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Research Report

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the Honours in BComm Strategic Brand Management degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

RESEARCH TITLE:

An exploratory and descriptive study on political persuasion and the extent to which it influence citizen voting behaviour.

ABSTRACT

It is argued that political persuasion can be used as a powerful tool to influence and guide citizen voting decisions and behavior (Anthem Branding, 2018). The main focus of this research study is to explore and describe political persuasion and the extent to which it influence citizen voting behaviour. This research topic was specifically explored in a South African context.

In order to explore and describe the influence of political persuasion on voting behaviour, the researcher made use of a mixed method research approach. Along with using a mixed method approach to conducting research, the researcher made use of a mixed method analysis. For the purpose of qualitative data, the researcher made use of thematic analysis in order to identify themes within the collected data. A mixed method approach allowed the researcher to analyse quantifiable data through the use of pie charts.

The findings of the research study reveal that political persuasion influence citizen voting behaviour to a significant degree with regards to considered factors.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, more and more research from fields such as neuroscience, cognitive psychology, social psychology, and behavioural economics has helped to uncover an even greater understanding of how influence, persuasion, and behavioural change occur (Martin, Goldstein & Cialdini, 2014:7).

Persuasion is believed to be a symbolic process in which an entity communicates messages with the intention of convincing changed beliefs, attitudes, perspectives or behaviours. Mostly persuasion is used as a tool for personal gain. The concept can be used to influence and improve people's lives, but can also be used with various negative intentions. Persuasion can be communicated verbally or non-verbally in a number of different ways (Cherry, 2019).

This research paper is particularly focused on persuasion in a political environment. The research paper aims to answer the research questions and meet the stated research objectives.

1.1. Background and contextualisation

Persuasion have been studied by many economists and political scientist, all seeking to comprehend how different strategies in branding, marketing and political campaigning induce people to change their beliefs and behaviours (Dewan, Humphreys & Rubenson, 2013:257). The researcher made use of literature conducted from Robert Cialdini, one of the seminal authors of persuasion. Cialdini's research were used in order to perceive persuasion from a number of different perspectives. Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance was used to create a theoretical foundation on which the study was constructed.

Many authors argue that political campaigns aim to persuade citizens in order to gain votes. Through conducting secondary research, it is mentioned that citizens who are persuaded by political campaigns, purely make voting decisions based on perceptions and feelings rather than concrete and adequate political information and knowledge (Dean, Croft & Pich, 2015:29).

This research study aimed to explore and describe political persuasion and the extent to which it influence citizen voting behaviour. The researcher focused on whether citizens believe persuasive messages communicated by political parties. The researcher then intended to describe whether persuasive messages communicated by political parties enable citizens to emotionally resonate with the political parties. The research topic served as the foundation of designing a research study that was conducted and on which a report was written. The researcher made use of a theoretical framework which assisted in the exploration and description of certain results.

Interconnected concepts of political persuasion are discussed in order to provide a holistic view of what persuasion entails, examples of how it is used and to what extent it can be effective in changing citizen voting behaviour. Main constructs such as; political branding, political campaigns, political communication and persuasive communication are explained and aligned with one another in order to create a broad argument.

In this assignment the topic for this research study and the methodology of this study was discussed clearly in order to create a general viewpoint of the study's strategy.

1.2. Rationale

Despite the amount of research on persuasion, little research has been conducted on political persuasion and the effects thereof on citizen voting behaviour, especially in the context of the South African landscape. The researcher aspires to fulfil this gap and add to the discipline of political persuasion in a South African context. The flexible nature of the topic can be replicated to fit other countries as well.

Brand Strategy Insider (2018), argues that the key objective of brands to create awareness and affiliation with consumers are achieved through encouraging desired actions, which essentially fits with the definition of persuasion. The practice of selling party candidates as “brands” is not a new thing in political campaigning (Fast Company, 2019). Political parties are making use of logos, slogans, colours, designs and so forth in order to convince voters (The New Republic, 2015). Political branding has the ability to merge the brand’s identity, purpose and image in order to unite large groups of people. As with corporate brand strategy intended to create an emotional connection with consumers, political branding are increasingly being used to resonate with citizens, their beliefs and attitudes. The importance of persuasion concerning political branding, is that it can be used to deliver a clear and strong persuasive message that can influence voter behaviour and perception (Anthem Branding, 2018).

Since research on political persuasion and political branding has obtained interest in recent years across various countries and disciplines, this topic was intentionally selected. The topic allowed the researcher to explore and describe the field of persuasion and branding in the political landscape of South Africa. Therefore, the researcher aimed to contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the specific field of politics by offering a different and holistic perspective to what has already been published.

This topic can be considered relevant, due to South Africa’s current economic and political condition. This research study aims to enhance the understanding and nature of political persuasion among South African citizens.

1.3. Problem statement

As a result of reviewing numerous literature regarding persuasion and influence, it can be presumed that the study of persuasion have been studied over many disciplines. As previously mentioned, one of the seminal authors of influence and persuasion, Robert Cialdini, also known as “the father of influence”, argues that there lies science behind how people are persuaded. Cialdini (2019), states that “In the increasingly overloaded lives we lead, more than ever we need shortcuts or rules of thumb to guide our decision-making.” (Influence at work, 2019).

According to Nimijean (2015:32), parties communicate in a way as if all voters matter, but the reality is that they target a smaller group of voters through sophisticated techniques. Nimijean (2015:32) argues that political parties narrowcast persuasive messages to voters in order for them to develop the same emotional connection with a party as consumers do with products. Nimijean (2015:31) further argues that leaders rather focus on resonating with citizens’ values and emotions, because it distracts voters from economic policy that is not as great as it is presumed to be. McBath and Fisher (2003:18) supplement the above statement by claiming that political persuasion is more focused toward communicating values and beliefs than logical information. This type of communication can also be seen from a South African political party, the Economic Freedom Fighter’s (EFF), strategy – communicating beliefs regarding freedom.

Chron (2019), state that many persuasive advertisings give an inaccurate image of what the actual product is. The same can be argued for political party campaigning, in many instances’ parties persuade voters with promises that cannot be realistically delivered on. Chron (2019), argues that persuasive messages can easily lead to dissatisfied customers. In the case of this study it can be argued that persuasive communication by political parties can easily lead to dissatisfied voters, if the party is not able to deliver on its promises. Dissatisfied citizens increase unease in the country and can easily lead to protests, strikes and boycotts.

Through the analysis of the mentioned author's statements, it can be seen that there is a major common agreement toward political branding being used as a tool to persuade and influence individuals. Since persuasive communication and branding messages has the power to affect people's decisions, behavior and to a broad extent their future, it is important that citizens are aware of persuasive techniques used by political parties. This will enable citizens to decide freely whether they want to base their decisions on emotions, values and beliefs, or on facts and realistic capabilities of political parties.

The researcher therefore explored and described the nature of political persuasion, along with aligned concepts such as: political branding, political communication and persuasive communication, by considering whether such persuasion impacts citizen voting decisions and to what extent.

1.4. Purpose statement

The researcher aims to offer a valuable contribution towards the existing body of knowledge on political persuasion by offering a different perspective to what have already been researched.

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the extent to which political persuasion influence citizen voting behaviour. This study will be conducted with the aim of gathering new information on the topic of persuasion in order to gain an in-depth understanding on how political parties resonate with citizens in a persuasive way and also aims to describe certain key concepts related to political persuasion.

1.5. Research question

This study made use of a mixed method research approach. This means that the researcher conducted research in both a qualitative and quantitative manner. The researcher made use of this mixed method to ensure that more comprehensive data about the investigated topic was conducted. A key objective of quantitative research is to predict certain outcomes (Bezuidenhout, 2014:41). Whereas, a key objective of qualitative research is to gain understanding into people's behaviours, attitudes and perceptions. Since this study used both quantitative and qualitative research methods, both research questions as well as an hypothesis was used.

For the purpose of qualitative research, the primary research question the researcher seeks to answer in this study include: To what extent does political persuasion influence citizen voting behaviour?

Secondary research questions include:

- Do citizens believe the persuasive messages communicated by parties?;
- Do citizens feel they resonate with political parties in emotional ways?;
- Do persuasive messages contribute to changed behaviours over time?
- Do the persuasive messages communicated in political campaigns, by South African parties, influence citizen voting behaviour?

For the purpose of quantitative research, the null hypothesis includes:

H0: The use of persuasion in politics does not influence citizen voting behaviour to a large extent

The alternative hypothesis include:

Ha: The use of political persuasion does influence citizen voting behaviour to a large extent.

1.6. Objectives:

The central aim of this research was to explore and describe to what extent political persuasion influence citizen voting behaviour and decisions. The researcher explored whether citizens believe persuasive messages communicated by political parties during campaigns and described whether persuasive messages enabled citizens to emotionally resonate with political parties. The researcher followed basic and applied research. Basic research assisted the researcher and participants to perceive the phenomenon in a particular way. Applied research enabled the researcher to investigate the practical problem of political persuasion in order to find solutions that can be applied in practice (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014:23). The description part of the research is in line with the theoretical foundation of this study and focuses on changed behaviours over time. The researcher made use of a theoretical framework in order to guide the study and explore whether behaviours and beliefs have changed over time. Therefore, the research objectives of the study includes:

- To explore whether political persuasion influence citizen voting decisions
- To explore whether citizens emotionally resonate with political parties due to their persuasive messages?
- To describe whether political persuasion can change people's beliefs over time?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Conceptualisation

The key concepts identified in this research study include; persuasion, political branding and persuasive communication.

Persuasion

According to Cherry (2019), persuasion can be defined as “a symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behaviours regarding an issue through the transmission of a message in an atmosphere of free choice.” This research study aimed to explore the concept of persuasion specifically with regards to the political landscape. To determine the extent of influence through political persuasion on citizen voting, it is necessary to understand what political parties communicate.

Political branding

As with branding, political branding is defined as a marketing practice in which an entity creates a name or symbol with the ultimate aim of establishing a relationship with its consumers, in this case citizens (Smithson, 2015). The same fundamental branding principles are used and applied to political parties and campaigns in order to create a brand voice that will unify people (Robertson, 2018).

Persuasive communication

Persuasive communication can be defined as “the process through which people attempt to influence the beliefs or actions of others” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019). As mentioned, in order to determine the extent of influence of political persuasion on citizen voting behaviour, it is necessary to understand what type of persuasive messages are communicated to citizens.

