It has often been observed that no single research methodology is intrinsically better than the next, and this has led to many researchers calling for a combination of methods to improve the quality of the phenomena studied (Edinburgh Napier Research Module, 2012).

In this study, the researcher adopts both positivist and interpretivist methods. This provides the researcher with a holistic view of the topic of fake news. Interpretivist research allows the researcher to understand what the impact of fake news is on the ANC. This requires the researcher to actively take part in the research process in order to have a better understanding of the phenomena. However, because of the lack of objectivity of interpretivist research, a positivist approach will also be used to the development of the key research instrument.

3.2 Research Design:

This research study follows a triangulation research design as it incorporates both a quantitative as well as a qualitative approach. Quantitative research methods will allow the researcher to compare responses in statistical graphs based on responses from the sample (Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). The aim of qualitative research methods will allow the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding through analysing the responses from the sample (Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

The study follows both a positivist and interpretivist research tradition where both inductive and deductive line of reasoning is tested and drawn upon. Inductive reasoning allows for the creation of a new theory or development of an existing theory through the study (Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Deductive reasoning allows for an existing theory to be tested during the research study. As fake news is a new phenomenon, new theories could be drawn up through this study (Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Existing media theories, such as the *Media Dependency Theory,* could be tested as it falls within the same framework.

The time dimension of the study is that of both a cross-sectional survey design as well as focus groups. Focus groups will be conducted to analyse the opinions and responses of the population sample. Cross-sectional surveys will be used to collect data from respondents at only one point in time to provide an overall snapshot of the phenomenon.

The researcher has drawn generalities from the data gathered through the surveys and responses in the focus groups. The aim of this research was to investigate the influence of fake news on consumer's perceptions and behaviour in terms of their support for the ANC and the impact on their brand image.

3.3 Population:

Unit of Analysis:

The individual that will be examined in a study is referred to as the unit of analysis (Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). In this study, the unit of analysis is:

1 South African citizen that is eligible to vote in the democratic elections.

Target and Accessible Population

The target population in this study is all South African citizens who are eligible to vote across the globe. The accessible population of the research study are all South African citizens that are eligible to vote in Cape Town, South Africa.

Population Parameters:

The population parameters for the study are South African citizens within the Cape Town City Bowl region. Beyond the similarity of being South African, the population sample will be extremely diverse demographically.

3.4 Sampling:

Non-Probability Sampling:

This research study will follow non-probability sampling. This is because each individual element of the population does not stand an equal chance of being a part of the sample drawn. The researcher will use this technique as accessing the entire population will inflict both time and financial constraints (Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Sampling Method:

This study will use convenience sampling. It involves all elements of the population which are easily accessible to the researcher (Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Sample Size:

Per the consensus in 2017, there are 3.7million people living in South Africa**Invalid source specified.**. The researcher has decided that a sample size of 100 individuals is adequate enough to gather data from, in order to draw conclusions of the effect of fake news on the ANC during the election period.

3.5 Data-Collection Methods:

As the nature of the study included a mixed method approach, an online questionnaire was used as the data collection method. The questionnaire consisted of mainly quantitative close-ended questions with 2 open-ended qualitative questions to allow respondents to express their opinions.

The questionnaire was made up of multiple choice, matrix and open-ended questions. It was constructed in the order of closed-ended questions at the beginning followed by open-ended questions and then three demographic questions at the end. The questionnaire followed this order to entice the respondent so that they were more willing to take part. Before beginning the questionnaire, the respondents were provided with instructions on how to complete the form as well as an acknowledgement of confidentiality being observed. The questionnaire was completed by respondents at their own time and pace. The problem that the researcher faced is that he was not be able to ask follow-up questions. Questionnaires are an extremely useful tool as it is relatively inexpensive and can reach a large pool of respondents remotely. They can collect a broad range of data such as attitudes, beliefs and opinions. It was relatively easy to administer for the researcher (Snap Survey, 2014).

As the questionnaire was hosted online, this was the easiest platform for the researcher to reach respondents in the timeliest manner. The researcher gathered data from the sample across the region without investing much money in travelling to various areas. The questionnaire was distributed on Google Forms and was shared on various forums on Facebook that many South Africans are a part of. The sample group was asked to complete the questionnaire before a certain date. The disadvantage of this method was that low response rates could have affected the study and this could be caused by factors such as lack of internet access of users or not being fluent in English.

The researcher made sure of the following during construction of the questionnaire:

- Questions were not confusing or misleading.
- Open-ended questions were not be biased and allowed the respondent to answer freely.
- The questionnaire did not store any personal information of the respondent

3.6 Data-Analysis Methods:

As the research study is of a triangulation nature, both sets of quantitative and qualitative data analysis were evaluated.

The quantitative data gathered from the closed-ended questions in the questionnaire were evaluated and checked. The results were then translated into visual presentations such as bar charts, pie charts and histograms. This helped portray the data in a illustrative way to explain the outcomes.

The qualitative data that was collected through the open-ended questions were transcribed by the researcher. The researcher drew out themes from the findings and identified and group themes that emerged from the data, as the study followed an inductive line of reasoning. Conclusions were then drawn from this data.

CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter analysis and presents the findings which have been derived from the online questionnaires that were conducted. A sample size of 100 individuals was selected to form part of the study, however, 119 individuals undertook the questionnaire. From the completed questionnaires, the researcher had to eliminate 14 questionnaires due to the fact that the respondents were not interested in politics or not active news consumers. 105 questionnaires were then deemed to be usable for the study.

The online questionnaire was solely based on the research questions and objectives and this was taken into account when collecting the data. The researcher analysed the quantitative data through tallying responses and the qualitative data by means of thematic coding. The researcher has used illustrative graphs and charts to present the quantitative findings and has identified various relevant themes to present the qualitative data.

