THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE INTENTION TO VOTE FOR STUDENT POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS IN THE EASTERN CAPE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER OF COMMERCE DEGREE IN BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

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27 JANUARY 2017

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of social media on the intention to vote for students political organizations in the Eastern Cape. The main objectives included measuring the influence of predictor variables such as medium credibility, message credibility, tie strength with peers, identification with the peers, peer communication, user trust, information credibilit on the intention to vote.

To measure these hypothesised relationships a conceptual model was developed for the study. Data collection was conducted in the Eastern Cape in which 381 participants were surveyed. To analyse the data the two stage structural equation modeling approach was adopted in which confimatory factor analysis and hypothesis testing was adopted. This was conducted ulitising Structural equation modelling. The main findings of the study were that all the proposed hypotheses were supported with the exception of that of peer commnication and tie strength with peers on the intention to vote. It was also important to note that identification with peers had the strongest impact on the intention to vote while the message credibility had the weakest. The implication was that users feel that the ability to identify with each other influenced their voting intentions however the message itself was irrelevant.

Keywords: *medium credibility, message credibility, tie strength with peers, identification with the peers, peer communication, user trust, Information credibilit on the intention to vote.*

Declaration

I, Tapiwa Chininga, declare that the following is fact and true that:

- This is my own original work
- There was no plagiarism conducted in this study
- This dissertation properly and acknowledged all sources used.
- This research has not been previously submitted in part or in full for the attained of any recognised higher education qualification
- University of Fort Hare research and ethical procedures were not violated before, during or after the course of this research
- Last, this dissertation was solely used for research purposes

SIGNATURE   _____

DATE   _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would wish to thank God for being able to complete my Master's degree in Business Management. Second, I would also wish to thank my wife, Caroline Chahwanda, my son, my family, friends and colleagues who supported me throughout my studies. Most importantly I would also wish to thank all those who took time to participate in this study because without their responses it would have never been possible.

Last, I would wish to thank my supervisor Dr Norman Chiliya and Ms Ellen Rungani for their guidance and patience in making this research possible. I will always be grateful for that and the opportunity that the University of Fort Hare gave me to undertake my studies.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION` TO THE PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction

In recent years, social media has been used as a new blend of combined marketing communications that allows organizations to create strong relationships with consumers (Mangold &Faulds, 2009). Examples of these social media platforms include social network sites such as Facebook, Friendster and Twitter (Boyd &Ellison, 2008). It is also argued that the emergence of Facebook has brought about dynamic changes in human daily life and personal communication across the globe (Mansfield, 2012). Since the primary aim of social network sites is to connect people, it it very important to understand underlying variables that govern social relationships and their properties (Karjaluoto, Mattila & Pento, 2004).

In this chapter, the background of the study was discussed highlighting what other scholars found out about social media electronic word of mouth over the years. The chapter also identified the problem that precipitated the study. The research objectives are also given and followed by the hypotheses development and the benefits of the study respectively. The research design was also briefly outlined, followed by data collection and research instruments. The chapter concluded by discussing sampling and data analysis and how the study was organized. Specifically, the data analysis process and techniques to be used in the study were stated to be the two stage structural equation modeling approach which was used for confirmatory factor analysis and hypothesis testing . The collected data was cleaned and captured into spread-sheets so that structural equation modelling could be applied to analyse the captured data.

1.2 Background to the Research

Studies on social media electronic word of mouth has been done in many areas for example commercial websites (Syarief & Genoveva, 2015: Minton, Lee,Orth, Kim & Kahle, 2013 :Ho & Li 2011), but only a handful of studies has been done to understand its influence on political consumers. According to Pennington, Winfrey, Warner, & Kearney (2015) scholars who have studied this area have produced different results to date, which makes it very important to examine the different effects of various types of social networking communication on political behaviour. Brundidge, Baek, Johnson and Williams, (2013) studied whether social media

mobilisation contributes to political participation and increased participation of citizens in political processes and the findings gave mixed opinions. However, many others scholars have confirmed a link between electronic word of mouth and purchase intention (Attia, Aziz, Friedman, & Elhusseiny, 2011; Gromark & Schliesmann, 2010; Mou, Miller, & Fu, 2015) .

The "Obama Yes" campaign highlights an important role social media play in political campaigns and arguably changed the whole landscape of the political marketing field (Rutledge, 2013). In the Middle East, the Arab Spring has left a very strong footprint that shows the growing importance of social media in personal communication particularly among the youths (Nam, 2012). On a more local scale, the fees must fall revolution highlighted the increased use of social networking such as Twitter and Facebook in political activities on campuses. Many people took to social media in support of student led protest using the hashtag "#FeesMustFall "and "#NationalShutDown" (Wesi, 2015). According to an analysis of online coverage around Fees Must Fall, Twitter was the main platform used by protesters and the hashtag #FeesMustFall became a trending symbol that represent the protesting students across south Africa (Ludovica, 2015). This overwhelming dissention caused President Jacob Zuma to announce a 0% increase in fees for 2016 (Ludovica, 2015).

The next section addressed the research problem.

1.3 Problem Statement

Whilst the use of social media in marketing has become acknowledged as a research theme, there has been a lack of theoretical and first-hand research into consumer psychology regarding local usage of social media in political marketing strategies and practices, and as a result, a lack of proper evaluation of its impact on voters (Aghara, Nwaizugbo, & Chukwuemeka, 2015; Cass, & Pecotich, 2005; Ediraras, Rahayu, & Natalina, 2013). According to Gupta (2013), Facebook is used widely by consumers and in the process influence their purchase decisions. Most studies that have been carried out on electronic word-of-mouth focused on consumer purchase intention of commercial products (Gregorio Fuschillo, 2015; Laroche,Richard, & Sankaranarayanan, 2012; Lim, Hwang, Kim, & Biocca, 2015) but the findings do not necessarily address conditions in a developing country. Although

the empirical research cited (Attia et al., 2011; Dobrzynska, Blais, & Nadeau, 2003; Fu, Ju, & Hsu, 2015; Gromark & Schliesmann, 2010; Syarief & Genoveva, 2015) support the assertion that consumers intention to purchase is susceptible to online word of mouth, studies in the South African context are few (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). The fact that scholars who studied this area have produced different results to date, also creates the need to examine the different effects of various types of social networking communication on political behaviour.

This study therefore measured the influence of social media on the intention to vote for student political organisations at Fort Hare University using six important social media variables namely Peer communication on Facebook, Perceived User Trust of Facebook , Perceived information Credibility, Tie Strength with peers and Identification with Political Party Facebook Page. These variables have been drawn from the literature review that looked on factors that affect marketing online and, due to this, an influence was asserted between the factors and intention to vote in the South African political Marketing context. The notion of Facebook political marketing was therefore introduced with the specific aim to gain quantitative insights to the conceptual discussion regarding the adoption of Facebook as a political marketing tool to promote voter satisfaction and, in return, influence the intention to vote positively.

This problem was investigated at the hand of the objectives listed in section 1.3 below.

1.4 Objectives of the Research

According to Bryman & Bell (2011:79), research objectives and hypotheses provide the guidelines for the decisions that will be taken in relation to the type of research design used in the study. After defining the research problem above, the topic will now be narrowed down to specific objectives that stipulate exactly what the study aims to achieve. Cant, Strydom, Jooste, du Plessis & Brink (2007:59) describe research objectives as the steps a researcher towards achieving the purpose of the research. The objectives of this study were therefore stated as follows:

1.5 Primary research objective

- To measure the influence of social media on the intention to vote for student political organisations in the Eastern Cape.

1.5.1 Secondary research objectives

- To measure the influence of Facebook medium credibility on students intention to vote for student political organisations at Fort Hare University.
- To establish the influence of Peer communication on Facebook on the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.
- To measure the effect of users' trust of Facebook on the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.
- To measure the extent to which Identification with peers on Political Party Facebook Page influence the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.
- To measure the extent to which Tie strength with Peers on students Political Party Facebook Page influence the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.
- To measure the influence of Perceived Information credibility on students' intention to vote for student political at Fort Hare University.
- To measure the influence of Facebook message credibility on the students intention to vote for student political organisations at Fort Hare University.