2.2. Theoretical foundation

Through the evaluation of various literature on voting behaviour it was noted that attitudinal measures are used to explain and understand citizen vote choice. It is then appropriate to understand factors that influence citizen attitudes. For the purpose of this study, the cognitive dissonance theory was used. Cognitive dissonance was proposed by Leon Festinger, a social psychologist (McGregor, 2013:1). The nature of the theory is grounded on an individual's internal need for consistency (Mullainathan and Washington, 2006:2). The theory explains that most people believe themselves to be truthful unless they have strong incentives to behave otherwise. In example, if a person performs an activity that is not in line with his/her beliefs, the individual may unconsciously change his/her beliefs to relieve the discomfort of having inconsistent attitudes or actions (Mullainathan and Washington, 2006:2).

Cognitive dissonance usually occurs in situations where individuals have to choose between two incompatible beliefs, choices or actions. The utmost dissonance is created when two alternatives are equally important and attractive to the individual (McLeod, 2018). It is clear that dissonance is especially relevant in the problem solving and decision-making process. According to Festinger (1957) there are two factors that influence the strength of dissonance. Firstly, the number of dissonant beliefs and secondly, the importance of each belief to the individual.

Festinger (1957) further points out that there are three ways in which to reduce or eliminate dissonance. Firstly, the importance of the dissonant beliefs is reduced. McLeod (2018) argues that this approach to reducing dissonance may present individuals with problems since it is often difficult for people to change addictive behavioural responses. Secondly, the individual will add more consonant beliefs in order to weigh out the dissonant ones. Finally, the individual will change their dissonant beliefs in order to eliminate inconsistency. In this approach the individual may also reduce the importance of certain beliefs and convince themselves otherwise (Festinger, 1957).

Festinger and Carlsmith (1959:203) conducted a study in order to investigate whether male students performing a dull task would create cognitive dissonance through forced compliance behaviour. 71 students were chosen to perform a dull task and were then paid either \$1 or \$20 to tell a confederate how they experienced the task. The results showed that those participants who were paid \$1 rated the task as more enjoyable than those who were paid \$20 to lie. It is clear that \$1 was not enough of an incentive to lie and so the individuals experienced dissonance. The participants only overcame that dissonance by believing that the task really was enjoyable (McLeod, 2018).

Another example of a study done on dissonance was conducted by McGregor (2013:7) in Canada. The aim of the study was to consider the impact of cognitive, affective and behavioural factors on changes in political party evaluations, arguing that elections serve as a significant stimulus for attitude change. The results showed that dissonance related factors can have lasting effects on individual attitudes toward political parties.

The cognitive dissonance theory offers insight into a variety of social phenomena (McGregor, 2013:2). The primary objective of using this specific theory is to explain the voting decisions made by South African citizens and whether political persuasion through political campaigns influence voting behaviour. Mullainathan and Washington (2006:2) states that cognitive dissonance is not limited to cases in which researchers aim to test persuasion. Applying cognitive dissonance to this research study assisted in identifying whether voting behaviour has changed over time and helped to explain such changes in behaviour. It assisted the researcher to identify to what extent political persuasion influence citizen voting behaviour.

According to McGregor (2013:2), elections provide researchers with an opportunity to test cognitive dissonance since elections require people to freely choose. This study specifically took place several months after the 2019 elections. This increased the functionality of the theory by identifying whether attitudes and beliefs regarding voting has changed, i.e. post-decisional dissonance. The researcher made use of several in-depth interview questions to identify motives behind post-decisional dissonance.

After voting, the knowledge of an individual's behaviour becomes a cognition and can lead to dissonance when combined with potentially conflicting cognitions. To relieve the discomfort of dissonance, attitudes towards parties can shift in order to be compatible with cognitions (McGregor, 2013:2). Furthermore, election outcomes (whether a citizen votes for a winning or losing party) can also influence an individual to change his/her attitudes and/or beliefs. Ultimately, the cognitive dissonance model helped to structure the findings of the research.

2.3. Current literature

A brand can be described as the development and creation of diverse values for a product or service in a manner that makes it different from its rivals. A brand must consist of a clear identity that needs to be communicated to the target audience (Omojola, 2008:127). Omojola (2008:127) states that a brand can be used as a powerful tool to retain customer loyalty in mass-market offerings. According to Scammell (2007:178), brands are not just applied to products, companies, organisations and celebrities anymore but also to cities, nations, and even individuals. Marsh and Fawcett (2011:516) argues that it is important to identify and understand branding and marketing techniques because it is increasingly being used by political actors. The concept of political branding has been adopted by many political parties as they seek to distinguish themselves from competitors and create meaningful differentiation (Pich and Dean, 2015: 1353). Nimijean (2015:32), argues that political brands aim to have the same effect on voters as brands aim to affect consumers. He states that the appeal to values has become the new form of political competition (Nimijean, 2015:32). Political branding encompasses the development of a "positive relationship between the voter and the party" (Smith & French, 2009:214). Kumar and Dhamija (2016:47) states that "political branding is about how well and to what extent the party is able to position itself as a trusted name in the mind-space of voters". Through the analysis of various authors' opinions, it is clear that there is a major common agreement toward resonant emotions, beliefs and values. It is noticeable that parties aim to resonate with citizen's emotions and beliefs in order to gain their approval and support.

Dean *et al.* (2015:29), believes that political parties provoke certain emotional connectivity among voters who identify with their ideology. Marsh and Fawcett (2011:520) states that leaders strive to “resonate with the aspirations and values of voters”. Nimijean (2015:32) argues that the voter choice is about trust, belief and efficacy. He states that it is emotional, “which is the foundation of all brand relationships”. Kumar *et al.* (2016:52) believes that voters developing a connection with the political brand causes successful political lineage. An example of these common agreements can be found in a study done by Smith and French (2010:10). Through the use of mind mapping, the study revealed that participants chose the party they felt greatest affinity with. The embedded argument here is that branding is related to the development of supporter alignment through common beliefs, attitudes and emotions.

Here it is clear that political parties use political branding in order to form a meaningful and lasting relationship with the voter. It is evident that branding can be used as a functional tool to convince and persuade citizens that the presented party have the answers to the problems the country face. Through the investigation of political parties and their objective to ensure emotional alignment with citizens, the researcher agrees with the presented arguments. Political branding could be applied to political parties and leaders, depending on the political scenario concerned. It is clear that parties aim to communicate personalised messages, just like brands, in order to resonate with citizens (Nimijean, 2015:32).

Bowman (2018) argues that design also plays a crucial role in political communication and can be used as a powerful tool for persuasion. As with branding, design communicates personality. Bowman (2018) states that design such as colours and images can contribute to citizen perceptions. As seen from various political campaigns, parties have made use of several articles of clothing to promote a strong message. For example, the Economic Freedom Fighter’s (EFF) red clothing. In an interview with News24, EFF leader Julius Malema told reporters: “Red is originally an EFF colour because it represents the blood that has been shed by those who have died during the struggle for economic freedom,” (Thelwell, 2014). The EFF’s Floyd

Shivambu further claims that the red overalls represent the working-class South Africans. Shivambu states that: “The working class and poor now know they’ve got representatives in Parliament. There is no other organisation which associates itself with the struggles of the poor.” (Thelwell, 2014). This example of the EEF’s red clothing can be considered important since it is intended to resonate emotionally with specific groups of people. This action of wearing red might resonate directly with people’s past experiences, beliefs and values. Another example is that of the African National Congress’s (ANC) logo. The party’s logo represents the early wars of resistance to colonial rule, the ANC’s struggle against racial oppression and the joining of people from all of South Africa’s communities (Mail & Guardian, 2012). It is clear that the consistent use of a single word, logo, colour or even clothing articles like hats and t-shirts will help in strengthening a party’s message and image. Based on a study in 2014 from the Journal of Psychology and Marketing, results showed that the colour red can be used to persuade individuals in the decision-making process (Business Insider, 2015).

As with branding, communication is essential in political campaigns. Vorster (2010:44), describes political communication as “the exchange of messages and symbols that have a significant influence on the functioning of the political system”. Vorster further argues that events (such as campaign events) are the major components of the political communication system i.e. the system encompasses functional relationships. Geib and Schäfer (2017:444) states that an increasing amount of resources are invested in political campaigns to disseminate information, mobilise support and persuade voters. Basu and Wang (2009:77) points out that public campaigns involve a systematic communicative process which aims to persuade a large group of individuals in order to adopt a certain message and/or behaviour. McBath and Fisher (2003:24) has a common agreement with Basu and Wang (2009:77) and argue that campaigning is essentially a process of persuasive communication. Stephen Shadegg’s explanation of the purpose of political campaigns also correspond with the previous statement: “to address a persuasive request to every registered voter to support your candidate at the polls”. McBath and Fisher (2003:24) further clarify that any kind of persuasion is an effort to influence attitudes or actions.

McBath and Fisher (2003:18) also mention that the “middle” group of voters are those who are easily persuaded and becomes the main target of campaigns. Neiheisel and Niebler (2015:436) agree with this statement and mention that citizens with middling levels of political awareness are most likely to be persuaded by campaign advertising. Through the analysis of the above statements it can be argued that each voter makes judgements most appropriate to his or her own view of the world.

A common endeavour noticed is that political parties communicate messages through digital media. Vorster (2010:44) argues that the press plays an important role in a democracy in the communication between citizens and the government. Neiheisel and Niebler (2015:434) suggests that there are many evidence that shows how political candidates employ campaign advertising in an attempt to persuade voters and the success thereof. These authors mention that the media, especially TV ads, have the power to induce voters to change their vote and preferences. Various studies done by many authors suggest that the exposure to televised political advertisements assists in stimulating political discussions (Neiheisel & Niebler, 2015:436). Neiheisel and Niebler (2015:437) further argues that citizens who constantly receive campaign messages on social networks are more likely to strengthen their initial decision to support a particular party.

It can be argued that political advertising expose political messages with the intention to influence citizen’s political attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. It is also noticeable that the process of political communication can be seen as a systematic activity. This means that it is focused on the group or party and their relationship with citizens, rather than the individual. Due to this, it can be concluded that political communication is a complex process (McBath & Fisher, 2003:24).