4.1 Findings of Analysis of Data

4.1.1 Question 1: Do you consider yourself as an active news consumer?
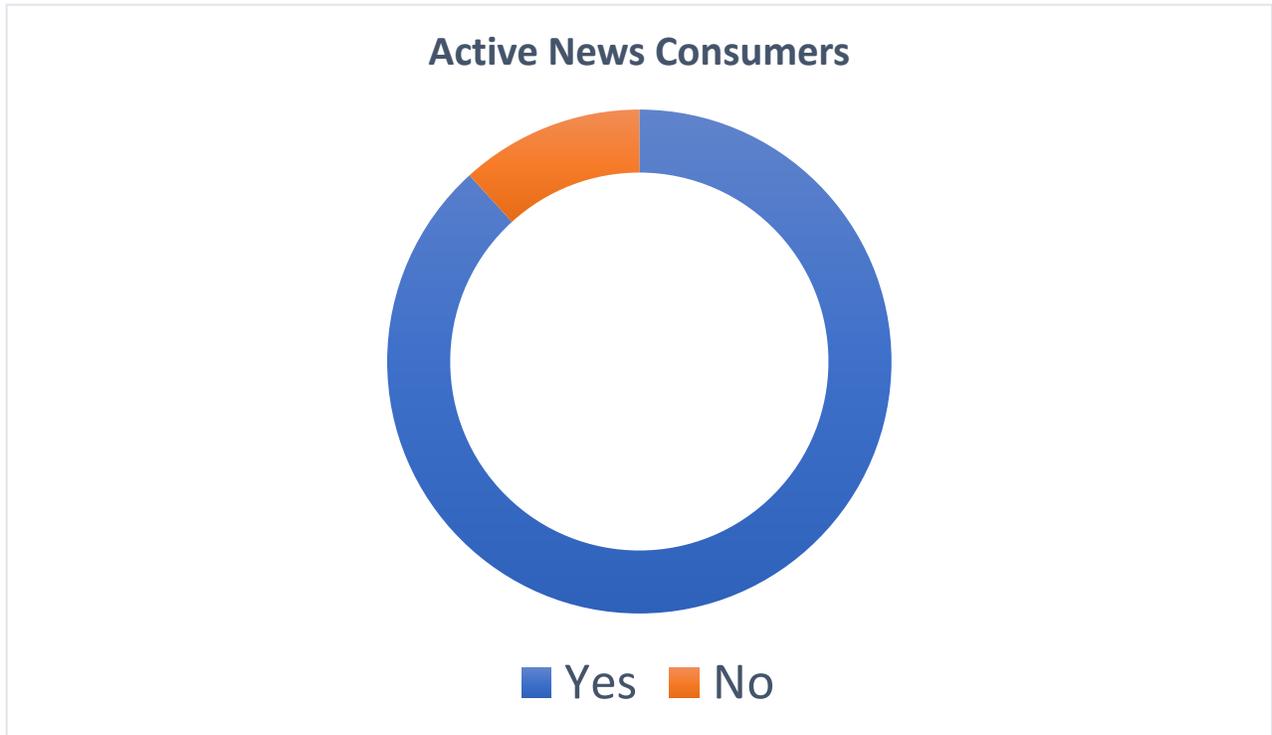

Active News Consumers

Yes ■ No

Figure 2: Active News Consumers

The first question of the questionnaire was to gain a general consensus of whether the respondents are active news consumers or not. The data presented consists of all 119 respondents and enables the researcher to separate the results given by both parties. The data shows that 105 respondents were active news consumers whilst 14 respondents were non-active news consumers. The findings can be interpreted as majority of participants are active news consumers. This can be interpreted as majority of individuals in South Africa rely on the news to fulfil their need of information.

From this data, the researcher has then eliminated the results of the 14 non-active news consumers for the rest of the questionnaire. This was in order to gain a clearer picture of the influence of alleged fake news on consumers who take a vested interest in the news.

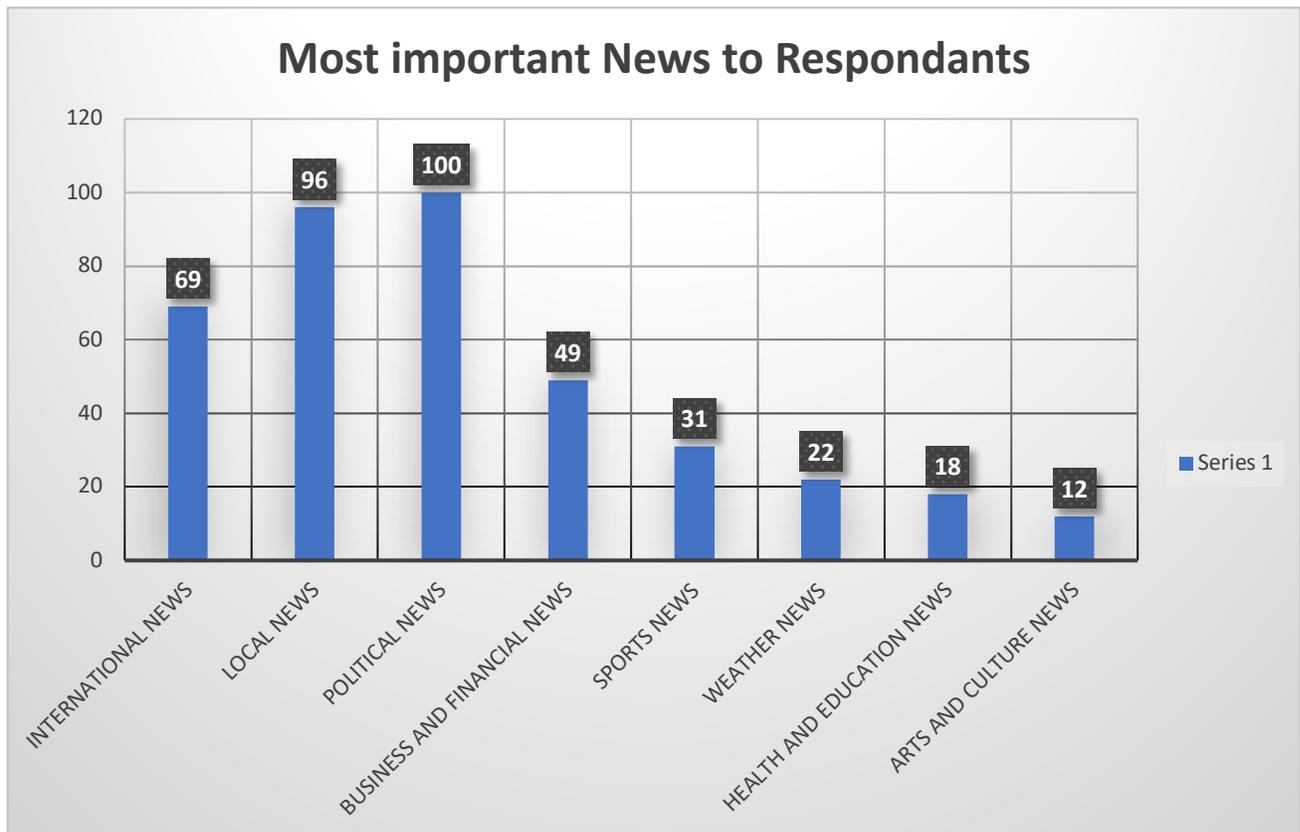### 4.1.2 Question 2: What type of News is most important to you?

Figure 3: What type of News is most important to you?