1.6 Research Hypotheses

A hypothesis is a statement that makes a specific estimation about how two or more quantifiable variables are associated. The relationship between the variables must be testable and clear inferences for the variables in question must be visible (Feinberg, Kinnear & Taylor, 2013:55). The hypotheses for this study are presented in section 1.5.1 below.

Hypotheses

$H1_0$: Facebook medium credibility has no significant influence on the intention to vote for student political organisations at Fort Hare University.

$H2_0$: Peer communication on Facebook has no significant influence on the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.

$H3_0$: Users' trust of Facebook has no significant influence on the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.

H4$_0$: Identification with peers on Political Party Facebook Page has no significant influence on the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.

H5$_0$: Tie strength with Peers on students Political Party Facebook Page has no significant influence the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare

H6$_0$: Perceived Information credibility has no significant influence on the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.

H7$_0$: Facebook message credibility has no significant influence on the intention to vote for student political organisations at Fort Hare University.

The model below in Figure 1 clearly demonstrates the variables in this study and their relationship.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model for the Study

Medium credibility of Facebook	

H_1

Peer communication on Facebook — H_2

User trust of Facebook — H_3

INTENTION TO VOTE

Identification Peers on Party with Facebook Page — H_4

Tie Strength with peers on Facebook — H_5

Perceived Information Credibility — H_6

Perceived Message credibility — H_7
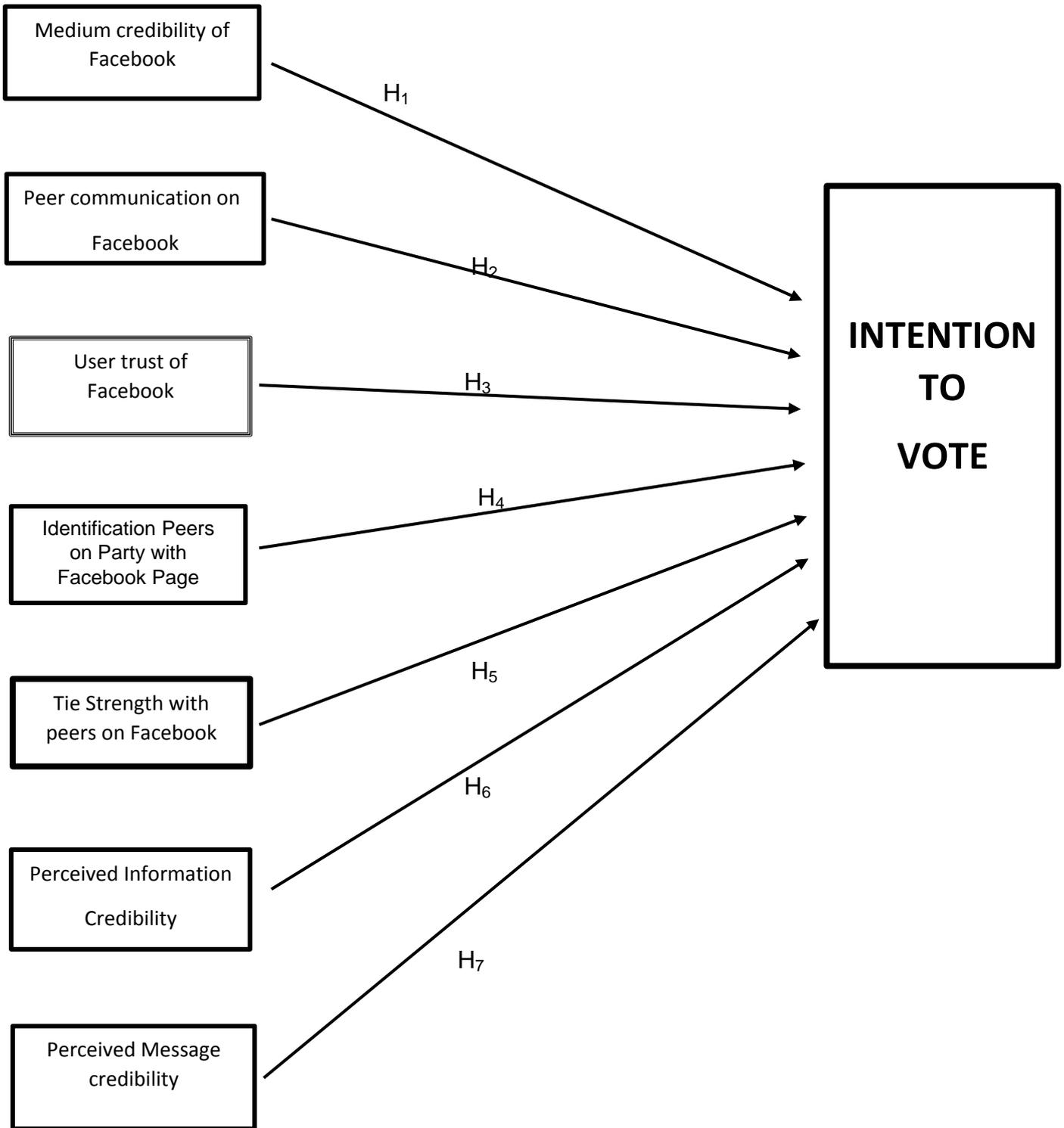
Source: Developed for this study

Following the formulated hypotheses and the proposed model, the significance of the study is outlined.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is very essential as political parties have become part of the marketing revolution and adopt social media as a marketing tool .The study therefore shed light on an important research focus area namely, the use of Facebook in political marketing. Government, Universities and political organisations are major employers; hence, it is critical to add relevant knowledge about the use of Facebook to this field of employment. The relevance of consumer behaviour theory in marketing and the significance of the social media platforms such as Facebook to steer exogenous change from the consumer point of view was be highlighted. As the political environment in South Africa changes, students and politicians are able to employ Facebook to change voter perceptions about their organisations and get more votes. The study therefore helped political parties with information on how to harness social media tools like Facebook through honing their messages to favourably influence the perceptions of target consumers in their marketing campaigns and hence reduces costs.

Uniquely, the collecting of data on voter intentions provides an opportunity to assess the relative influence of different direct and indirect social media marketing communications on voting – a relatively less-comprehensively research domain. The variables that were under study added value to academia because they had not been comprehensively explored in the context of political marketing on social media in South Africa. The findings therefore helped to not only increase the academic agility of researchers as they become amenable to the use of Facebook within the political environment, but also focus their attention on the differences between commercial marketing on Facebook and non-commercial marketing in the service market. The research helped to contribute to current and potential future research areas in local political marketing and also provide meaningful conclusions and recommendations. The study also helped to map how Facebook marketing communication techniques impact voting intentions. The information provided above made the study unique and of value beyond political marketing on Facebook to mainstream marketing, where assessing marketing influence is becoming of

increasing importance. The following section 1.8 provides a short overview of the methodology that was followed in this study.

1.8 Research Methodology and Design
1.8.1 Research Methodology

After clearly establishing the research model in Figure 1, the study now provides an introductory outline of the project's research methodology and research strategy. According to Collis and Hussey (2008) research methodology refers to the techniques that the researcher uses to gather information. Interviews, observation, surveys are some of the most commonly used methods in the social science. Feinberg et al., (2013) argue that if the researcher wishes to unravel in depth information about individual attitudes, and experiences, the researcher would use in-depth interviews. However, if the aim of the research is to gain holistic, more statistically-significant information a survey is adopted.

1.8.2 Research Paradigm

Bryman and Bell (2011) defined a research paradigm as a set of beliefs and principles used by scientists in a certain field of study in order to give direction on aspects that should be studied and how the results of the study will be interpreted. The purpose for paradigms is to determine the benchmarks for research. This study followed the positivist approach. Auguste Comte is credited with starting Positivism in the nineteenth century (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) and has asserted a deterministic and empiricist philosophy, where causes determine effects. The approach has also been centred on directly observing, quantitatively measuring and objectively predicting relationships between variables (Krauss & Putra, 2005)

1.8.3 Research Design

According to Malhotra and Birks (2007:64), the research design and plan is a charter for the research project which outlines the plan the researcher should follow, in line with the method chosen, and also establishes the steps that needs to be taken. Wiid and Diggines (2013:55), further states that research designs are classified into three major type's namely exploratory, descriptive and causal studies in line with the fundamental objectives of the study. Based on the features of descriptive research, this study can be classified as descriptive study.