Through the reviewing of the provided literature it can be assumed that the audience of a political campaign is weak in its political knowledge and strong in its feelings. The researcher aims to create a direct link between branding and consumer behaviour and politics and voting behaviour. Through the analysis of various journals and articles, it is noticeable that many Government parties globally makes use of political branding in order to gain votes.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

As mentioned, this research study aimed to explore and describe the extent to which political persuasion influence citizen voting behaviour. This study is also aimed at answering the stated research questions:

- To what extent does political persuasion influence citizen voting behaviour?
- Do citizens believe persuasive messages communicated by parties?
- Do citizens feel they resonate with political parties in emotional ways?
- Do persuasive messages contribute to changed behaviour over time?

3.1. Research paradigm

A paradigm gives rise to a particular worldview and addresses fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality, the relationship between knower and known and assumptions about methodologies (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014:19). In other words, paradigms serve as principles by which reality is interpreted.

For the purpose of this research study the researcher will make use of the critical realism paradigm. The aim of the critical realism paradigm is to empower people through knowledge (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014:35). The nature of this worldview suggests that social power shapes social reality. This paradigm is specifically suitable for this study as it will enable the researcher to understand behaviours in society and change these behaviours. Creswell (2016:63) states that a key characteristic of critical realism is structuralism, which is focused on structures within society.

By making use of this method for the research study, enabled the researcher to analyse the relationships between each part of the structures. Structuralism assist the researcher to identify how common aspects of the structure relate to the larger whole of the structure i.e. in the case of this study, the relationship between political persuasion and voting behaviour.

Since this study made use of critical realism, the five positions identified by du Plooy-Cilliers (2014:23) of paradigms are discussed in terms of the chosen paradigm.

3.1.1. The epistemological position of critical realism

The epistemological position of critical realism believes that all knowledge should be questioned since it depends on context, culture, gender etc. (du Plooy-Cilliers 2014:29). The researcher engaged in epistemology by focusing mainly on a social issue. This paradigm allowed the researcher to identify several realities in the data. Ultimately allowing the “best possible understanding” (Maree, 2015:39).

3.1.2. The ontological position of critical realism

The nature of the ontological position of critical realism believes that reality and people change over time. This position allowed the researcher to identifying how citizen’s beliefs changed over time and if factors of political persuasion influenced changed beliefs, attitudes and perceptions.

3.1.3. The methodological position of critical realism

The researcher made use of the methodological position of critical realism which includes a mixed method research approach. The mixed method approach provided more definite data about the questioned phenomenon (du Plooy-Cilliers 2014:31).

3.1.4. The metatheoretical position of critical realism

The metatheoretical position of critical realism states that conditions in which people find themselves, such as cultural or historical conditions, may hold them back (du Plooy-Cilliers 2014:33). The researcher incorporated this position by providing citizens with data that enabled them to understand, question or even change their world, beliefs or values.

3.1.5. The axiological position of critical realism

Lastly, the researcher believed that this research study was of value and importance in the category of politics, branding and communication. The researcher value human freedom and believe that the critical realist tradition enabled people to understand how persuasive communication might influence their lives. This relates directly to the axiological position of critical realism. This position enabled the researcher to accept subjectivity in the research.

3.2. Research design

This study followed both basic and applied research. The study followed basic research in that it assisted the research and ultimately participants to perceive a phenomenon in a particular way. The study also incorporated applied research because it investigates the practical problem of political persuasion in order to find solutions that can be applied in practice (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014:23).

3.3. Research strategy

The researcher made use of an exploratory and descriptive mixed method research approach. Exploratory research is aimed at conducting data about a topic that has not yet been researched before (Davis, 2014:12). As discussed, the researcher aimed to become familiar with political persuasion involving South African political parties and citizen behaviours, since it is an unexplored area within the South African landscape. The use of exploratory research enabled the researcher to obtain new insights regarding citizen perceptions, beliefs and behaviours. The researcher made use of exploratory research by identifying and conceptualising key concepts such as political persuasion, persuasive communication and political branding.

The use of descriptive research enabled the researcher to describe the phenomenon that is identified through the research that will be conducted.

Descriptive research also enabled the researcher to describe certain characteristics of the phenomenon and provide insightful information about the specific phenomenon, i.e. it provided information as to whether political persuasion can change people's beliefs over time.

Thus, the objective of this study was to explore whether political persuasion influence citizen voting behaviour, to explore whether citizens emotionally resonate with political parties due to their persuasive messages, and to describe whether political persuasion can change people's beliefs over time.

Thus, qualitative and quantitative data was conducted to ensure that more comprehensive data was collected. Qualitative data enabled the researcher to build an understanding of the participant's attitudes, feelings, beliefs and perceptions (Davis, 2014:79). Ultimately, it delivered more meaningful insights into citizen voting behaviour. Investigating the extent of political persuasion required the researcher to obtain qualitative data. Whereas, quantitative research allowed to easily identify comparisons and differences in the study. Quantitative research was also used to increase the trustworthiness of the study. Analysing whether citizens are influenced by persuasive communication required the researcher to obtain numerical data.

A mixed method increased the flexibility of the research study and assisted in identifying key concepts. This approach was used through perceiving the research problem from a broader and generic perspective. The aim of a mixed method approach allows for both qualitative and quantitative research to supplement each other (Payne, 2014:83). A mixed method research approach is directly in line with the methodological position of critical realism as discussed above. In line with this, quantitative research was conducted first, in order for the qualitative data to validate the quantitative findings. Making use of this strategy increased the reliability of the study.

For the purpose of this study both a deductive and inductive reasoning approach was used. Deductive reasoning required the researcher to move from general assumptions to more specific assumptions (Bezuidenhout, 2014:16). In the context of this study it allowed the researcher to test the theory of political persuasion and its influence by collecting data (Bezuidenhout, 2014:20).

The theory was constructed before the data was collected. Using a deductive reasoning approach presented the researcher with the possibility to generalise findings to a certain extent and develop relevant research approaches to observe or test assumptions. By using an inductive reasoning approach the researcher reasoned theoretical concepts after data was collected (Bezuidenhout, 2014:18). Data were collected first, which allowed the researcher to test the hypothesis.

Using both deductive and inductive reasoning approaches allowed the researcher to describe unexpected data that arose throughout the process. This approach provided the researcher with a more complete understanding of the topic under investigation.

3.4. Population

The population refers to all the units or people, acquiring the attributes relevant for this particular study, from whom information is required (Pascoe, 2014:132). The units of analysis for this research study included individuals, since the researcher aimed to explore and describe political persuasion influences on citizens. In order for this study to be conducted successfully it was required that every participant in the study acquire at least one attribute or population parameter that is relevant for this research study. The population group for this study had the following population parameters:

Nature of the population: Male and female South African citizens.

Size of the population: This include the entire population of South African citizens between the ages of 18 and 50 years of age. The researcher have specifically chosen these age groups to ensure that a broad section, in terms of age, represents the larger portion of the population. Citizens are legally acceptable to vote at the age of 18. Citizens at the age of 50 was also used to represent the population in order to describe whether voting behaviour has changed over time, and if political persuasion has an influence on their decisions.

Unique characteristics of the population: South African citizens between the above mentioned ages who actively vote (meaning these citizens has voted in the past two elections).

Outlined population parameters enabled the researcher to define the target and accessible population. The target population for this study included male and female South African citizens between the ages of 18 and 50 years old, who actively vote. Since the entire target population could not be reached due to impracticability i.e. time and distance constraints, an accessible population was derived. The accessible population included male and female South African citizens between the ages of 18 and 50 years, who currently resided in Pretoria. The researcher have specifically chosen this accessible population in order to be able to reach as many participants as possible. The location of the accessible population was more convenient for the researcher, thus easily accessible. By making use of an accessible population ultimately increase the feasibility of the study.

3.5. Sampling

Since the entire population for this study could not be reached due to impracticability, a sample was selected that reflected and was representative of the population (Pascoe, 2014:132). For the purpose of this study non-probability sampling was used. The researcher specifically made use of this type of sampling method since the entire population could not be reached. Non-probability sampling implies that the sample be selected based on the researcher's subjective judgement, therefore the participants were not selected at random. This means that the elements of the population did not have an equal chance of being selected (Pascoe, 2014:132). It enabled the researcher to choose participants specifically according to the population parameters and allowed to meet research objectives more easily. This type of sampling method also allowed the researcher to gain understanding into citizen's intricacies. Given that the study was focused on citizen voting behaviour and required an in-depth understanding into people's perceptions; there was an important time frame. Thus, this sampling method was appropriate and feasible for the study (Pascoe, 2014:131).

One of the techniques used in accordance with non-probability sampling was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was used for this study in order to determine what characteristics are important for conducting the data (Pascoe, 2014:132). Therefore, the researcher purposefully chose citizens between the mentioned ages. Using this sampling technique ensured that each element of the sample was aligned with the population parameters (Pascoe, 2014:132). Along with a purposive sampling technique, the researcher made use of convenience sampling. The sample was made up of people that the researcher already knew.

It is important to note that the researcher engaged in social research, since the study was focused on a social issue that stands in the way of social change. Based on the defined accessible population and sampling, the researcher interviewed two participants in order to conduct qualitative data. Data was collected using in-depth interviews, where open ended questions were asked. For the purpose of conducting quantitative data, twenty participants were given semi- structured questionnaires.

3.6. Data collection method

As mentioned, this study made use of a mixed method research approach. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected and analysed. For the purpose of this study the researcher made use of two types of data collection methods since a mixed method research approach was followed.

Quantitative research

Since the aim of quantitative research is to collect quantifiable results, the researcher made use of surveys using questionnaires for conducting quantitative data (see Annexure A for questionnaire questions and results). A mixture of different questions were asked in the questionnaire, such as close-ended questions, pared-comparison questions and multiple choice questions.

Different types of questions enabled results to be successfully simplified and quantified. In conjunction with qualitative data analysis, the researcher used two different themes within which certain questions fitted. Themes were derived from the literature review in order to ensure that the primary and secondary research questions were answered and that key concepts were assessed. Topics of themes included: political messages communicated and political branding. Themes were used in order to capture important responses about the data in relation to the research question, and represented the researcher with patterned responses. Incorporating themes into the data collection method offered structure and order. Themes also facilitated the researcher in analysing findings more conveniently.

The study participants were required, but not obliged, to answer fourteen short questions. The questionnaire approximately took twenty minutes to fill out. The questionnaire was formulated using Google Forms and was then distributed via email or text. This approach held advantages for the researcher and participant since it was inexpensive, ensured anonymity of participants and could be filled out within the participants' own comfortable setting and convenient time.