The second question was created to gain a further understanding of the type of news which is held in high regard amongst the active news consumers. This data helped the researcher decipher the type of news that the respondents were most interested in. The findings show that out of the 105 respondents, *Political News and Local News* ranked the highest with 100 and 96 respondents both selecting these options. *International News and Business and Financial News* were deemed important to at least half of the participants of the questionnaire. *Sports News, Weather News, Health and Education News and Arts and Culture News* were considered important to the least majority of the respondents.

This data allows the researcher to depict that majority of South Africans take great interest in both Political News and Local News and consider it part of their daily lives. These two news forums play a crucial role in decision making for these consumers.

4.1.3 Question 3: What platforms do you use to access your News?

NEWS PLATFORMS USED BY RESPONDANTS

■ Number of Individuals

- RADIO: 58
- TELEVISION: 42
- SOCIAL MEDIA / INTERNET: 92
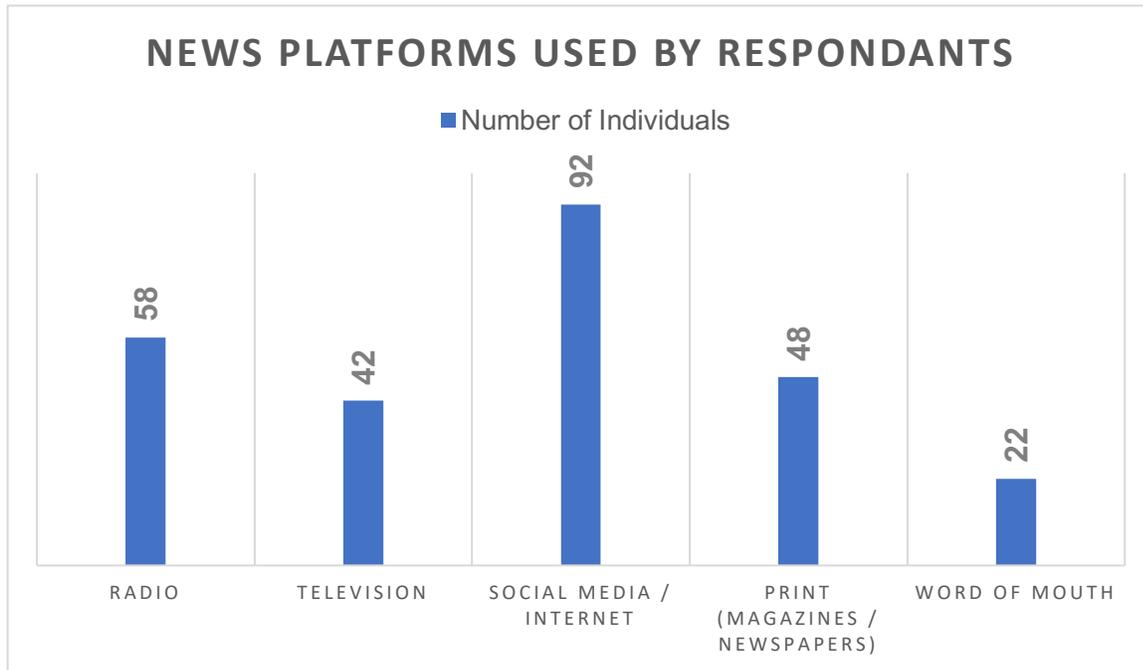- PRINT (MAGAZINES / NEWSPAPERS): 48
- WORD OF MOUTH: 22

Figure 4: News Platforms used by Respondents

The third question was asked to recognise which news platforms most respondents use in their daily lives. Respondents were allowed to choose more than one option in this question. The data uncovered portrays that most individuals, 87.6%, use either *Social Media or the Internet* for news consumption. *Radio, Print and Television* all still play a major role for half of the respondents.

The data gathered from this question allows the researcher to draw conclusions that most individuals today use *Social Media / Internet* to view their news. As technology has increased over the past decade, more consumers are using smartphones and are able to surf online with ease. On the other hand, many believe that *Print News* may be on a rapid decline, but many individuals still use it as a news reference. The data reflected correlates with these phenomena.

4.1.4 Question 4: Do you rely on the News to make important decisions?

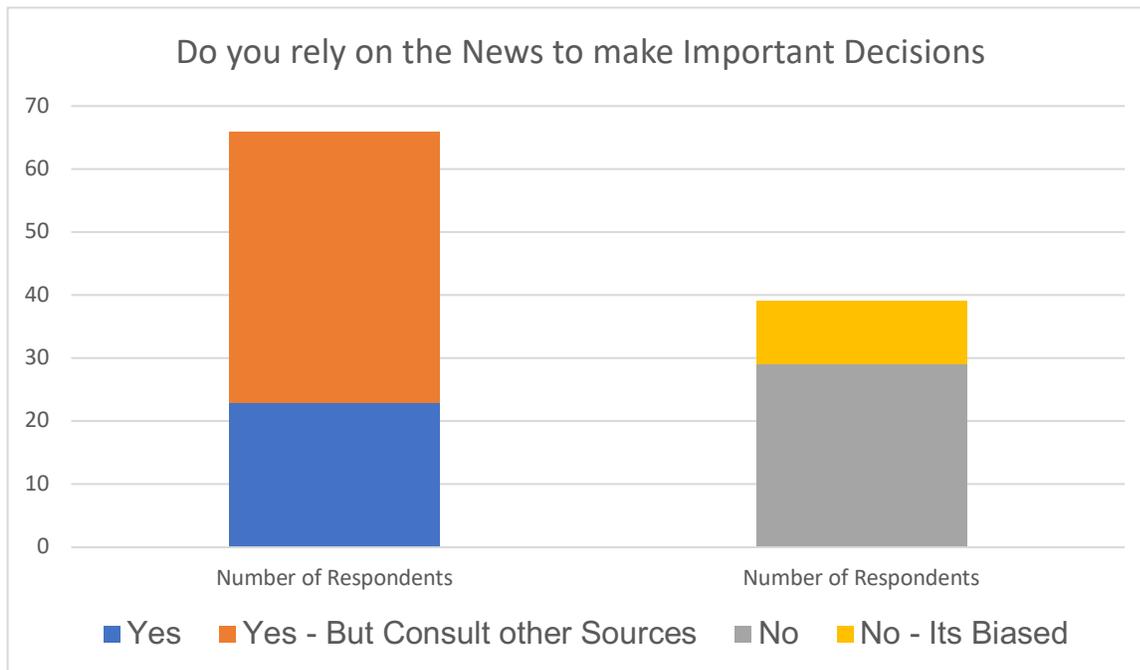Do you rely on the News to make Important Decisions

Figure 5: Respondents Relying on News to make Important Decisions

The fourth question was constructed in order to find out if individuals relied on the news to make important decisions in their lives. Participants were given 4 different options, *Yes, Yes – but also consult other sources, No and No – its biased.* Whilst majority of individuals answered with the affirmative, more than half of them said that they consult other sources as well as the news. Less than 40% of individuals said that they did not take the news into account when making important decisions with the minority going to the extent of saying that it is biased.