Wiid and Diggines (2013:59), also points out that the basic designs (exploratory, descriptive and casual) can be quantitative or qualitative in nature. Qualitative methods assist the researcher to gain rich in-depth data such as reasons and motivations. On the other hand quantitative methods allow the researcher to collect data that are more statistically significant using statistical, mathematical and computational techniques. This research can therefore be regarded as a quantitative research study and quantitative data was collected based on precise measurements using designed and authenticated instruments for collecting data. The following sections 1.8.3 to 1.13 briefly discuss the most pertinent elements of the research design in general and as well place them within the context of the study.

1.8.4 Population

Authors such as Bradley (2013:39), described population as considerations addresses key questions such as who represents the market place, who are the players, and who should be the centre of investigation and where are those subjects?. In other words, the population of a study refers to a group of individuals or items that is under investigation (Churchil & Brown, 2004:400). The target population for this study comprises registered students at the University of Fort Hare. All registered students qualify to participate as long as they have access to social media by some or other means of electronic device and be a user Facebook. The University of Fort Hare has six student political organisations namely SASCO, Youth Communist League, ANC Youth league, DASO, PASMA and DENOSA. All the organisations are using Facebook to market themselves to students and have active Facebook pages. As of 31st of April 2016, the University had 11, 818 registered students and 50 percent of the students voted during the SRC Institutional elections held in April. The University is also divided into three campus namely East London Campus, Bisho and Alice Campus. Out of the 50% (5909) students that voted in the 2016 (SRC) student leadership elections, 56% (4091) were from Alice campus and 41% (1860) from East London campus. The results show that support for the parties varies across the campuses for all the parties. Specifically the study was conducted at the Fort Hare three campuses.

1.8.5 Sampling and Sample size

Hill, et. al. (1999:33) argue that it is not necessary to survey all elements of a large population but only a small proportion or sample, provided that the sample information can be generalised to draw meaningful conclusions about the whole population. Wiid and Diggines (2013:181) describe sampling as a shorter route for investigating a population. The sampling plan first starts by identifying the population to be studied which is followed by specifying the sampling frame. There was no sampling frame in this study. The sampling plan culminates in selecting the data collection method to be used. For this purpose, a self-administered questionnaire was administered. The Rao Soft Sample size calculator was used to come up with the sample size. The researcher budgeted for 5% margin of error at a 95 % per cent confidence level. With a population size of 11 818 and 50% response distribution, Rao Soft Sample size calculator recommended a sample size of 377 voters and therefore sample elements were a total 377 students.

The sampling method/technique is dealt with next.

1.8.6 Sampling Technique

The sampling technique specifies whether a probability or a non-probability technique was used and how the sample elements are selected (Knight & Wilkin, 2010). With probability sampling, also referred to as random sampling, all the units in the population have a probability of being selected for the sample (Cant, et. al., 2005:173). On the other hand non-probability sampling relies on the discretion of the researcher and the magnitude of the sampling error cannot be determined. Alice has more students followed by Bisho and East London Campus. The University is divided into three campuses, and students from both three campuses were sampled using stratified sampling based on student numbers of the 3 campuses in order to constitute the total sample compilation of 377 elements. Even though East London and Bisho campus has few students as compared to Alice campus, all the six political organisations are active at the campus and they seem to enjoy even support which makes stratified sampling technique the best for the study.

1.8.7 Data Collection Process

This step involves the implementation of the methodology and research design by starting collecting data according to the established plan. Wiid and Diggines (2013:73) contend that the process of collecting data starts as soon as the person who makes the decisions has decided on the necessity and feasibility of the research and gives the green light to proceed. Two general errors are commonly experienced during the data collection stage, namely; sampling and non-sampling errors and the researcher needs to follow the specified procedures meticulously to minimise these errors. It can save costs and time to first explore all relevant secondary data before embarking on collecting primary data (Wiid and Diggines, 2013:74). The process of collecting data therefore focused on secondary data and primary data as outlined below in the following sections..

1.8.7 Secondary data

Secondary data is information that has been gathered before for another purposes and not for solving the current research problem (Malhotra & Birks, 2007:94). Wiid & Diggines (2013:75) purport that secondary data from could render meaningful information to researchers about the research method used, the sample size and the scope as well as evaluating the reliability and credibility of the secondary data. Syndicated data, pooled data, databases and journals also serve as useful secondary data sources (Donghoon, Kim & Li, 2013). This study mainly explored textbooks, academic journals and unpublished dissertations for enlightening the research problem and for formulating the research design. Data obtained from the University records and student developer was used in the study.

1.8.8 Primary data

Secondary data is usually insufficient to provide solutions to newly formulated research problems. It is, therefore, necessary to collect primary data. Primary data is new data collected to address a specific problem at hand (Gerber-Nel, Nel & Kotze, 2012:87). Wiid & Diggines (2013:88), mention two primary research approaches that could be implemented by researchers namely, quantitative or qualitative research. Both these approaches utilise distinct methods to gather primary data, namely; surveys, observations and experiments. The specific objectives set assisted in

deciding on the research approach and method to implement to solve the specific problem. The study therefore adopted a quantitative research approach and used a survey to collect the primary data.

1.8.9 Data collection instrument

A data collection instrument the tool, such as a questionnaire, is used to collect data from the research subjects (Wiid & Diggines, 2013:154). A questionnaire was used as instrument to obtain the relevant data from the correctly sampled respondents (McQuarrie, 2006:115). The researcher adopted a self-administered questionnaire. This method of data collection was suitable to reach this particular population and for obtaining the required data speedily and inexpensively (Cant et al., 2007:100). The questionnaire included Likert rating scales. The ordinal scale asked participants to indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree with statements given on a particular variable (Hill & Alexander, 2000:100). The most-commonly used 5-point Likert scale allows respondents the opportunity to rank the available answers to the questions on a scale given a range of values of 1 to 5. This approach enabled the researcher to gauge the impact of emotional response to the communication campaigns (a single Likert-scale item). Wiid and Diggines (2013:148) emphasise that a correctly designed measuring instrument is vitally important and impact the reliability and validity of the collected data.

As hypothesised, the questionnaire measured the six (6) independent variables. These variables together with the scales were adapted from previous researches listed in the table 1 below.

Table 1: <u>List of scales adapted for the study</u>

No	Name of Variable	Journal Tittle	Cronbach's alpha	Author
1.	User Trust	The role played by perceived usability, satisfaction and consumer trust on website loyalty	0,84	(Flavian, Guinaliu, & Gurrea, 2006)

2	Peer communication, Tie Strength with peers, Identification with peers & Intention to vote	Social Media Peer Communication and Impacts on Purchase Intentions :A Consumer Socialization Framework	0,92 - 0,94	(Wang, Yu, & Wei, 2012)
3	Information Credibility, Medium credibility, Message Credibility.	Factors Influencing Information credibility on Social Media Platforms: Evidence from Facebook Pages	0,88	(Li & Suh, 2015)

1.9 Pilot study

The draft questionnaire needs to be tested and refined. Wiid and Diggines (2013:171) explain that the questionnaire is tested on a proportion of the sample. The researcher is then able to measure how long it takes to complete the questionnaire, discover any problems that can arise during the questionnaire completion, and test if the instructions are clear and easy to understand, if the correct format has been followed and lastly whether the questionnaire was flowing naturally and in a conservational manner. The researcher personally conducted the pilot study and respondents were requested to complete hard copies of the questionnaire.Ten per cent or 38 sample subjects (377) was pre-tested and their responses assessed. Any shortcomings in the draft questionnaire such as erros or descrepancies were rectified before printing and administering the final questionnaire. The pilot studies ran for a period of one week at East London Fort Hare campus in the Eastern Cape.

1.10 Data Analysis

Cant et al., (2007:89) point out that data analysis involves breaking down the collected data into useful and logical evidence. The collected data was cleaned and

captured into spread-sheets so that SPSS could be applied to analyse the captured data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for this analysis. Descriptive statistics condense and show positivistic data while inferential statistics are used to reach reliable conclusions about the population based on the quantitative data obtained from the sample (Collins & Hussey, 2008:222). Descriptive and inferential statistical tests were done, related to the normality of the data; the reliability and validity of the research instrument. In addition, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were also conducted. The information obtained was collated in the form of bar graphs, pie charts, frequencies and cross tabulations in order to arrive at useful findings and conclusions.