For the purpose of this research study the researcher made use of Likert scales in the questionnaire as a level of measurement. A Likert scale required respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement. Likert scales were composed by a statement and an evaluation (whether the participant agrees or disagrees with the statement). The evaluation part consisted of a four point scale from which respondents could choose.

The questionnaire enabled the researcher to conduct data in an efficient and affordable manner. Since Likert scales were used as a level of measurement, the researcher was able to compare results straightforwardly.

Qualitative research

For the purpose of conducting qualitative research, in-depth interviews, specifically a general interview approach was followed (see Annexure B for interview questions and results).

A general interview approach follows a conversational approach (Bezuidenhout & Strydom, 2014:187). By using this approach the researcher still incorporated certain themes with predetermined questions.

As mentioned above, the same themes derived from the literature review was used for the in-depth interviews. The use of consistent themes assisted in answering the primary and secondary research questions. By using a general interview approach, a great degree of freedom was given to each interviewee and allowed the researcher to adjust the focus of the interview when necessary (Bezuidenhout & Strydom, 2014:188). In-depth interviews were conducted in a location and space which was convenient and comfortable for participants.

This type of data collection method allowed for new insights regarding citizen beliefs, values, opinions and views. Interviews are a form of conversation with the aim of obtaining information based on open-ended questions (Bezuidenhout & Strydom, 2014:188). Questions asked in the interview were guided by the theoretical foundation used for the literature review. Open-ended questions granted each participant to provide a more detailed explanation for answers (Bezuidenhout & Strydom, 2014:189). A predetermined number of fifteen questions were required to be answered depending on the conversational flow of the interview. Participants were recorded (if allowed) when completing the interview.

In-depth interviews assisted the researcher to interpret and understand the meaning of each participant's answers to specific questions. Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014:151), states that in-depth interviews holds a major advantage since questions can be clarified, response rates are high and respondents do not have to be literate.

Since this research study aimed to fulfil a gap regarding political persuasion in the context of South Africa, the use of questionnaires and in-depth interviews was suitable to gain further understanding from a generic point of view. The use of these types of data collection methods supplemented each other and ensured that the research rationale was achieved. As mentioned earlier in this research report, data was not conducted concurrently. Qualitative data was collected after quantitative data in order to ensure validity.

3.7. Data analysis method

For the purpose of this study the researcher used two types of analysis, since a mixed method approach was utilised. The purpose of data analysis is to “reduce the volume of raw information” (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014:232). For the purpose of conducting qualitative data, the researcher applied thematic content analysis. Bruan and Clarke (2006), describe thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analysing and describing themes within the collected data. By making use of thematic analysis the researcher was able to reflect reality and unravel the surface of “reality” regarding political persuasion. Themes facilitated the researcher to capture important patterned responses related to the research question (Bruan & Clarke, 2006:10). The use of thematic analysis provides a flexible and more accessible approach to analysis. This analysis method assisted in capturing different perspectives of research participants (Lorelli, Norris & White, 2017:4). It can be confirmed in the findings section of this research paper that the researcher made use of thematic analysis through summarizing key features of the data set.

The researcher incorporated certain topics into questionnaires and interviews in order to supplement the use of thematic analysis. Topics were derived in a deductive way. This means that topics were developed from existing concepts and ideas. By means of this, the researcher derived topics from the literature review. Topics included:

Topic 1: Messages communicated. This category addressed research questions such as:

- do citizens believe persuasive messages communicated by parties?;
- do citizens feel they resonate with political parties in emotional ways?;
- do persuasive messages contribute to changed behaviours over time?;
- do the persuasive messages communicated in political campaigns, influence citizen voting behaviour?

The objective of this topic was to gain an in-depth understanding into whether messages communicated by political parties influence citizen voting behaviour.

Participants were allowed to disclose their personal feelings with regards to messages communicated in the political environment. This topic also enabled the researcher to explore the extent to which persuasive messages influence voting behaviour.

Topic 2: Political branding. This topic proposed the researcher with insightful views regarding political parties being presented as brands.

To ensure successful analysis, qualitative recordings were transcribed onto a written document. Each sentence was analysed where patterns and themes within results were identified.

For the purpose of conducting quantitative research, the researcher used frequencies. This type of analysis was used, since complex quantitative analysis methods were not necessary (Khan, 2014:204). Frequency analysis enabled the researcher to identify the mean of specific responses. Frequency analysis was done and presented by making use of charts. Results were represented in percentages and explained.

Since a mixed method approach was used, findings were interpreted together in order to successfully draw conclusions. The chosen data analysis methods assist the researcher in identifying key features and issues under investigation (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014:290).

4. FINDINGS

This section details the findings from the research process described in the previous section. As mentioned in the research strategy, the researcher made use of an exploratory and descriptive mixed method research approach.

4.1. Presentation of findings

In order to analyze both qualitative and quantitative data, thematic content analysis and frequencies were used. Thematic analysis was used based on the study's theoretical framework of cognitive dissonance that provided the analysis with context and substance. This analysis method was used in a deductive way. Thematic analysis was used in a deductive way and enabled the researcher to capture patterns in responses. Thematic analysis was utilized for qualitative data collection only. For the purpose of analyzing quantitative data, frequencies were used.

Quantitative data:

As mentioned, for the purpose of conducting quantitative data, the researcher used Google Forms to successfully conduct questionnaires. (See Annexure A for all questionnaire questions and responses). Consistent topics were used in the quantitative questionnaire to incorporate structure and ease of analysis. See below a visual representation of the most important quantitative data collected. A sample of twenty respondents partook in the online questionnaires.

Analysis topic 1: Population parameters

Question 2:

Age

22 responses

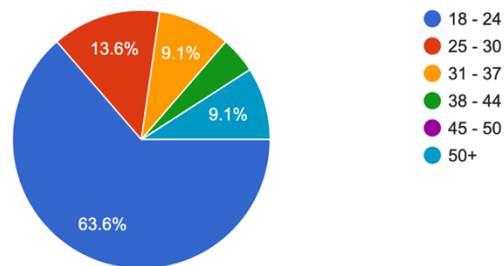


Figure 1: Jooste, C. 2019. *Research Questionnaire*. Pretoria.

From this question, it can be seen that the majority of respondents fall between the age bracket of 18-24 years.

Analysis topic 2: Messages communicated

Question 4:

Do the messages communicated by political parties, during campaigns, influence your voting decision?

22 responses

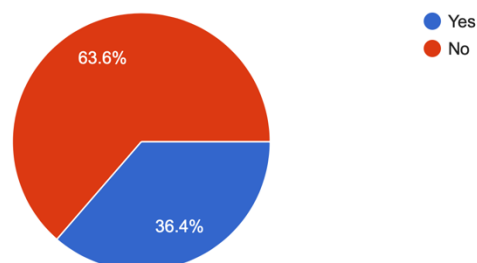


Figure 2: Jooste, C. 2019. *Research Questionnaire*. Pretoria.

From question 4 it can be seen that only 36.4% of respondents are influenced by political party messages communicated during campaigns. This initially means that messages communicated during political campaigns have the potential to influence 36.4% of respondents to a great extent.

Question 5:

Did anything, with regards to the messages parties communicate during campaigns, change your voting decision before?

22 responses

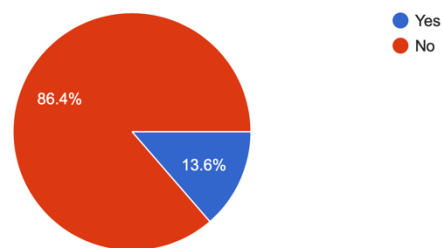


Figure 3: Jooste, C. 2019. *Research Questionnaire*. Pretoria.

As seen from the above figure, only 13.6% of respondents agreed that political communication contributed to a change in voting decisions. This is also in line with question 4, regarding the influence of messages on voting decisions. However, there is a contradicting agreement. Since 36.4% of respondents agreed that political messages influence their voting decision, it is seen in question 5, that not all of them are influenced to such an extent as to change voting decisions. Although messages do influence them, not all of them are to change their voting decisions.

Question 6:

Do you feel parties resonate with you emotionally through their communicated messages?

22 responses

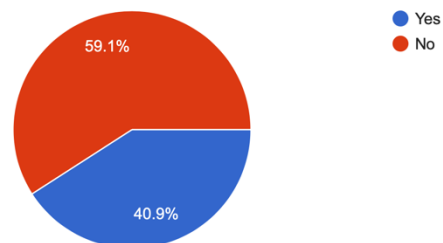


Figure 4: Jooste, C. 2019. *Research Questionnaire*. Pretoria.

As seen from this question, almost half of the respondents agree that political messages communicated resonate with them emotionally. This question can also be aligned with question 4 regarding the influence of messages on voting decisions

Question 7:

Do these emotional messages form the basis of your voting decision?

22 responses

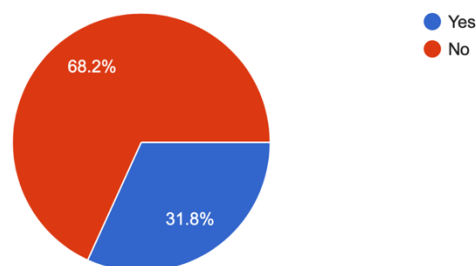


Figure 5: Jooste, C. 2019. *Research Questionnaire*. Pretoria.

From the above question, the majority of respondents (68.2%) disagreed that emotional messages form the basis of their voting decision. When comparing question 6 and question 7's pie charts it is noticeable that 9.1% of respondents who answered yes to question 6, answered no to question 7.

This indicates that although 9.1 % of respondents feel as if parties resonate with them emotionally, that those emotional messages do not form the basis of their voting decision.

Question 8:

Do you believe the messages parties communicate as part of their campaigns to be true?

22 responses

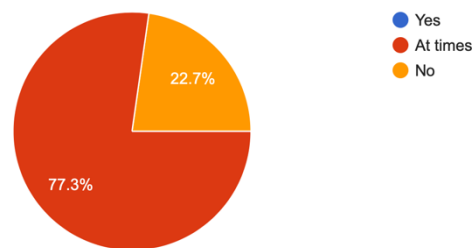


Figure 6: Jooste, C. 2019. *Research Questionnaire*. Pretoria.