These responses allow the researcher to believe that majority of South Africans rely on the news in some capacity before making important decisions. The news portrayed to them can have lasting effects as it can change the outcome of many of their lives. The shift between solely relying on the news and consulting other sources has become far greater for the later, deeming that individuals are starting to become more curious to what they are exposed to.

4.1.5 Question 5: Have you ever come into contact with alleged Fake News?

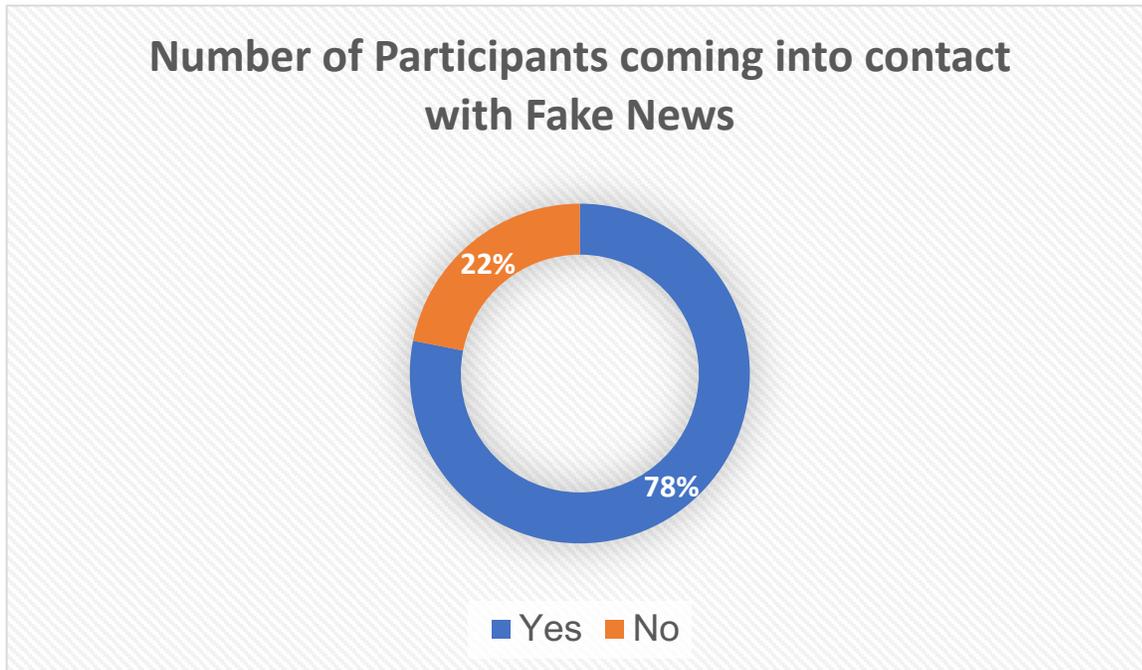**Number of Participants coming into contact with Fake News**

22%

78%

■ Yes ■ No

Figure 6: Number of Respondents coming into contact with Fake News

Question five was the first question about fake news and whether the respondents have come into contact with alleged fake news articles. The question had a simple yes or no option. 78% of the respondents confirmed that they have been exposed to fake news articles whilst 22% said they had not.

The researcher has found that majority of participants have been exposed to some sort of alleged fake news. As Fake News has become the new buzz word, more individuals are becoming more aware of it and are evaluating and scrutinising every article they come into contact with. The data proves that this phenomenon is not just hearsay or a myth, but fake news articles are becoming more common in these times.

4.1.6 Question 6: Do you believe that mainstream media publish fake news articles?
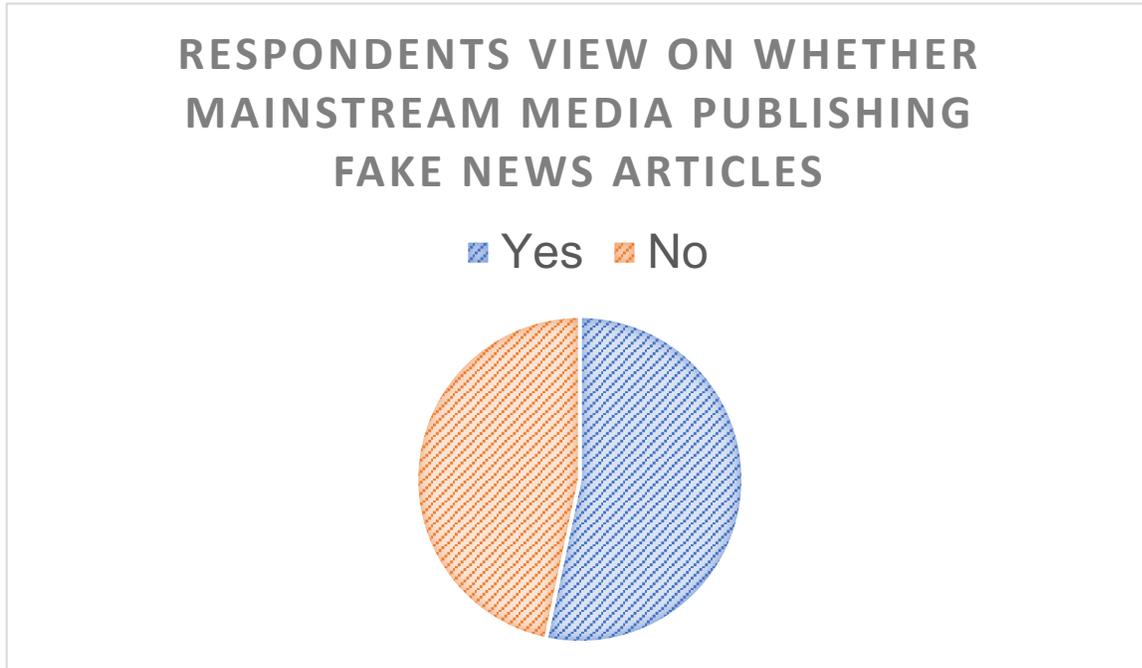

Figure 7:Respondents view on whether mainstream media outlets publish Fake News articles

The next quantitative question asked respondents if they believed that the mainstream media outlets publish fake news articles. The question was posed as a follow up question to *Question 5* to determine whether the respondents have been exposed to alleged fake news articles from these outlets. 53% of the participants believed that mainstream media channels do publish fake news articles whilst 47% believed that they do not.