1.10.1 Validity and Reliability

Tustin, et. al. (2005:296) defines validity as the degree of accuracy of a measurement instrument and how it truly represents a concept. This view is supported by Evans et al., (2016) who, in addition, distinguish between internal and external validity and the subsequent methods that are used to test validity i.e., face, content, criterion, convergent, discriminant and construct validity. This research project will preferably use construct validity which is a commonly recommended approach by other scholars such as Shiu, Hair, Bush and Ortinau (2009:282) to test both internal validity which broadly seek to understand whether the research instrument measured what it sought to measure and the external validity concerned with the generalizability of survey results. Multivariate procedures such as factor analysis of the data were therefore done in order to test if the constructs are valid. Another concept closely related to validity is reliability. Straus and Mickey (2012) define reliability as the measure of consistency. According to Ataya et al., (2012), for a scale to be regarded as having a very good reliability, it must have coefficients between 0.70 and 0.95, while 0.60 and 0.70 shows fair reliability. A scale that is below 0.6 has poor reliability. Statistical software packages like SPSS easily calculate coefficients. The data that was obtained in this study was tested for the reliability of the instrument using coefficient Alphas. The scales adopted and used in this study estimate internal consistency reliability of the constructs ranging from 0.78 to 0.94 Cronbach's alphas and can be said to be acceptable.

1.11 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics is instrumental to stop research abuses and helps investigators to understand their responsibilities as responsible scholars (Berg & Lune, 2004:61). They further posit that research participants are supposed to be treated humanely and sensitively in order to minimise the risk they may be placed into by research procedures. It is always the duty of the researcher to make sure ensure that his or her research is conducted in an ethical manner. Before research participants are contacted, the researcher must make sure that the research plan passes an ethical evaluation. This survey was both confidential and anonymous. Confidentiality of research participants was guaranteed and participants were asked to sign a letter of consent before they take part in the study. Anonymity and confidentiality were also guaranteed by not needing to enter your name on the questionnaire. Participation was completely voluntary and involves no risk, penalty, or loss of benefits whether or not one participate and furthermore participants were not asked to reveal the parties they vote for and were given the option to with draw from the survey at any stage. Furthermore, an ethical clearance was also sought from Fort Hare Research Ethics committee before the study was conducted and it was granted under the following reference: RUN211SCH01.

1.12 Delimitations of the Research

The study focused on measuring the influence of social media on the intention to vote for student political organisations at the University of Fort Hare. The study only took into account the following variables: peer communication, tie strength with peers, identification with peers, user trust and the intention to vote. The sample was also limited to students registered at the University of Fort Hare three campuses. As all students are eligible to vote, an equal number of students were sampled and inferences generalised to the total population per se.

PROPOSED STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter 1: Introduction and background of the study laid the foundation of the study. This was followed by the problem statement, the research objectives, hypotheses, benefits of the study. An overview of the methodology and research design was also briefly highlighted but a detailed discussion was done in chapter 5. Delineations and Limitations of the Research and ethical considerations were also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 2: This chapter dealt with the theoretical and empirical overview of related studies that informed this research.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Design described the research methodology or plan of action that underpinned the research and also, the ethical considerations that were adhered to throughout the research. It provided more detail on the research design, population, sample that was drawn, data collection instruments, sources and procedures used, as well as limitations that incurred during the primary data collection period.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Interpretation of Research Findings provided an analysis and interpretation of the research findings. Descriptive and inferential statistics was also used in explaining the research findings.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations provided a brief overview of the study, recommendations regarding the findings and recommendations that were made for future study based on the limitations observed. Suggestions were evaluated to come up with valid solutions to the problems that were highlighted. The chapter ends with a summary and conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: CONSUMER INTERPERSONAL INFLUENCE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

2.1. Introduction

Chapter one above served as the foundation that introduced the research problem that was under investigation. The following literature study was therefore a follow up of the first chapter. It discussed some of the findings in studies that have been conducted on social media. The information was examined in order to understand the influence of social media on the intention to vote for student political organisations in the Eastern Cape. The literature review includes a section on the overview of social media, consumer socialisation through social media such as Facebook. The chapter ends with a conclusion of the findings gleaned from previous researches in the field of the study. All these sections outlined above were discussed comprehensively. The information obtained helped to identify key issues linking the said influences on Facebook and the intention to vote.

2.2. Theoretical and Empirical Literature Review

2.2.1. The theory of planned behaviour and student intention to vote for their parties.

This study was based on the Theory theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985) . Ajzen's theory posits that a change in behaviour is caused by attitude, which is itself caused by change in beliefs due to reliable sources of information. The theory posits that if people view the recommended behaviour as constructive (attitude) and if they feel that other people who are important to them would be happy if they perform the behaviour (subjective norm), this will motivate the doer to perform and it increases their likelihood to actually do it. This theory has been tested many times (Smith & Speed, 2011; Wijesundara, 2014) and a positive correlation between attitudes, subjective norms and behavioural intention has been confirmed.

Figure 2: Theory of Planned Behaviour
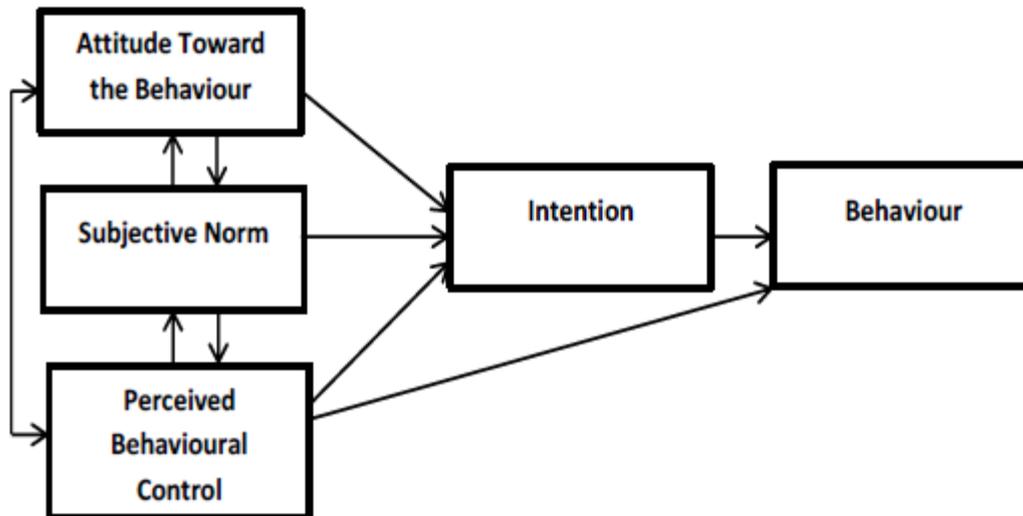
The Theory of planned behaviour formed the main theoretical basis for this study, that was also used to identify to measure the influence of the predictor variables. This was considered important given that the study sought to understand user intentions to vote. Since most user generated content found on platforms such as Facebook is sometimes viewed with scepticism since many users' regards content on social media as not reliable, it was important to understand consumer attitudes that influence intention to vote.

Consumer behaviour scholars argue that purchase intention can be used to make predictions of consumer buying decisions. Studies also show that purchase intention scale works better when used to predict future sales as compared to just using past sales (Syarief & Genoveva, 2015). According to Morar, Venter, and Chuchu, (2016), intention was defined as the likelihood that a person will act in a certain manner. Consumer behaviour scholars later used this concept to explain the intention to purchase and consequently the intention to vote as the likelihood that voters are willing to vote for their respective parties (Ganser & Riordan, 2015). According to Yazdanpanah and Forouzani (2015) the intention to purchase predicts how a consumer will behave and what they will buy in their next shopping. When the intention to purchase is positive, there will be a high probability of actually purchasing, further reflecting how loyal or positively committed is towards specific

products or brands (Chen, Teng, Yu, & Yu, 2015). Research has also shown that consumer attitude forms as a result of beliefs, feelings and behavioural intentions, elements which are complementary and show the process that consumers use in making a purchase decision of a particular product or service (Yazdanpanah & Forouzani, 2015). According to Baber et al., (2016), consumers tend to form particular attitudes towards products or services first and if these attitudes are positive, then there is a higher likelihood for them to purchase the service or product. This is view was also supported by Morar et al., (2016) who argued that positive attitudes influence the intention to vote.