It can be seen from the above chart, that more than 77% of respondents believe the messages communicated by political parties “at times”. It is highly noticeable that not one respondent answered “yes” to agree that they believe messages communicated by parties.

Question 9:

If you receive constant campaign messages, would it influence your decision?

22 responses

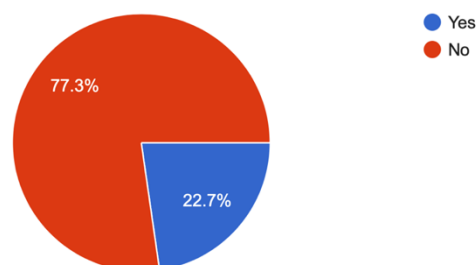


Figure 7: Jooste, C. 2019. *Research Questionnaire*. Pretoria.

It is very interesting to note that the exact same amount (although it might not be the same respondents) of people who believe campaign messages “at times”, is the same as those who agreed that constant campaign messages will influence their voting decision. When comparing the results of question 8 and 9, it is clear that there is an important contradiction. Not one respondent agreed that they fully believe the messages communicated by parties, but 22.7% of respondents agreed in question 9 that constant messaging will have an influence on their voting decision.

Question 10:

I believe parties make use of persuasive messages to gain votes.
22 responses

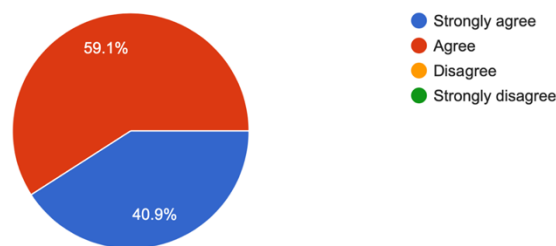


Figure 8: Jooste, C. 2019. *Research Questionnaire*. Pretoria.

When analysing question 10, it can be seen that 40.9% of respondents strongly believe that political parties make use of persuasive messages in order to gain votes. When comparing question 8 to question 10, there is a noticeable contradiction. Although question 8 states that 77.3% of respondents believe political messages “at times”, 40.9% of respondents believe that these messages are persuasive.

Question 11:

I believe political candidates make promises in order to gain votes.

22 responses

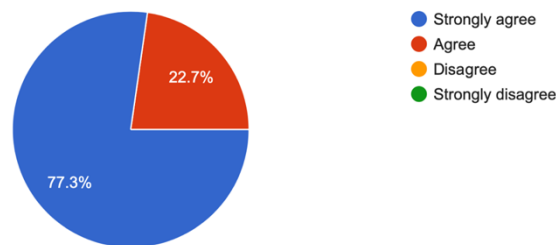


Figure 9: Jooste, C. 2019. *Research Questionnaire*. Pretoria.

When comparing question 10 and question 11, it can be seen that there is a vast increase in respondents who “strongly agree”. This means that 36.4% of respondents only agree that parties make use of persuasive messages, but strongly agrees that parties make promises in order to gain votes.

Analysis topic 3: Political branding

Question 12:

Do you think parties present/propose themselves as brands?

22 responses

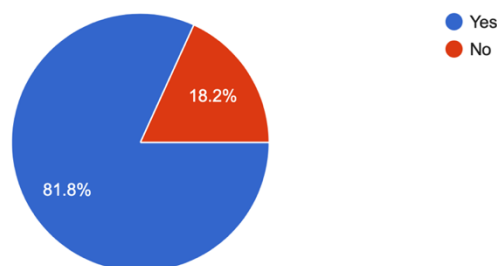


Figure 10: Jooste, C. 2019. *Research Questionnaire*. Pretoria.

When analyzing question 12 and question 6, it can be seen that 81.8% of respondents believe that parties present themselves as brands, but only 40.9% agrees that they resonate with voters on an emotional level.

Question 13:

Do you think a party's design, i.e. colours, images, outfits etc. can influence your voting decision?

22 responses

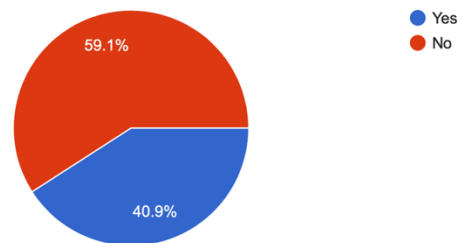


Figure 11: Jooste, C. 2019. *Research Questionnaire*. Pretoria.

From question 13 it can be perceived that 59.1% of respondents disagree that a party's design influences their voting behavior.

Question 14:

Do you think by making use of these designs, i.e. red clothing, promotes a stronger message?

22 responses

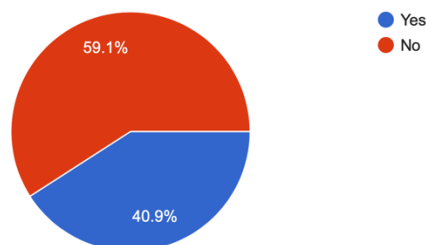


Figure 12: Jooste, C. 2019. *Research Questionnaire*. Pretoria.

As seen from the above pie chart, exactly the same number of respondents (13) that disagree to design influences, disagrees that design promotes and communicates a stronger message.

Qualitative data:

As mentioned, for the purpose of conducting qualitative data thematic analysis was used. Each topic used in the interview questions derived from the literature review in order to meet research objectives and answer research questions. See below the interpretation of the most essential qualitative research findings (See appendix ... for all interview questions and responses).

Common themes derived from the collected data includes:

1. **Promises that's not believed to be true;** Patterned responses such as “empty promises” continuously appeared throughout the conduction of qualitative data.
2. **Messages influence voting behaviour to a large extent;** Both interview participants strongly agreed that communicated messages influence voting behaviour to a large extent. Key insights were derived with regards to factors that the determine the extent of the influence.
3. **Persuasion for vote gain;** Participants had common agreements towards vote gain. Both believe that the main objective of a party is only to gain votes.
4. **Parties can be perceived as brands;** All interviewed participants agreed that parties can be perceived as brands. Participants responded homogenously in that branding techniques can be used by political parties to strengthen intended messages and influence people.

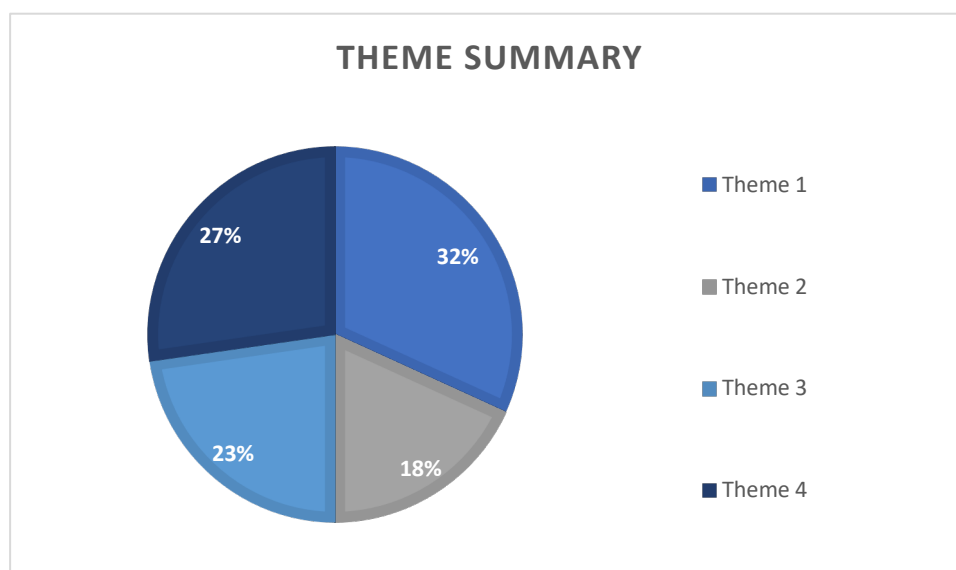


Figure : 13 Jooste, C. 2019. *Thematic Analysis*. Pretoria.

The above presented chart visually shows the percentage of patterned responses within each derived theme. A more comprehensive presentation of qualitative findings and analysis can be seen below.

Participant 1 and 2 analysis of responses

The following responses were collectively analysed in order to present a broad perspective of the findings.

Topic 2: Messages communicated

4. How do you feel about the message's political parties communicate?

Both participants mentioned that political parties communicate empty promises.

5. To what extent do you think messages communicated by political parties' influence voting behaviour?

Both participants agreed that communicated messages influence voting behaviour to a large extent. Participant 1 and 2 mutually responded with answers relating to communicated promises such as housing, water, electricity, education etc.

6. Did anything with regards to the message's parties communicate during campaigns, change your voting decision before?

Participants did not mutually respond to this question. Participant 2 did not change his/her vote with regards to communicated messages. Whereas, participant 1 did change his/her vote because of communicated messages eventually. Explicitly the political party did manage to communicate messages that influenced changed behaviour in voting decisions.

7. Why do you think parties resonate with citizens emotionally through their communicated messages?

There were no mutual response among participant 1 and participant 2. Participant 1 stated that party's seek to convince citizens in order to only gain votes. Participant 2 mentioned that vulnerable citizens fall for persuasive messages communicated regarding basic needs such as housing, education, water electricity etc.

8. What forms the basis of your voting decision?

For participant 1, future promises forms the basis of his/her vote decision. Whereas, participant 2 states that common values (what the party stands for) for the basis of his/her vote behaviour.

9. Do you believe the messages parties communicate as part of their campaigns to be true?

Both participants responded "no" to this question.

10. If you receive constant campaign messages, would it influence your voting decision?

A mutual response of "no" was answered to this question.

11. Do you think parties make use of persuasive messages to gain votes?

Both participants agreed that political parties utilise persuasive messages in order to gain votes.

12. Why do you think political candidates make promises to citizens?

Participant 1 and participant 2 mutually responded that political candidates make promises to gain votes only.

Topic 3: Political branding

13. Do you think parties present/propose themselves as brands?

A common agreement resulted with both participant 1 and participant 2.

14. To what extent do you think a party's design, i.e. colors, images, outfits influence your voting decision?

Both participants agreed that design may play a role in influencing citizens. Participant 1 stated that colors draw attention. However, participant 2 explained that certain design resonates with certain people, and that it is only about how people feel.

15. Do you think by making use of these designs, i.e. red clothing, promotes a stronger message?

There was a definite agreement among both participants.