The data relates that there is an even split between the respondent's answers and that although some may believe that mainstream media outlets don't publish alleged fake news articles, there is a growing population that do believe it. This can hamper journalist credibility as well as news outlet's credibility and the vast population could view them as untrustworthy sources.

4.1.7 Question 7: Have you ever believed or been persuaded by an alleged fake news article about the ANC?
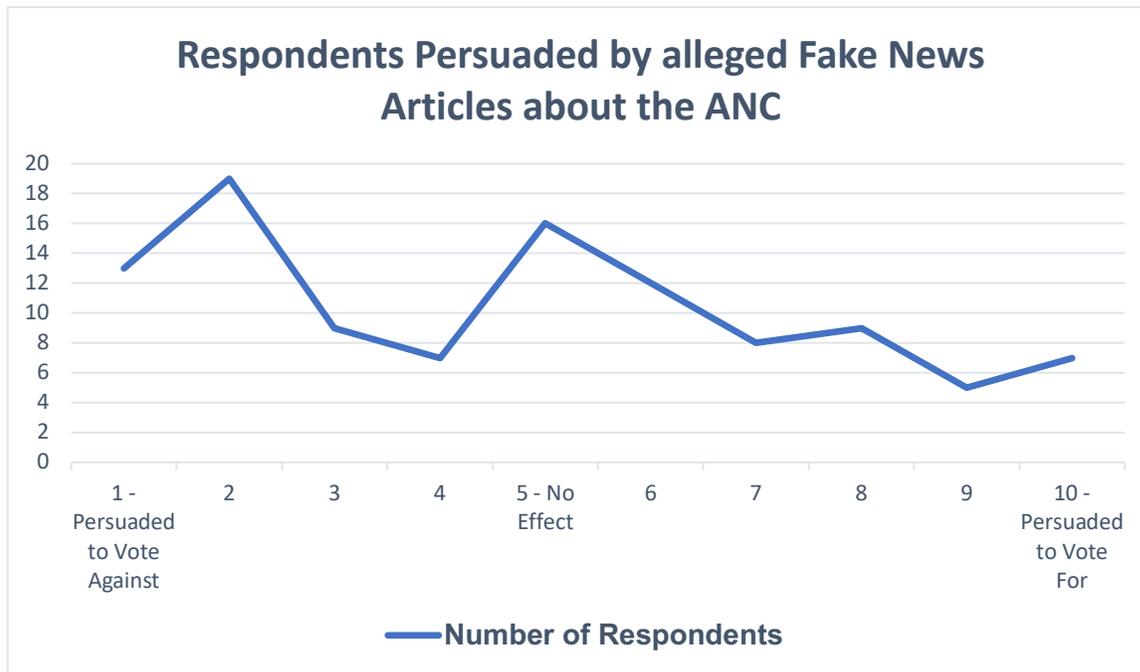

Figure 8: Respondents Persuaded by alleged Fake News Articles about the ANC

Question 7 was created to combine the concept of fake news whilst including the perception of the respondents of the African National Congress(ANC). The respondents were given a scale from 1-10, with 1 being persuaded to vote against the ANC because of an alleged fake news article, 5 – no effect and 10 being persuaded to vote for the ANC. The respondents were allowed to pick only one option. The line graph depicts that majority of respondents fell between 1 and 4 – deeming that alleged Fake News articles have persuaded them to vote against the ANC. The minority voted between 6-10 – believing that fake news articles persuaded them to vote for the ANC. 15% of respondents said that alleged Fake News articles had no bearing on how they vote for the ANC.

The research shows that majority of people believe that alleged Fake News articles has adverse effects on the ANC rather than encouraging support for the ruling party. This portrays that many individuals who could have voted for the ANC may evaluate their choices before making their final decision because of such articles.

4.1.8 Question 8: Do you believe that the ANC use Fake News as a tool to gather support from the publics?
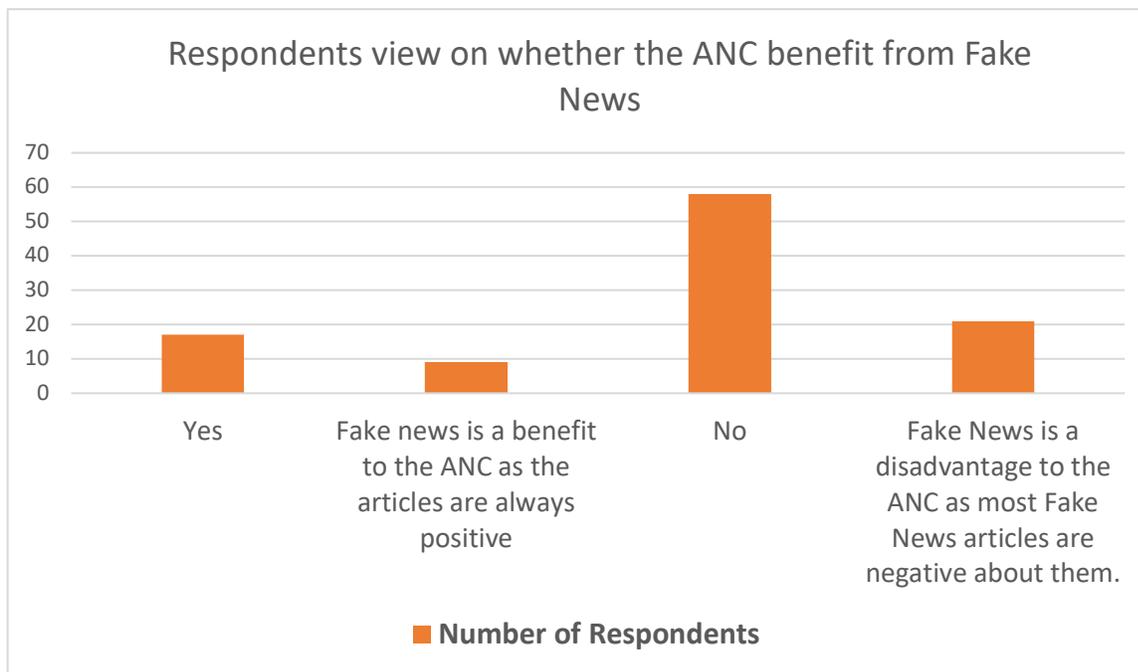

Figure 9: Respondents view on whether the ANC benefit from alleged Fake News articles to gather support from the publics

The next question asked respondents whether they believed that the ANC uses alleged Fake News articles as a tool to gather support from the general publics. Respondents were given 4 options, only being allowed to choose 1. The bar graph above shows that majority of the participants believe that the ANC do not use alleged Fake News articles as a tool whilst some even going to the extent in saying that these alleged Fake News articles come as a disadvantage to them because majority of these alleged publications are negative. Less than 30% of the participants believe that the ANC uses alleged Fake News as a tool with a third believing that these alleged articles are always portraying the ANC in a positive manner.