This study was based on the assumption that the variables selected influence the student's intention to vote for their respective student political organisations. These relationships align well with the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Elaboration Likelihood Model. Morar et al., (2016) argue that the field of political marketing borrows heavily from the traditional marketing concepts such as purchase intentions and therefore a purchase intention scale was adapted as intention to vote. Hansen and Jensen (2007) argued that the concept of marketing exchange is very dominant in politics hence student political organisations can be regarded as service-provider. In the current study, it was posited student organisations get votes in exchange for promises of some benefits derived from the services offered to improve the lives of students at the University. In a marketing context, Hansen and Jensen (2007) posited that voters can therefore be viewed as users who are consuming a service. According to Lamb, Hair, McDaniel, Boshoff and Terblanche (2008:4), marketing encompass knowing and meeting the needs of customers through valuable exchange processes done profitably and more efficiently than competitors because of effective management. The inclusion of the word 'idea' in the definition apart from goods and services as the key objects of the exchange process is significant as it envisioned the acknowledgement marketing politics as part of conventional marketing (Che Supian, Muhammad, Noorliza & Mahmud, 2008). The 'idea' becomes the thing/object exchanged between political actors involved in marketing and the electorate, regarded as consumers. In marketing, the intention to purchase generally refers to the proclivity of a particular segment of consumers to purchase a product and this study applied this concept regarding the intention to vote. According to Syarief and Genoveva (2015) organizations that have strong knowledge of their

customers propensity to purchase will up-sell and formulate retention strategies than those who do not have the same information. This view is supported by researchers such as Abzari, Ghassemi and Vosta (2014) who discovered that much user generated content across various on social media is brand-related and has the potential to shape consumer brand perceptions. In another study by Jiménez and Mendoza (2013), purchase intentions were positively affected by both the quantity and quality of the reviews consumers read on social media, reflecting the significance of information on consumer decisions. In the case of Facebook, when browsing is repeated, the purchase linked needs can be different at different times of browsing (Rooduijn, Van der Brug, & de Lange, 2016; Stamati, Papadopoulos, & Anagnostopoulos, 2015; Warren, Sulaiman, & Jaafar, 2014). Users visit Facebook with more important purchase-related needs in mind, which often times lead to purchase / voting intentions (Brewer et al., 2015). This study argue that browsing Facebook regularly offers new ideas and experiences to the users, which gets them coming back time after time. Better understanding these differences is potentially important for marketers who are concerned with promoting their political organisations in different social media platforms (Attia et al., 2011).

Consumers on social networks come across substantial amounts of information, and as Phua, Jin and Kim (2017) found out, this tends to have a positive effect on purchase intentions.Raman, Sani and Kaur (2014) added that visitors to company-hosted Facebook community pages come upon, apart from posts by other members, a diversity of marketing messages and other information from the host company. For utilitarian consumers, getting information on a Facebook community page allows the members to fulfill their purchase decision needs of a specific political organization (Cvijikj, Cetin, Karpischeck, & Michahelles, 2013). In other words, according to Sibona and Choi (2006) the more the user browses a Facebook page related to a specific organization or in this case a political party, the more they are likely to be exposed to information and marketing messages that may be useful. Over time, affinity and loyalty to the Facebook page can translate to more votes for the parties concerned. Today, student bodies and political organizations are able to create stronger emotional connections with their customers by offering carefully selected services designed to appeal to a particular demographic, customer or voting group (Magento, 2014). Known as curated commerce, this trend is helping organizations to

develop a more distinctive brand voice while cultivating loyalty and increasing average order values and sales and in case of political organizations, higher voter turnout (Magento, 2014).

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1. Defining Social Media

Researchers such as Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) defined social media as "a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content." It is also sometimes referred to as social networking sites. The main role of social media is to connect participants through friendship invitations and creating social media profiles shared with colleagues (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). Therefore social media allows consumers to network with one another and share information related to their consumption and buying decisions. According to Richards (2012), human interaction is an essential part of consumer experience and social media provide this much needed platform. Wang et al., (2012), added that this interaction influences the pace and advertising on social media especially Facebook. Erdoğmuş and Çiçek (2012) observed that young people constitute the largest demographic group that is actively engaging on social media to send messages and pass advertisements to friends and advertisers directly thereby creating viral channels. Most organizations have also realized the need to have their brand present on social media in order to keep up to date with what consumers are saying about their products or services. Gupte and Eliassi-Rad (2012) noted that in a much as organizations may not be able to directly influence consumer interactions on social media, they are able to shape consumer conservations around their brands. Facebook groups have therefore become a new arena that consumers trust as a credible source to get information, opinion, therefore highlighting the underscoring the need for organizations to build consumer brand relationship. According to Paquette (2013), how believable and trustworthy a medium is has great influence on the perception held by consumers of the information offered. The relationships established on social media usually simulate real life connections of the people who use the social networks and this encourages them to share their private life information (Lankton & McKnight, 2008). As social media get integrated with our

daily life, scholars who have studied the areas pinpointed essential characteristics of all social media platforms. According to Wang, Min and Han (2016) all social media platforms are allowing users to participate, they are open; allow conservation, a sense of community and connectedness. Warren, Sulaiman, and Jaafar (2014) also pointed out other properties of social media such as accessibility, speed, interactivity, longevity and reach. Further, social media enables a two way communication through interaction between users while the traditional media creates and distributes information one way.

2.3.2. Consumer Socialization through Social Media

The proliferation of social media meant that consumers are exposed to a lot of information every day and in such circumstances, the credibility or believability of the information becomes very essential (Seufert et al., 2016). Many information consumers are therefore concerned about how they can evaluate information credibility yet few studies have examined this matter especially on social media platforms. The spread of smartphones has also resulted in an explosion of mobile social networking tools. These social networking tools have revolutionized interpersonal interaction by greatly facilitating communication between users, resulting in the massive surge in popularity of social media sites such as that we see today (Rauniar, Rawski, Johnson, & Yang, 2013). Early sociologists such as Asch (1952) introduced the idea of social networks as personal connections between individuals with common interests. With the advent of the internet, these social interactions are happening online where millions of people meet other internet users to gather and exchange information or experiences on many topics (Ellison, Lampe, & Steinfield, 2007). Numerous online social communities are also permitting consumers to share their individual experiences by writing reviews, commenting and evaluation of others' reviews. Consumer socialization is therefore concerned with how interaction among consumers affects their cognitive, sentimental, and social attitudes (Ganda et al., 2014). Although this largely applied on face to face communication, modern research have sought to extent the concept to electronic interaction particularly on social networks (Luarn, Kuo, Chiu, & Chang, 2015). Through socialization, consumers gain consumption-related skills, information, and attitudes in the marketplace.

Scholars such as (Jo & Polyakova, 2014; Luarn et al., 2015) noted that the rise to ubiquity of social networks has been accompanied by the creation of multibillion dollar industry to provide these social networking services. Clearly, Facebook and Twitter are high profile examples which command high valuations based on their large user bases and growth expectations (Magento, 2014). Increasingly, social networks sites are also becoming a platform for self-expression (Johnson & Kaye, 2015). According to a survey done by Sarapin and Morris (2015),Facebook have become the most important form of electronic word-of-mouth. Another study by (Erdoğmuş & Çiçek, 2012; Freedman,2011) found out that 92% of users read online product reviews; of these, 89% said online product reviews influenced their product choice and this data is significant pointer to the role of Facebook in influencing consumers to make purchase decisions and in the present study, student voting decisions .With the capabilities that social networking services offer including speed of communication, accessibility, and ease of knowledge-sharing, these services have great potential to create unprecedented trends in both businesses and politics (Al-badi, Alhinai, Sharma, & Williams, 2013). Interactions with friends are important human acts, arising from psychological, physiological and sociological need gratification (Dhir & Tsai, 2016). Even on social networks, consumer socialization literature indicates that peers are the primary socialization agents, as opposed to family members (Cho, 2015; Gong, 2014; Pentina & Tarafdar, 2014; Sobkowicz, Kaschesky, & Bouchard, 2012).