When analysing the above mentioned responses, it can be comprehended that participants had a common agreement among 10 out of 12 interview questions.

4.2 Validity, reliability and trustworthiness

The use of a mixed method research approach ultimately increased the validity, reliability and trustworthiness of the research study, for the reason that the phenomenon was explored from a comprehensive point of view and data collection methods were used to validate and supplement each other.

The research strategy contributed to an increase in validity, in that quantitative data was collected first in order for validation. For the purpose of conducting quantitative research, the researcher applied reliable research tools, such as questionnaires and interviews, that increased the reliability of the data set. However, some sources of error affected the reliability of the research study. A noticed source of error was the misinterpretation of certain questions by participants.

Since this study encompassed a flexible research topic, it can be argued that the study can be replicated to fit other countries as well. Thus, the research results might be generalisable. Since the sample size used for the study was not large, but small, the reliability of the study is minimal.

With regards to qualitative data, the trustworthiness of this study is minimal. The researcher did not spend long time periods with participants.

4.3 Interpretation of findings

Findings were interpreted by combining both quantitative and qualitative findings in order to derive general findings that perceives the research study from a broad perspective.

Although only 36.4% of quantitative data respondents agreed that campaign messages influence their voting decision, both qualitative data respondents agreed that it might influence citizens other than themselves to a large extent. By combining both research methods, a noticeable common agreement were discovered.

Both respondents argued that more vulnerable citizens of the country are more likely to be influenced by communicated messages since they are in need of basic resources. Participant 1 answered that: "It doesn't affect me, but I believe that it certainly does affect most citizens of our country that is in need of, for example housing, electricity, etc. I also definitely think that it does influence the poor people of South Africa in that way. Poor people are more vulnerable." From key findings related to this objective, it can be considered that people who require basic needs are more easily persuaded through promises around the provision of these needs. As mentioned in the literature review, Neilheisel and Niebler (2015:436) explain that citizens with middling levels of political awareness are most likely to be persuaded. Essentially it can be recognized that a number of different factors will depend on the extent of influence involving political persuasion.

Question 5 of the quantitative questionnaire and question 6 of the qualitative interview were directly aligned to the study's theoretical framework of cognitive dissonance. This was intentionally conducted in order to establish whether party messages contribute to a change in voting decisions over time. Through the analysis of quantitative data, 86.4% of respondents revealed that their votes have never changed because of communicated campaign messages. These responses ultimately indicate that the majority of the sample are not easily influenced to such an extent of changing their voting decisions. As identified previously, voting decisions can be based on a number of different motives such as beliefs, attitudes, perspectives, cultures, experiences, historical events, awareness, knowledge and so forth.

However, interview participant 1 stated that his/her vote did change before and argued that; "some messages were convincing and felt like it was applicable to me personally." This response is unmistakably related to the theory of cognitive dissonance, persuasive messages and the extent to which political persuasion influence voting behavior. Although the majority of the data set skewed toward the rejection of cognitive dissonance and persuasive influence, the findings still presented 4 participants that agreed to changing behaviors. It is recognized that not only was cognitive dissonance experienced, but that the influence of persuasive messages was effective and that strong personalized messages did in fact influence the participant.

The extent of the influence of political persuasion can be considered meaningful in that it changed citizen behavior and decisions.

Interview participant 2 argued that “what the party stands for” creates the basis of his/her voting decisions. “For example, the DA. Maimane have Christian values that resonates with me personally.” (Interview Participant 2, 2019). Furthermore, participant 2 states that: “It is about how they can make people feel about themselves and promote people to become something better.” Nimijean (2015:32) argues a mutual statement that voter choice is emotional, “which is the foundation of all brand relationships.”

Question 6 of the quantitative data set reveals that 40.9% of respondents feel that political parties resonate with them emotionally through messages. This means that here parties resonated with citizen beliefs in order to gain approval and support. This finding corresponds directly to Dean *et al.*'s (2015:29) beliefs concerning voter ideology. Dean *et al.* (2015:29) claim that political parties provoke emotional connectivity among voters who identify with their ideology. This finding confirms the statement of Marsh and Fawcett (2011:520): “leaders strive to resonate with the aspirations and values of voters.” Nimijean (2015:32) states that the appeal to values has become the new form of political competition.

Fundamentally these findings also confirm the use and influence of political branding and the influence of communicated messages on voting behavior. However, 9.1% thereof (40.9% who agreed that they resonate emotionally) confirmed that the emotional messages they resonate with does not form the basis of their voting decision. This finding can be considered to increase the possibility that the majority of the sample base their vote choices on additional motives, rather than emotional messages communicated by political parties.

In order to establish the extent of influence on voting behaviors, the researcher was required to question whether citizens believe these political messages communicated. From the entire combined data set not one respondent agreed to believe messages communicated by parties. However, 77.3% of respondents believe such messages “at times”.

Additionally, the research reveals that all participants believe political parties make use of persuasive messages and that all political candidates make promises in order to gain votes. As part of thematic analysis, the researcher discovered that this was an overarching theme.

Although citizens recognize that political parties make use of persuasive messages and communicate promises with the only intention to gain votes, it is clear that citizens still resonate emotionally with communicated party messages. As a result of this, it can be stated that political parties still hold great potential to influence voting decisions through persuasive communication.

81.8% of sample responses indicated that political parties may be perceived as brands. This question is directly related to content discussed in the literature review. Dean *et al.* (2015:1353), argues that the concept of political branding has been adopted by many political parties in order to distinguish and differentiate themselves from competitors. Nimijean (2015:32) point out that political parties focus on influencing voters the same way brands aim to influence consumers, by resonating emotionally. It is remarkable to see that only 40.9% of 81.8% of respondents are emotionally affected by means of messages. This indicates that although parties are perceived as brands, parties are not completely successful in resonating emotionally with citizens.

As discussed in the literature review, Bowman (2018) argues that a party's design plays a crucial role in political communication and can be used as a powerful tool for persuasion. However, findings from the qualitative interviews coincide with these statements. Both participants agreed that a party's design has the potential to influence voting behavior and promote stronger messages. Participant 2 states that "it does affect me to a certain extent, because every party has their own unique designs." As with branding, design communicates personality. Participant 1 highlights that "colors draw attention." However, the quantitative data set reveal contrasting results. Only 40.9% of respondents agrees that design promotes a stronger message.

5 CONCLUSION

The focus of this research study was to explore and describe the extent to which political persuasion affect citizen voting behaviour. The literature review discussed conceptualisation, the theoretical foundation on which the study was grounded and details of the research problem being investigated. The research methodology outlined the specific strategy used in which research questions were answered. For the purpose of the findings, The researcher compared research objectives with research findings in order to establish whether objectives were achieved and to answer the primary research question.

5.1 Concluding answers to research questions and objectives

It is important to note that in the final analysis the researcher recognized that all objectives and research questions are interrelated.

The primary research question states: To what extent does political persuasion influence citizen voting behaviour?

The researcher achieved the related objective by exploring whether political persuasion influence citizen voting decisions. It was founded that the majority of the data set skewed towards minimal influence. However, a small number of the sample responded to cognitive dissonance, which ultimately reflects the effectiveness of political persuasion and the extent of its influence. It can be described that political persuasion can change people's beliefs over time. Although a small portion of the sample responded positively towards the influence of persuasion, the extent of its influence can be considered significant. Additionally, the researcher identified that such an extent of influence by means of political persuasion is dependent on a majority of different factors.

Sub-question 1: Do citizens believe the persuasive messages communicated by parties?

The sample responded negatively towards their trust in political messages. It can be seen from the analysis process that a majority of the sample believe communicated messages “at times”. A potential reason for this might be seen in the presentation of findings, where data indicated that the entire sample believe political parties communicate persuasive messages.

Sub-question 2: Do citizens feel they resonate with political parties in emotional ways?

The related objective was achieved by means of exploring whether citizens emotionally resonate with political parties due to persuasive messages. The researcher found that the majority of the sample skewed towards not resonating emotionally with communicated messages. Nevertheless, the smaller portion of the sample that did respond positively indicates that personalised messages communicated by political parties can be regarded as an effective tool. The extent of influence resulted in changed behaviour. Although a small portion of the sample agreed with resonating emotionally, the research objective was met, and research question answered.

Sub-question 3: Do persuasive messages contribute to changed behaviours over time?

The data revealed that only a small portion of the sample agreed that political communication contributed to a change in voting decisions. Yet, it can still be concluded that persuasive messages incited changed behaviours.

For the purpose of quantitative research, the null hypothesis includes:

H0: The use of persuasion in politics does not influence citizen voting behaviour to a large extent

The data illustrated that a majority of the sample are not influenced by political persuasion to a large extent. However, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The alternative hypothesis include:

Ha: The use of political persuasion does influence citizen voting behaviour to a large extent.

Although a minority of the data represents a relationship between political persuasion and voting behaviour, the extent of this influence is significant, therefore the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Through the analysis of the questionnaire and interview responses, the researcher found that the utilized qualitative research method delivered key insights to broad responses from the questionnaire. Thus, the research questions and hypotheses were answered by means of exploring and describing all stated questions and objectives. Main constructs were researched, conceptualised, and analysed in order to capture a broad image of what the findings were communicating. Although the data analysis illustrated minimal responses in order to answer research questions, valuable data were uncovered. Several findings suggested contradictions, yet thematic analysis assisted in identifying common themes. Consequently, it can be argued that political persuasion has a significant influence on citizen voting behaviour.

5.2 Implications of findings for future practices

This study has contributed to the existing body of knowledge by exploring and describing the political persuasion and the extent to which it affects citizen voting behaviour. However, the sample size may have limited the researcher's analysis and ability to explore and describe the selected topic thoroughly. Unexpected research findings emerged. A larger sample size along with diversified geographical areas can be considered when conducting the study again. In future, the researcher will consider adjusting the direction of the study to a more narrow perspective.

5.3 Ethical considerations

According to Louw (2014:263), ethics in research is crucial, in that it potentially affect all the stakeholders involved in the research study. The ethical considerations of this study were in line with the Independent Institute of Education's (IIE) ethical code of conduct. Participants was given a consent form in order for them to agree that they are willing to partake in the study. The use of a consent form informed participants that they took part in a study. A clear description of the nature of the study, what was be required (if partaking) and how results was intended to be used, was given to participants via the consent form. The consent form informed participants about how their identities or sensitive personal information was intended to be protected (see Annexure C for the consent form).