The previous two questions were posed differently but came to the same outcomes. From the data uncovered, the researcher can explain that as alleged Fake News articles have come rife in recent times and has caused a negative effect on the ANC, many individuals believe that the ANC do not construct these publications as most of them represent them in a negative spotlight.

4.1.9 Question 9: How do you feel about the impact of Fake News on the Political Sphere within South Africa?

The first qualitative question posed to the participants was regarding their how they felt about the impact of alleged Fake News articles on the Political sphere within South Africa. Whilst respondents were able to share their own views on the matter, the researcher was able to derive the following themes:

- Fake News has negatively impacted the political sphere in South Africa.
- Fake News has negatively impacted journalism in South Africa – News outlets are becoming less credible.
- Fake News has unfairly tarnished the reputation of many public figures.
- Fake News has become a tool for political parties to gain an advantage by demoting their rival's credibility.

The first three themes identified by the researcher are all in line with the negative effects of alleged Fake News articles on the political sphere, on journalism, and on the reputation of public figures within South Africa. Fake News has made individuals more sceptical about what they read now but has also caused the wider publics to believe stories that may be untrue. The key finding here was the fourth theme uncovered by the researcher. *Fake News has become a tool for political parties to gain an advantage by demoting their rival's credibility.* This finding shed light on the fact that the ANC may not be the only political party who has been impacted by alleged Fake News articles. Political parties may use alleged Fake News articles to deter support from opposing parties and not necessarily to gain support for themselves.

4.1.10 Question 10: How has your perception changed about the ANC because of an alleged Fake News article during the upcoming Presidential Elections?

The second qualitative question asked the respondents whether their perception of the ANC has been altered because of an alleged Fake News article during the upcoming Presidential Elections. This open-ended question allowed the respondents to explain their reasoning behind their choices in order to substantiate it. The following themes were uncovered from their responses:

- Fake News has made individuals more skeptical about the ANC.
- Participants perception of the ANC has shifted negatively due to the constant conversation surrounding the ANC and its association to Fake News.
- Alleged Fake News articles surrounding Jacob Zuma has caused many individuals to review their support for the ANC.

The themes discovered from the data clearly marks a distinctive shift in support for the ANC to a more negative light. Individuals are becoming more sceptical about articles referring to the ANC, even if the article may be justified with facts, because of the unwavering quantity of alleged Fake News articles. Participants perception of the ANC has also deteriorated due the constant link between these alleged articles and the ANC. These individuals feel that, 'where there is smoke, there is fire.' This quote was taken from a specific individual answer but it has common qualities amongst many other participants views. The third theme identified was Jacob Zuma, the President of South Africa, inclusion in many alleged Fake News articles. This is because his credibility has decreased during his past term as president and these alleged articles cause many individuals to review their support for him and the ANC.

The researcher believes that from this data, the ANC may have lost support from some individuals within the larger publics due to the nature of these articles.
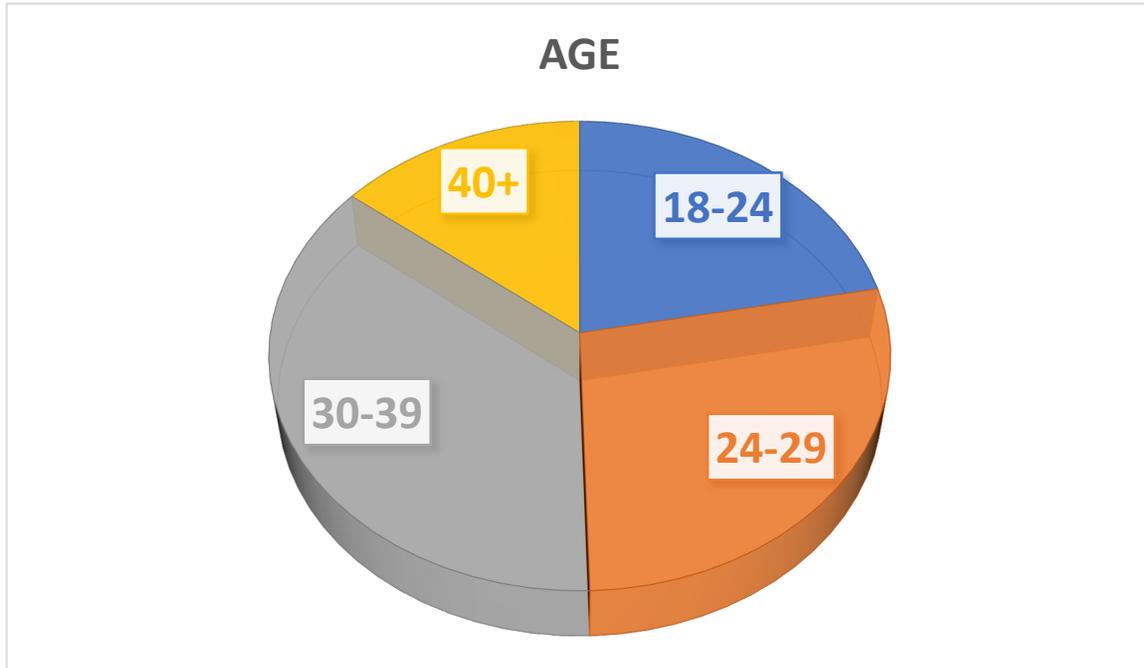
4.1.11 Question 11: Age?