While conservative socialization happens between consumers who know one another, such as parents and children, associates, families, friends, and neighbours, it is to some extent different on Facebook since people involved may not know each other individually while on the other hand online social media facilitate socialization through simulated groups among people who know one another but it also involves strangers (Lomi, Snijders, Steglich, & Torló, 2011). Traditionally, peer groups are also widely accepted as playing a central role in consumer socialisation but peer influences on social networks have received limited research attention (Seufert et al., 2016). In the past, studies have found out that consumers have used word-of-mouth through face-to-face exchanges. However, as consumers increasingly use the Internet to interconnect with other consumers as well as to review and purchase products, electronic word-of-mouth has gained importance (Goodrich & de Mooij,

2013; Gregorio Fuschillo, 2015). According to Forehand and Perkins (2011), social networks have become a major source of traffic to e-commerce and non-commercial sites and user generated product assessments have increased through social media, with great impact on marketing. Cho (2015) argued that electronic word-of-mouth, apart from increasing the effectiveness of marketing messages, also changes consumer information processing hence extension of this concept to political marketing on Facebook by University students with far reaching consequences in student politics. This view is supported by Lu, Heatherly and Lee (2016), together with Davis, Piven, and Breazeale (2014) who suggested ways to evaluate the behavioural impact of Facebook on consumer decision making process. Their study found out that unlike verbal face-to-face word-of-mouth, in electronic word-of-mouth consumers are more concerned with the trustworthiness of the service or product offerings. Ellison et al., (2007) added that this interplay of inter personal influence and consumer behaviour is becoming a major concern to organisations and those that will be successful must wade through and understand this intriguing phenomenon.

Balakrishnan, Dahnil, and Yi (2014) found out that as e-commerce continued to grow, consumers increasingly turned to the social media market, to find and buy the products they needed and also as a source of information. Similarly, the political market place has also found social media to be a handy tool to advance their interests. Chen, Teng, Yu, & Yu (2015) observed that as competition increase for organizations, consumers are finding themselves overwhelmed by many product choices and recommendations and consumers therefore tend to share their interests and unique product finds with friends via social media. Although Yan et al., (2016) aimed to explore the relationship between electronic word of mouth and purchase intention, he also highlights numerous useful contributions that could be used in future research such as consumer socialisation done by social media.

2.3.3. Consumer group influence on Facebook

The growth of internet use has increased opportunities for organisations to collect data concerning consumers or product information by including comments posted on social network sites like Facebook as consumers offer consumption related advices to their peers(Park, Wang, Yao, & Kang, 2011). This concept is generally referred as

consumer group influence whereby consumers rely on opinions of others whom they share common interests with when making purchase decisions. According to Balakrishnan et al., (2014) the introduction of group application as a basic feature by Facebook has transformed the way users network on Facebook as members are able to identify areas of common interest and have discussions towards those interests. Košir, Horvat, Aram, Jurinec, and Tement (2016) also added that Facebook groups are being used to link users based on their common interest although they may not know each other. This is supported by Burke and Kraut (2014) who argued that Facebook groups have a massive potential to network users as they exchange messages and even enable political communication due to interactive nature of Facebook. The Facebook wall and fan pages enable consumers to shares their consumptions associated problems.

According to Balakrishnan et al., (2014), Facebook has more than 500 million users and provide huge amounts of data that affect social and political life. Other researchers such as (Lim, Chan, Vadrevu, & Basnyat 2013; Ryan & Xenos 2011) found out that consumers are attached to social networking tools such as Facebook than they are to traditional media, such as television shows, magazines, thereby allowing them to be new leading instruments to propagate deliberative activity via discussion on walls, online chat, information sharing, and networking. A survey conducted by Kaplan and Haenlein (2011), shows that 41 % of participants choose to receive information from marketers on Facebook as compared to other platform such as 18% Twitter, 17% My Space, 13% others, and 48% none.

As consumers continue to use Facebook to engage in political issues, current events information and political news becomes easily accessible via social media. Many social network users participate in political activities online by liking, spreading political content and encouraging fellow users to vote and re-sharing other people's political content that persuade other users to take action on common issues affecting them (Obschonka, Goethner, Silbereisen, & Cantner, 2012). There is no doubt of the fact that social networks have transformed how users and marketers connect (Song, Dai, & Wang, 2016). For example, Facebook draw millions of users, many of whom add the site into their everyday lives and business practices (Buccafurri, Lax, Nicolazzo, & Nocera, 2015). Moreover, young people are using Facebook to connect with friends by adding them to networks of friends, which

facilitates communication, chiefly among consumer groups, thereby creating a great value of information shared on Facebook (Ferrara, Meo, Fiumara, & Provetti, 2012). This new channel of consumer socialization through Facebook is shifting consumer behaviour with boundless consequences for the consumer decision process and marketing communications (Luarn et al., 2015). According to (Gupta, 2013: Robinson, 2005 & Park & Lee, 2009), consumers believe that the information they get on Facebook helps them to make purchase decisions and in this case, voting decisions. This finding has been supported by de Vries, Gensler and Leeflang (2012) who found out that marketing creativity are crucial to ensure positive user behaviour responses to any Facebook marketing and that likelihood to use Facebook was certainly related with the intention to purchase.

According to Bonsón, Royo, and Ratkai (2015), Facebook is unique in that it is organized around its users, enabling them to reach large audiences at a relatively low cost. This has caused a major shift towards use of social media, particularly Facebook as a marketing tool and as evidence to support this assertion , a study done in 2011 showed that 76 percent of companies reportedly intended to reinforce their existence on Facebook (Jalilvand, Esfahani, & Samiei, 2011). As social networking increase social commerce, Facebook will indisputably be one of the most noticeable tools to conduct social commerce activities (Magento, 2014). However, despite this commercial potential of Facebook, there are very few studies that have been done to understand what influences consumers to interact with companies in social media environments (Chen & Hanasono, 2016; Oeldorf-Hirsch & Sundar, 2015). It is however clear that Facebook, as a social networking site presents a unique opportunity for consumers to interact with several companies within one site, with comparatively little effort (Lee, Yen, & Hsiao, 2014).

Scholars such as Burke and Kraut (2014) investigated the role of reference groups in influencing consumer decision and found out that consumer group influence usually arise as a result of individuals who interact with one another and share a common need or goal and their behaviour are usually interdependent. Consumers tend to interact with peers on social networks about consumption matters, thereby influencing their attitudes towards products and services (Park, Choi, Kim, & Rho, 2015). The influence of reference group peers on consumer behaviour especially in

social networks has also been well documented (Lin, Wang, Chen, & Wu, 2016). Peer group influences as a form of consumer group influence is exerted in written messages, such as positive and negative reviews, comments, suggestions, discussions, or experiences. Macafee (2013) also observed that Facebook allow consumers to obtain product information through peer communication at a very low or no cost. Saadati, Tarmizi, & Bayat, (2010) added that the need for information about a service or product motivate consumers to accept information found from others. Consumers want to make good decisions and improve their choice so they tend seek information from peers who are well-informed (Schmitt-Beck & Mackenrodt, 2010). When a consumer has no knowledge and experience of purchasing an item or information about a particularly service being advertised,the information and recommendation from a reference group as may be seen as credible (Eisingerich, Chun, Liu, Jia, & Bell, 2015). This view was supported by Fu et al., (2015) who found out that one may ask friends and family members for information about a particular service, product or brand when making purchase deliberations. Other consumers search online group discussions such as Facebook for information and compare different products or services from different organizations (Pöyry, Parvinen, & Malmivaara, 2013; Warren et al., 2014).