The physical and social context in which the study took place was convenient and comfortable for the participants. No incentives was given in order to attract participation, since incentives might distort results. Harm was avoided at all times by avoiding the recall of emotionally painful memories; avoiding group settings for questions to be asked in and avoiding situations where a participant's future prospects may be harmed (Louw ,2014:266). For the purpose of conducting quantitative data, the participants were assured of their anonymity. Whereas, in the collection of qualitative data, participants were assured of confidentiality.

5.4 Limitations

Limitations of the study included time constraints, since research was conducted cross-sectional. The requirements for this assignment included a limited word count. This limitation hindered the extent of explanations. There was no budget for this study which lead to decisions regarding sampling and population to be based on accessibility. The researcher recognises that the sample size is not representative of the population. Since the sample size is small, results cannot be generalised. A non-probability sampling method increased the opportunity for researcher bias.

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7. ANNEXURES

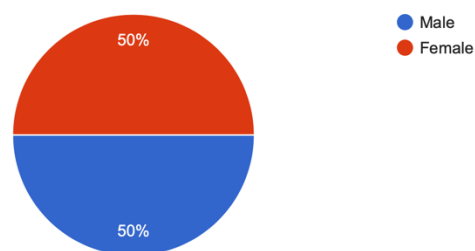
Annexure A: Questionnaire guidelines and results

The questionnaire was formulated using Google Forms and was distributed via email or text. Categories in featured answers are mutually exclusive. The questionnaire was filled out in the participant's own comfortable setting and convenient time.

Theme 1: Population Parameters (questions in theme 1 will be asked in order to identify whether the participant fit into the population parameters)

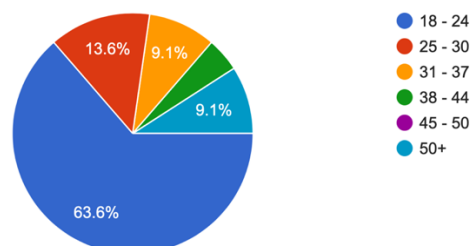
Gender

22 responses



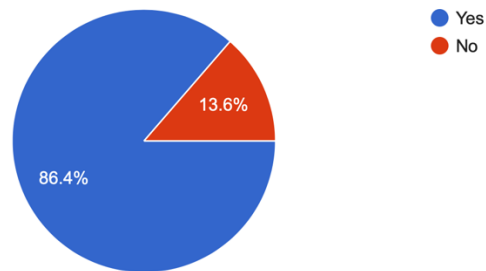
Age

22 responses



Have you ever participated in electoral voting?

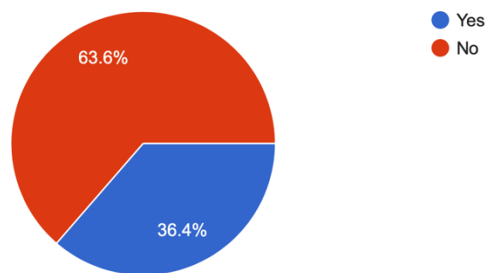
22 responses



Theme 2: Messages communicated

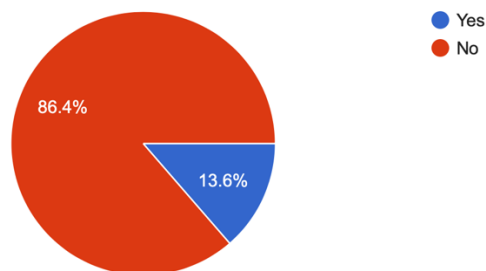
Do the messages communicated by political parties, during campaigns, influence your voting decision?

22 responses



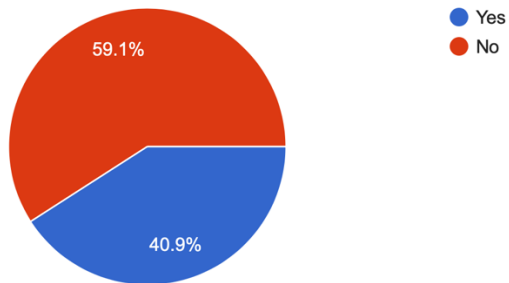
Did anything, with regards to the messages parties communicate during campaigns, change your voting decision before?

22 responses



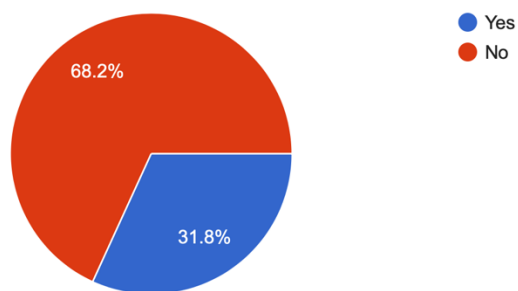
Do you feel parties resonate with you emotionally through their communicated messages?

22 responses



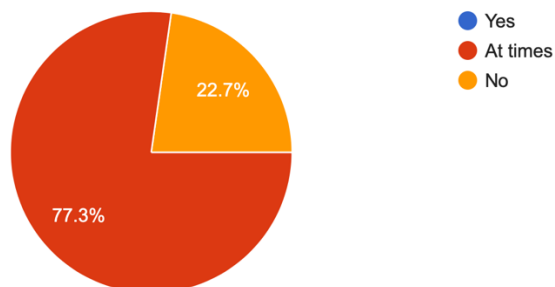
Do these emotional messages form the basis of your voting decision?

22 responses



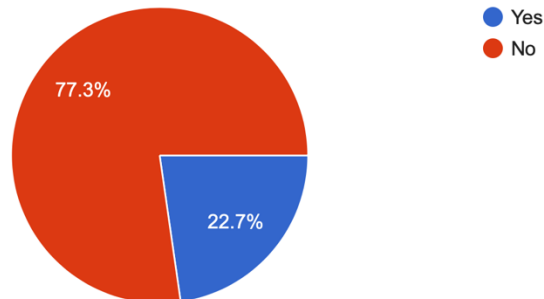
Do you believe the messages parties communicate as part of their campaigns to be true?

22 responses



If you receive constant campaign messages, would it influence your decision?

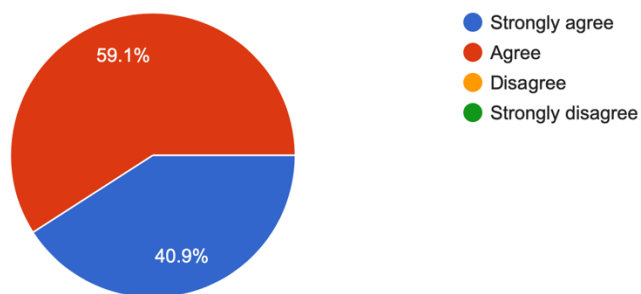
22 responses



Please select an option for the following statements:

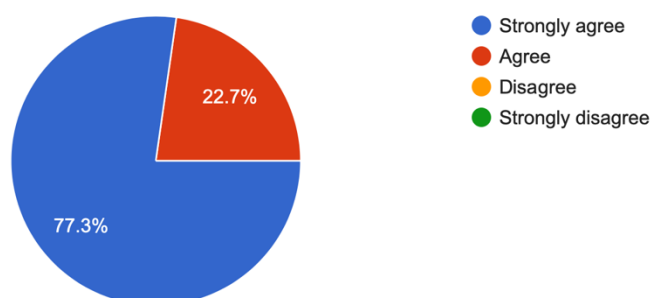
I believe parties make use of persuasive messages to gain votes.

22 responses



I believe political candidates make promises in order to gain votes.

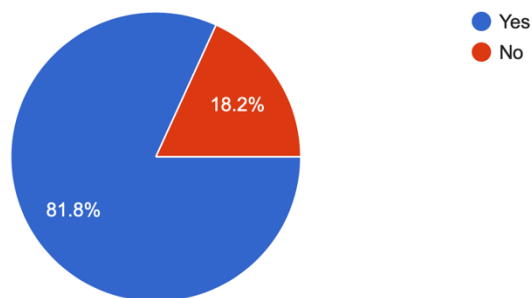
22 responses



Theme 3: Political branding

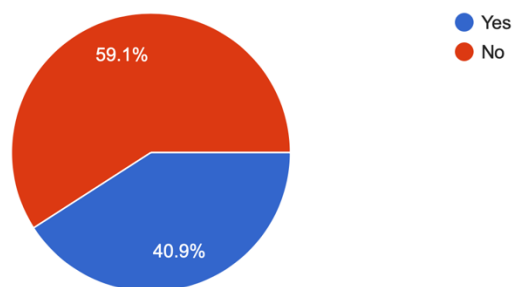
Do you think parties present/propose themselves as brands?

22 responses



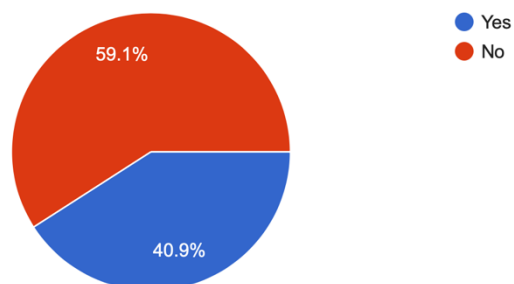
Do you think a party's design, i.e. colours, images, outfits etc. can influence your voting decision?

22 responses



Do you think by making use of these designs, i.e. red clothing, promotes a stronger message?

22 responses



Annexure B: In-depth interview questions and results

Participant 1

In-depth interviews will incorporate certain themes in order to answer the research questions successfully. A general interview approach will be followed, which will allow a great degree of freedom to the interviewee. It will also allow the researcher to adjust the focus of the interview when necessary. A general interview approach will be following in order to ensure a conversational approach is followed. Interviews will be conducted in a convenient and comfortable setting for the interviewee.

Theme 1: Population Parameters (questions in theme 1 will be asked in order to identify whether the participant fit into the population parameters)

1. Gender

- ☐ Female
- ☒ Male

2. Age

- ☐ 18 - 24
- ☐ 25 - 30
- ☐ 31 - 37
- ☐ 38 - 44
- ☒ 45 - 50

3. Have you ever participated in electoral voting?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

Theme 2: Messages communicated

1. How do you feel about the messages political parties communicate?

“I feel they communicate messages, but never deliver the actual results. Thus, I actually don’t feel like listening to any form of political messages. Because of past experiences and not delivering on promises I am not interested anymore.”