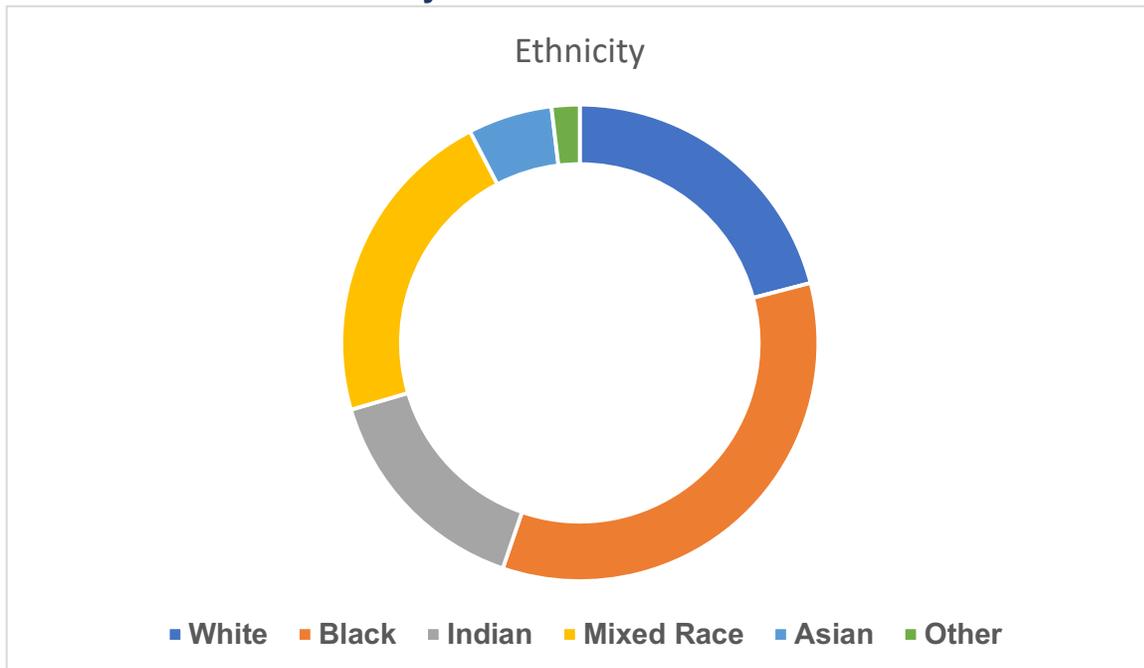*Figure 10: Age of Respondents*

4.1.12 Question 12: Ethnicity?

Figure 11: Ethnicity of Respondents

4.1.13 Question 13: Employment Status?

Employment Status

- Self-Employed
- Employed for Wages
- Unemployed - Looking for Work
- Unemployed - Not Looking for Work
- Student
- Retired
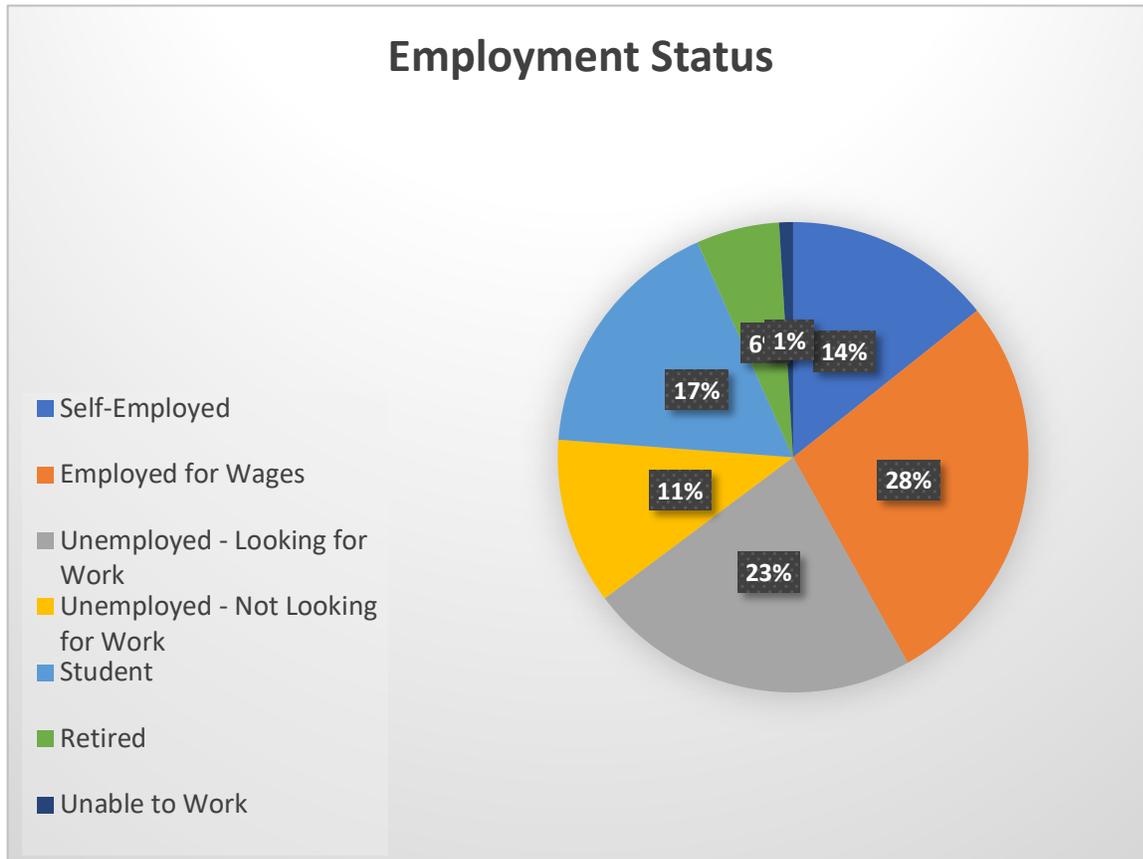- Unable to Work

6% 1% 14%
17%
28%
11%
23%

Figure 12: Employment Status of Respondents

Question 11, 12 and 13 were basic demographic questions that were created to get a general consensus on who the respondents were. The 3 pie charts above show the different age groups of the respondents, their ethnicity as well as their employment status.

Age – The researcher was able to gather information in the survey from a wide range of different ages, being from 18-40+. Majority of the respondents were from the age groups 24-39.

Ethnicity –The researcher aimed to have a diverse group of respondents and this was found to be successful as the respondent's ethnicity varied from all races throughout the questionnaire. Majority of the respondents were *Black and Mixed Race*.

Employment Status – The respondent's employment status was also taken into consideration for this study. Most respondents were said to be *Employed or Looking for work.*

The researcher asked these demographic questions to get a snapshot of the participants of the questionnaire and to ensure validity to the study. Age, Ethnicity and Employment Status could all play various roles in the way that individual views the news as well as how they perceive the ANC. The data proves that that the participants were from a diverse group and not from one school of thought.

4.2. Discussion of Findings

The data uncovered from the questionnaire has allowed the researcher to gain further insight in order to answer the *Problem Statement, Research Questions and Objectives* below:

4.2.1 Problem Statement:

The aim of this research is to investigate the influence of fake news on consumer's perceptions and behaviour in terms of their support for the ANC and the impact on their brand image.

4.2.2 Research Goal and Research Questions:

What is the influence of Fake News on the ANC brand image during the election period?

- Are consumers persuaded by fake news articles about the ANC?
- Do the consumers believe that the ANC create fake news articles to combat opposition parties?
- To what extent do consumers rely on digital media to obtain factual information to make important decisions?

4.2.3 Objective:

The primary objective of this study is to explore the influence of fake news on the ANC and how it persuades consumer perception and behaviour. Whilst gaining an understanding of the effects of fake news, we can decipher if consumer voting trends will differ from previous years in the upcoming elections.