Consistent with this need to find information, modern researchers see this emerging pattern as a significant cause of shift in consumer behavior regardless of reference group identification (de Vries et al., 2012; Grieve, Indian, Witteveen, Anne Tolan, & Marrington, 2013). In a democracy such as South Africa, Facebook give different consumers their own voices, as well as freedom to share information on products and services that enables them to make decisions (Rozzell et al., 2014). Student political parties Facebook pages are repeatedly being used as a marketing channel and their significance as a sales channel for the respective parties is likely to surge. Details about student underlying reasons to use these pages should therefore be investigated (Pöyry, Parvinen & Malmivaara, 2013).Thus the focus of the study was on the role of Facebook in creating a pool of information and how consumers are socialized through these positive interactions on a social networks towards voting for various student political organisations at Fort Hare University.

2.3.4. Voting Patterns and Peer Communication 'on Facebook groups

Facebook has emerged as an powerful medium for political talk , in the process attracting consumers who are interested in politics (Li & Suh, 2015;Johnson & Kaye, 2009). According to Fu et al., (2015) word of Mouth has a significant influence on customer's buying decisions and the use of social media platforms such as Facebook has become a novel form of online word of mouth where consumers discuss and exchange product information. Social media users are able to read other people's opinions, and make contributions in discussion about product or services. Peer communication refers to the interactions consumers have on social media with regard to products and services (Bramoullé, Djebbari, & Fortin, 2009; Sarapin & Morris, 2015; Wang et al., 2012). According to (Churchill & Moschis 1979; Mukhopadhyay & Yeung 2010), consumers usually discuss consumption matters on Facebook and this influence their behaviour towards products and services. According to Faraon and Stenberg (2014), Facebook has become a new way students use to interact with one another and discuss their concerns and problems affecting them. This is a key finding in that it highlights the fact that Facebook has become a major platform used by students in Africa, necessitating the need for research on its impact particularly on political matters. Gupta (2013), argue that due to its widespread reach, social media helps to facilitate purchase decisions. This increasing reliance on social media to communicate underscores why it is important to analyses its impact on our daily lives. Scholars such as (Biswajit & Jyoti, Shankar, 2013; Kim et al., 2010; Wijesundara, 2014) argue that social media affect how people build relationships on the social networking platform. Rutledge (2013) added that political parties now need interactive presence on social platform like twitter, Facebook, You tube, Google plus as they canvass for support while comments on platforms such as Facebook influence the opinions of voters on political issues or candidates. A study by Ludovica (2015) found that favourable comments about a political candidate on Facebook resulted in a positive views about that particular candidate while bad comments led to negatives opinions about a candidate.

Literature reviewed also showed that news consumption positively affects consumer political and civic engagements (Boulianne, 2015; Marder, Joinson, Shankar, & Houghton, 2016; Rauniar et al., 2013). Researchers particularly forecast that this will

increase as more people adopt Facebook and Twitter for communication, posing scientific questions on the relationship between social media usage and public engagement (Bohn, Buchta, Hornik, & Mair, 2014). President Barack Obama 2008 and 2012 presidential campaigns and the Arab spring in the middle east are commonly referenced examples of massive use of social media to connect with information consumers in recent years but research in this area remain inconclusive or findings were mixed (Cho & Keum, 2016). According to a study on 'social influence and political mobilization conducted in 2012, feeds on Facebook users at the time had the capacity to influence voting patterns (Crawshaw, 2012). The study observed 60 000 voters were directly affected by messages that were posted by friends while 280 000 where influenced through social contagion, resulting in 340 000 more votes. Crawshaw (2012) further found out that friends who are widely connected seemed to have more influences than those who were not. Although there seems to be a revolution in online election campaigns, there is still little evidence online campaigns effectively change the level of consumer participation as other scholars argue that other factors such as political interest may be the other reason why people use social network sites (Ciszek, 2016; Ha et al., 2013; Hamilton, 2011).

A study carried by Pentina and Tarafdar (2014) on the impact of social networks found out that politicians usage of social networks has a great sway on the their image in the public sphere. Bright, Kleiser, and Grau (2015), added that reliance on social networks was used in aiding campaigns to increase grassroots support. The study further noted that social media has simplified word of mouth and helps to generate interests in campaigns speedily and cost effectively. In addition, the use of social media has also enabled voters to access information on specific candidates easily through continuous interaction between voters and politicians on their Facebook pages (Gromark & Schliesmann, 2010). These findings show that many people are relying on social media to get consumption related information and in the process increasing the communicative value of social media on how consumers make purchase decisions. One example of this increased value has been widely researched is the Obama presidential campaigns use of "an array of new, incredibly speedy and cheap internet tools" that enabled the campaign to run a grassroots campaign that connected directly to individual voters via social media (Rutledge, 2013).

According to Kaplan & Haenlein (2011), 46 percent of Americans reportedly used internet and social media apps on their phones to obtain information about political campaigns and to share their views and mobilizes their colleagues to vote. These finding underscored the importance of social media to politicians because it enable them to gain support and interact with their supporters on a continuous basis cheaply and cost effectively. Scholars such as Fakhoury and Aubert (2015) highlighted that the growing association between social media usage and political influence is increasingly transforming political campaigns, thus influencing the voting behaviour of consumers in South Africa. In other words, the more consumers use social media, the more they are persuaded to vote for their respective parties. Che Supian et al., (2008), examined the use of online media for political purposes in 2008 election found out that internet sources and political efficacy are positively related, raising serious questions on the Implications of online media usage for young adults. Despite these findings, various researchers came up with mixed results in terms of how politicians used social media to meet their campaign's needs. While other studies reported that the use of social media enhances participation on voting process, (Gerber & Rogers, 2009), others produced contrasting results (Bechtel, 2012; Drake et al., 2015; Ganser & Riordan, 2015). A study that surveyed, 4 556 USA college students who use social media showed that participation on Facebook group positively influence users to participate politically (Cho & Keum, 2016). A research conducted by pew research also found out that almost half of people who use Facebook rely on the social network platform for news although the majority highlighted they come across the news from post by friends on their groups , effectively meaning many of them got exposed without actively searching for the news. The study also found out that the information obtained in this manner is likely to be trusted by users since it would have been filtered by trusted users such as family and friends.

Another study sought to find out whether political views that are expressed on Facebook walls by friends influence their political expression and their likelihood to vote (Macafee, 2013). The findings show that the use of social media to acquiring news has a significant relationship with online political participation (Kent, 2013). In America, voters also use social media to find out information about candidates and as a result a candidate has been forced to align their campaign strategies in order to

effectively target their audiences. In light of The Pew Research Centre's Internet and American Life Project report which found out that, 95% of 18-29 year-olds uses the Internet, and 78% of American people at the majority age make use of the internet daily, it is a significant pointer that politicians would have to use social media in marketing themselves (Hampton & Goulet, 2011). Clearly, social media offer new ways of reaching prospective voters, although the data obtained on social media cannot replace polling as a means of evaluating the sentiment or intentions of the electorate.

According to Lu et al., (2016), the influence of social media on political advertising has been a highly debated issue by many researchers due to the high speculation that social network sites play a significant role in driving voters to the polls. Forbush and Foucault-welles (2016) also argue that this situation has been made worse by the fact that social network sites such as Twitter and Uber don't release information on the amount of voters reached using their platforms. According to Huberty (2015), Facebook is slightly different because in some countries it is known for providing voter registration prompts and Election Day prompts which displayed "I voted", enabling Facebook users to let their friends know that they have voted and show pictures of other friends who would have voted already. Huberty (2015) also added that the "I voted" Facebook prompt button was said to have influenced an estimate of 340 000 voters to vote in past US elections. This finding was corroborated by a Pew Research centre report that recorded that 82% of those between 18 and 29 of age use Facebook, underscoring the idea that Facebook can play an important role in politics due to its massive reach and impact on this demographic group (Lu et al., 2016).

 In South Africa, most millennials have never known elections without exposure to Facebook political news as they were born after independence in 1994. Ludovica (2015) found out that in a group of 10 millennial, 61 % reported that they obtain news on current affairs via Facebook. Due to this massive influence of Facebook, it has become a place of political socialization by friends, family, peers and other groups. Faraon and Stenberg (2014) also argue that peers from the same group often behave alike since it is assumed that peers with common preferences are likely to associate with one other and behave alike for example friends are likely to vote for the same party etc. This is in line with the large body of literature of peer effect on

politics that seemed to have focused mainly on trying to understand questions on whether these similarities in preferences are coincidences or group members are just attracted to group preferences (Dobrzynska et al., 2003; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011; Marino et al., 2016; Vodopivec, 2012). The evidence found also shows that people are influenced by their peer's political preferences as people respond to social pressure and get induced to vote although researchers don't know what cause this conformity (Baines et al., 2014; Vodopivec, 2012). Does it arise because individuals become better informed about political choices through interaction with peers and so become more inclined to vote? Or do peer preferences for political engagement strengthen what would otherwise be weak individual preferences for political engagement? (Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Misati, 2017).