2. To what extent do you think the messages communicated by political parties’ influence voting behavior?

“It doesn’t affect me, but I believe that it certainly does affect most citizens of our country that is in need of, for example housing, electricity, etc. I also definitely think that it does influence the poor people of South Africa in that way. Poor people are more vulnerable.”

3. Did anything with regards to the message’s parties communicate during campaigns, change your voting decision before? If yes, why?

“Yes, some messages were convincing and felt like it was applicable to me personally.”

4. Why do you think parties resonate with citizens emotionally through their communicated messages?

“To try and convince people to vote for them.”

5. What forms the basis of your voting decision?

“The party’s promises for the future.”

6. Do you believe the messages parties communicate as part of their campaigns to be true? Please justify to what extent.

“Not always, because it is proven that they lie. That is what politicians are, liars.”

7. If you receive constant campaign messages, would it influence your voting decision? Why?

“No, it will irritate me, it shows that they’re desperate.”

8. Do you think parties make use of persuasive messages to gain votes? If yes, please justify how you think they make use of persuasive messages. If no, please justify why.

“Yes, by making use of certain words, for example using the word “corruption & crime” - every party wants to stop it.”

9. Why do you think political candidates make promises to citizens?

“It is the only way to gain votes.”

Theme 3: Political branding

10. Do you think parties present/propose themselves as brands? If yes, why do you think parties do this?

“Yes, I think they do it because they believe the more famous and popular the brand is, the more votes they will gain.”

11. To what extent do you think a party’s design, i.e. colors, images, outfits, influence your voting decision? Please justify.

“To a certain extent. Colors draw attention for example, if you see red it makes you feel angry.”

12. Do you think by making use of these designs, i.e. red clothing, promotes a stronger message? Why?

“Yes definitely, as mentioned red for example. Bright colors are aggressive, for example blue is more reliable.”

Annexure B: In-depth interview questions and results

Participant 2

In-depth interviews will incorporate certain themes in order to answer the research questions successfully. A general interview approach will be followed, which will allow a great degree of freedom to the interviewee. It will also allow the researcher to adjust the focus of the interview when necessary. A general interview approach will be following in order to ensure a conversational approach is followed. Interviews will be conducted in a convenient and comfortable setting for the interviewee.

Theme 1: Population Parameters (questions in theme 1 will be asked in order to identify whether the participant fit into the population parameters)

4. Gender

- ☐ Female
- ☒ Male

5. Age

- ☐ 18 - 24
- ☐ 25 - 30
- ☐ 31 - 37
- ☒ 38 - 44
- ☐ 45 - 50

6. Have you ever participated in electoral voting?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

Theme 2: Messages communicated

13. How do you feel about the messages political parties communicate?

“The messages they communicate irritates me. Parties make too many empty promises, which are not delivered upon. Yes, the promises are there but there is no objective/vision.”

14. To what extent do you think the messages communicated by political parties' influence voting behavior?

“Promises are made and therefore they do receive votes but after the elections nothing happens, and people then realize it was only lies. I think they influence voting decisions to a large extent. If a party promised me a house of course I will vote for them, especially when I'm in need of one. It's like that for anything; houses, water, electricity etc.”

15. Did anything with regards to the message's parties communicate during campaigns, change your voting decision before? If yes, why?

“No never before. The reason for that is, if you believe in one party, you stay with them. It doesn't matter what other parties promise.”

16. Why do you think parties resonate with citizens emotionally through their communicated messages?

“The current situation in South Africa is poverty. If all parties were to promise food, clothing, houses, education etc. people will fall for it because the country is poor, and some communities are in need of these things. It makes it easier for parties to gain votes if they give money or food, because people need it. It's sad if you look at today's youth, everything is about money because there is no money, and that makes it easy to persuade people.”

17. What forms the basis of your voting decision?

What the party stands for. For example, the DA. Maimane have Christian values that resonates with me personally. For me it's about what a party can do for a person – it is about everything, not just black or white people. It is about how they can make people feel about themselves and promote people to become something better. But yes, promises are there, and it doesn't always get delivered on.

18. Do you believe the messages parties communicate as part of their campaigns to be true? Please justify to what extent.

That's a difficult one. No, I don't believe those messages, because everything is about votes. They'll say anything or do anything to make you believe or influence you to vote for them.

19. If you receive constant campaign messages, would it influence your voting decision? Why?

No, I like it when parties communicate with me. It gets frustrating during election times, but it doesn't affect me. Because I know the common cause is only to win other parties.

20. Do you think parties make use of persuasive messages to gain votes? If yes, please justify how you think they make use of persuasive messages. If no, please justify why.

Yes, as previously mentioned, the entire game is played with the objective to get as many people possible to vote for the candidate. Parties will do anything to get people to vote. I don't believe it actually is about the people, I think it's just about the votes.

21. Why do you think political candidates make promises to citizens?

Just to gain votes – it's the only reason. But they make them while knowing they can't deliver on them or achieve what they promise to.

Theme 3: Political branding

22. Do you think parties present/propose themselves as brands? If yes, why do you think parties do this?

I've never actually thought about it. But thinking of it yes. To a certain extent.

23. To what extent do you think a party's' design, i.e. colors, images, outfits, influence your voting decision? Please justify.

Yes, I'll agree that it does affect me to a certain extent, because every party has their unique designs. For example, the ANC has its unique colors, same with the DA and EFF. So yes, it thinks it influences people. It's about how people feel- the EFF wears red, I feel it communicates aggressiveness. Still, every person that sees it resonates with it. Same with the DA, they represent something else again which resonates with other groups of people.

24. Do you think by making use of these, i.e. red clothing, promotes a stronger message? Why?

Definitely. Because some people aren't afraid to show other the party they belong to or support. I think it communicates very strong messages.

Annexure C: Consent forms



ANNEXURE C: EXPLANATORY INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

To whom it may concern,

My name is Chanté Jooste and I am a student at Vega School of Brand Leadership. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Ivan Mkhomazi about the topic of political persuasion. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of political persuasion and the extent of influence thereof on citizen voting behaviour.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

What will I be doing if I participate in your study?

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because it will present the study with valuable insights. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to have an in-depth interview with you that will take approximately 20 minutes of your time.

You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.

Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your perceptions toward politics and political persuasion. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Do I have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?



I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at Vega School of Brand Leadership, will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my Honours in BComm Strategic Brand Management degree. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

Chanté Jooste

0713553516

Chnate.jooste@icloud.com

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Ivan Mkhomazi

ivanmkhomazi@gmail.com



Consent form for participants

I, Estella Jooste, agree to participate in the research conducted by Chanté Jooste about the topic of political persuasion and the extent of influence thereof on citizen voting behaviour.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. I agree to be interviewed for this research.
2. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
3. My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
4. I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
5. I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.



Signature

31/08/2019

Date



ANNEXURE C: EXPLANATORY INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

To whom it may concern,

My name is Chanté Jooste and I am a student at Vega School of Brand Leadership. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Ivan Mkhomazi about the topic of political persuasion. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of political persuasion and the extent of influence thereof on citizen voting behaviour.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

What will I be doing if I participate in your study?

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because it will present the study with valuable insights. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to have an in-depth interview with you that will take approximately 20 minutes of your time.

You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.

Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your perceptions toward politics and political persuasion. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Do I have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?



I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at Vega School of Brand Leadership, will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my Honours in BComm Strategic Brand Management degree. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

Chanté Jooste

0713553516

Chnate.jooste@icloud.com

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Ivan Mkhomazi

ivanmkhomazi@gmail.com



Consent form for participants

I, William Botha, agree to participate in the research conducted by Chanté Jooste about the topic of political persuasion and the extent of influence thereof on citizen voting behaviour.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. I agree to be interviewed for this research.
2. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
3. My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
4. I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
5. I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.



Signature

31/08/2019

Date

Annexure D: Ethical Clearance Letter



August 26, 2019

Student name: Chante Jooste
Student number: 16012105



Re: Approval of Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) in Strategic Brand Management Proposal and Ethics Clearance



Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.



Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and we hereby provide you with ethical clearance to proceed with your data collection.

There may be some aspects that you still need to address in your proposal. If this is the case, feedback will be provided to you in writing. You will need to address these aspects in consultation with your supervisor.

In the event of you deciding to change your research topic or methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure that all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued in such instances.

We wish you all the best with your research!

Yours sincerely,

Amalia van Schalkwyk
Supervisor
Coordinator

Name: Chanté Jooste
Campus Postgraduate

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Inanda Greens
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Wierda Valley 2196
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Annexure E: Summary Document Table

Research Purpose/ Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/ Sources	Literature Review -Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Anticipated Findings	References
To explore and describe the extent to which political persuasion influence citizen voting behaviour.	To what extent does political persuasion influence citizen voting behaviour?	The aim of this research study is to explore and describe the extent to which political persuasion influence citizen voting behaviour in a South African context.	Leon Festinger Robert Cialdini McBath & Fisher	Persuasion Political branding Persuasive communication	Critical realism	Mixed-method	Qualitative: In-depth interviews Quantitative: Surveys using questionnaires	Informed consent IIE ethical code of conduct Harm will be avoided No incentives Anonymity	The researcher aims to answer the research questions, test the hypothesis and meet the objectives of the study	See reference list
						Population Target pop: 18-50 year old SA citizens Accessible: In PTA				
Research Problem	Secondary Questions	Key Concepts	Key Theories			Sampling	Data Analysis Method	Limitations	Anticipated Contribution	
Political parties narrowcast persuasive messages to voters in order to develop emotional connections. Leaders focus on distracting voters from economic policy. Parties make promises which cannot be delivered on. Voters become dissatisfied which leads to unrest in the country.	Do citizens believe the persuasive messages communicated by parties? Do citizens feel they resonate with political parties in emotional ways? Do persuasive messages contribute to changed behaviours over time? Do the persuasive messages communicated in political campaigns, by South African parties, influence citizen voting behaviour?	Political persuasion Political branding Persuasive communication	Leon Festinger theory of cognitive dissonance			Non-probability sampling Purposive sampling technique	Qualitative: Thematic content analysis Quantitative: Analysis using frequencies	Time Word count Non-probability sampling – researcher bias Small sample size	Add to the body of knowledge within aspects of politics, communication and human behaviours.	