Fake News has become ever more present in recent times and its effect on the political space within South Africa can't be ignored. The findings from the questionnaire are explained below:

It is apparent that many participants are active news consumers and that the majority of them view their news on either social media platforms or on the internet. Individuals rely on the news to make important life decisions and have vested interests in both Local News and in Politics. These four findings insinuate that many South Africans satisfy their need for information by engaging with news articles.

As many individuals use Social Media and the Internet to view their news, it was not surprising that majority of them have come into contact with alleged Fake News articles. The internet has become the easiest way for these articles to be published due to the extreme ease to disseminate information. Half of the individuals believe that mainstream media outlets are to blame for the publications of these articles but this can be countered with the reasoning that Fake News articles often bear the name of reputable sources to gain credibility.

The ANC has been the subject of many alleged Fake News articles. Most individuals have said that they have been persuaded to vote against the ANC but do not believe that the ANC use alleged Fake News articles as a tool to gather support. Many individuals believe that the ANC may be at a disadvantage because of this new phenomenon. When reviewing the qualitative questions in conjunction with the quantitative questions, it is evident that because of Fake News, the political sphere within South Africa has been affected. Many people believe that the credibility of news sources have been downgraded and that everything one reads must be placed under severe scrutiny before being accepted. Jacob Zuma, the head of the ANC and of South Africa, has come under great examination in terms of what is said about him. Many believe that although these Fake News articles are just that, fake, there must be an underlying reason to why they are sprouting about and they must hold some sort of truth.

4.3 Summary

This chapter illuminated the data gathered from the questionnaire and translated it into findings with regards to the problem statement and the research questions. The researcher conducted an online questionnaire, analysing 105 respondent answers and drawing the conclusion that Fake News has become a major talking point in recent times and it has caused a negative effect on the political sphere within South Africa especially on the ANC.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The final chapter of the study will conclude on the final research findings, whilst also making recommendations for further research to be carried out. The validity, reliability, trustworthiness as well as anticipated contribution and ethical considerations will be discussed.

5.1 Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness:

As the study uses both qualitative and quantitative research, validity, reliability and trustworthiness all play a crucial role. The researcher focused more on quantitative methods thus both reliability and validity will take more importance than trustworthiness.

The **validity** of the study refers to the research tool the researcher has selected to measure the outcomes of the study. The researcher must uphold to both external and internal validity when conducting the study (Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). This is being that the findings must relate to the research question and that the findings must be able to be generalised from the sample to the greater population. The questions asked in the questionnaire set out were all directly linked to the study with no redundant information asked. This insinuates that the questionnaire is of importance to the study and is applicable in to finding the outcome of the study (Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Reliability looks at how consistent the research tool and method is at achieving the same results by a different researcher using a different method. It also refers to the degree to which the results of the study can be viewed as a general seed to the larger population (Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). The researcher tested the reliability of the study by conducting an inter-rater test. The researcher split the responses from the questionnaires in half and comparing the results separately. The findings drawn from each half were compared to each other, and were deemed to be similar, portraying that the study is deemed reliable (Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

5.2 Anticipated Contribution:

The purpose of this study is, 'to explore the influence of fake news on the ANC whilst assessing the correlational relationship between the ANC, consumer perceptions and behaviour of their brand'. Fake news has become a worldwide buzz word and after the recent elections in the United States of America, more people are interested in its effects in terms of politics. The political sphere in South Africa is very volatile and the ANC have used political marketing in various election campaigns. Fake news creates a new range of tactics for them to employ and also be wary of during this upcoming election. For the public, it would be of great interest to see if fake news plays a role in the upcoming elections and to determine whether the larger publics are persuaded by fake news publications or if they are easily identifiable.

5.3 Ethical Considerations and Limitations:

The researcher remained as ethical as possible throughout the study. He made it clear to the respondents that the purpose of this research is for academic purposes. In the questionnaire, the researcher ensured that he is not invading the respondent's privacy. He guaranteed the respondents that confidentiality will be upheld at all times (Maree, 2014).

The researcher identified who the respondent was during the study but did not and will not disclose the respondent's identity to a third party. Respondents had the freedom to participate in the study and were not forced to take part in the study (Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

The researcher ensured that the questionnaire deals with no sensitive or personal information. Furthermore, participants were made aware of exactly what data is needed and why (Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

The scope of the study is South African citizens of all races that are eligible to vote who reside in Cape Town, South Africa. A limitation to the study was being able to get responses from individuals from different backgrounds within the time limit being set. Another limitation is that the questionnaire was only set out in English. This limited the amount of responses by individuals who are not literate in English as it could be confusing leading to a lower response rate. A major limitation was that individuals did not want to take part in the study as their political views may be a personal topic.

5.4 Implications of Findings and Final Conclusion

The research study illuminates the effects of Fake News on the pollical sphere within South Africa. Due to the fact that the research study was only focused on the ANC, they are able to use the findings and data analysis to combat consumer perceptions of their brand and potentially combat Fake News on a larger scale. This study could assist the ANC and all other political parties within South Africa to understand the effects of Fake News and how they can market themselves to the public through credible sources. For the citizens of South Africa, this study demonstrates to them about the effects of Fake News and that not everything that is written are based on facts.

The implications of the study empowers political parties to gain a further understanding of consumer perception of their organizations after the inception of Fake News. The researcher found that Fake News has negatively affected the political sphere within South Africa as well as negatively impacting journalism, making news outlets less credible. Many individuals in South Africa have come into contact with alleged Fake News articles and majority of them have been persuaded by one of these articles. This highlights the facts that even though the ANC may have a strong support base, they may be easily swindled by an alleged Fake News article to vote the other way.

The study has proven that since the inception of Fake News, individuals are susceptible to articles across all forms of mainstream media. Most individuals use the news to make important life decisions and can easily make the wrong decision based on an alleged Fake News article that they come into contact with

The researcher suggests that the ANC should try and combat all forms of alleged Fake News articles that come to light. The ANC could release quick responses to negate all perceptions of Fake News articles about them and this could give the public immediate clarity before their perception has changed about the organization. The researcher also suggests that the ANC, being the ruling party in South Africa, could table the motion to ban all alleged Fake News articles and impose heavy fines on news outlets that publish articles that are not backed up by facts. This could help distil the amount of articles that are brought to the public.

Researchers who are looking into the effects of Fake News on Political Parties can use the data and concepts which have been described in this study in their literature review. The researcher recommends that further research is done on the effects of Fake News on all Political Parties in South Africa and the implications of Fake News on other countries within the Southern African region. Other researchers can use the questionnaire from this study and alter it to their target market and research questions. This would enable them to have a foundation for their study.

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