Sussman, Pokhrel, Ashmore and Brown (2007) argues that interaction in social on social media groups has been instrumental in transferring skills, knowledge and the attitude of peers as they interact with one another. Traditionally, this form of socialization happened in person between consumers who are known to each other for example parent and child, brothers and sisters and friends but Facebook pages has changed this phenomenon, and consumers can now talk in groups using internet (Syarief & Genoveva, 2015)

According to a study conducted by Bronner (2013), social media influence the attitude of consumer with written messages sent by friends on social network through reinforcement and social interaction and modelling, as friends interact, they influence each other to like or buy a product or service, in the processing stimulating closer ties with peers or in the case of non-purchase, that may lead to alienation. The learning process is achieved through positive or negative reviews, comments, suggestions, discussion. According to Paquette (2013) social media enables users to associate with their friendship groups by adding them to the friendship networks. Further, according to Hölbl, Zlatolas, Welzer, and Heric (2015) social networking pages has also become a platform where individual consumers get their own voice as they access information on products and services. Psychologists also posited that people learn from each other knowledge and experiences and that consumers can be easily be influenced when the consumers involved know each other (Marder et al., 2016). This view has been buttressed by marketing literature that was reviewed which asserted that interactions in social circles with other

consumers on purchase decisions may positively affect the consumer attitudes, beliefs and behaviours (Oloritun, Madan, Pentland, & Khayal, 2013; Rozzell et al., 2014).

2.3.5 Tie Strength with Peers on Facebook

According to Wang et al., (2012),Tie strength with peers refers the degree that a person is eager associate with peers on social network sites, whether close or distant colleagues. Tie strength therefore helps to explain the influence electronic word of mouth communications (Gromark & Schliesmann, 2010; Huszti, Dávid, & Vajda, 2013; Syarief & Genoveva, 2015). Strong ties on social media leads to the transfer of more helpful information and therefore has larger impact on receivers than do weak ties (Huszti et al., 2013; Marder et al., 2016). It is therefore hypothesised that tie strength with peers is more likely to lead to communication about party services as compared to weak ties and consequently affect the voting decisions of students.

Other researchers have defined tie strength as the time, emotional intensity, intimacy, and reciprocal services devoted to a relationship that affect the nature and frequency of online interactions between pairs of users (Huszti et al., 2013; Koo, 2016). Ties can be strong or weak. In most cases, strong ties are formed with close friends and overlapping social circles (Burke & Kraut, 2014). Consumers are more likely to share close information with friends they have strong ties with and in most of the cases the relationship that exist between the parties will reciprocal, enjoys frequent interaction and more time is committed to nurture it. Gilbert (2012) argue that the closeness that occurs in strong ties ensures that information is shared within the network of users more openly and faster.

Servia-Rodríguez, Díaz-Redondo, Fernández-Vilas, Blanco-Fernández and Pazos-Arias (2014) also examined how social networking brings users closer or if it hinders meaningful interaction or just show existing ties or relationships. Their findings shows that Tie strength increases with both one-on-one communication, such as posts, comments, and messages, and through reading friends' broadcasted content, such as status updates and photos. Most of the research in this area have been modelled by seminary researcher, Granovetter, (1973) who proposed a tie strength model stating that human relationships (acquaintance, loose friendship) that are less binding than family and close friendship but yield better access to information and

opportunities. Granovetter came up with two types of ties, namely weak ties and strong ties. Strong ties were described as people that are trusted and where social circles are usually the same. On the other hand, weak ties were referred to as just acquaintances that do not have access to close information that is usually a preserve of close social circles (Koo, 2016).

The present research examines tie strength in the era of social media with Tie strength being defined as a general sense of closeness with another person. When users feel that they are strongly connected to another that feeling is referred a strong tie; when it is weak, we call it a weak tie. Sociologists have also argued that consumers usually trust their strong ties, and commonly share social circles (Chang, Lin, Lin, Chang, & Chong, 2014; Wang & Chang, 2013). Often, people in a strong ties often share the same values, tastes and interests although this observation may not be true for city dwellers (Wang & Chang, 2013) . According to some scholars, there is a positive link between peer communication, tie strength with peers and identification with peers. Tie strength helps to understand and explain the influence of online word of mouth on social media regardless of whether the friendships are close, casual or even strangers (Balaji, Khong, & Chong, 2016). A strong tie between an individual and his or her peers is more likely to lead to communication about a product than is a weak tie.

2.3.6 Identification with peers on Facebook groups

Identification with the peer group refers to a situation when a person develops we-intentions and wants to maintain a positive, self-defining relationship with a group, values relationships with the community, and is willing to engage in community activities (Brundidge, Baek, Johnson, & Williams, 2013b; Gromark & Schliesmann, 2010; Rodriguez-Gonzalez, Menasalvas Ruiz, & Mayer Pujadas, 2015). More importantly, the connection between the person and peers becomes more important and helps him or her to identify with the peer group. Therefore, a good relationship with peers is expect to cause consumers to seek out and interact with other similar members of the group (Bates, 2009; Bright et al., 2015; Grieve et al., 2013). Again, it is suggested here that identification with peers positively impacts communication about party services and consequently affect the voting decisions of students.

Chen and Hanasono (2016) maintains that the interactions on platforms such as Facebook creates an opportunity for practitioners to market their products to online consumers yet there is little research on how consumers cognitively response and behave towards online marketing efforts. A study by Wang et al., (2012) confirm that social media have a positive influence on peer communication outcomes as peers conform with each other behaviours or by product reinforcement involvement. Lomi et al., (2011) also pointed out that social networks enable users to connect with each other through friend requests, which has made communication easier, especially among peers on social media pages who seek to identify with one another. This new way of socialization has effectively changed consumer behaviour. Kent (2013) found out that social networks sites have readily become public forums where consumers are able to express themselves freely on consumption matters and also access information on products and services that enable them to make purchase decisions and identify with each other on areas of common interest.

Thoumrungroje (2014) argued that consumers are socialized when obtain skills, attitudes and knowledge during communication with friends which assist them to make consumption decisions. While traditional socialization happens between people who know each other, social media has broken those boundaries to include even strangers. According to Çokluk and Koçak (2016), peers play a leading role in socialization even more than family members. Gregorio and Fuschillo (2015) who observed that peers try to identify with their friends and tend to exert a positive influence on one another towards advertising, shopping orientations and consumer decision making. Goodrich and de Mooij (2013) insist that frequent interactions among peers' results in stronger desires to consume more and to do what is fashionable among the group of friends. Other scholars also found out that the interpersonal bond that exist between peers also affect consumer behaviour and on social media, attitudes and behaviours that motivate them to purchase are transmitted through written comments on Facebook walls (Balakrishnan et al., 2014; Fu et al., 2015). The fact that the consumer is under pressure to conform or identify with peers to or like the product or service also affect purchase intention whereas those peers who do not conform or identify with group norms may be punished or excluded from the peer group. The environment where social interaction takes place

is very crucial because it directly or indirectly affect learning (Phua, Jin, & Kim, 2016).

Social media has come across to consumers with more advantages as compared to the traditional media due to its interactivity. User are able to like, follow, get updates and posts from their friends on their newsfeed and the recipients can further share the information they receive, creating a chain of interaction between consumers. The fact that information is transmitted much faster to a large and more responsive audience of users at fairly low cost has caused a spike in social media usage in recent years although studies show that consumers engage on social media for various motives (Attia et al., 2011; Sakkthivel & Balasubramaniyan, 2011; Song et al., 2016). A study that was conducted by Kindler, Solomon and Stauffer (2013) also found that most young people use the internet to communicate with their friends because it is cheap, therefore it is utilized to maintain relationships between peers and to facilitate social activities. Other studies have shown that young people continue to adopt social media to connect with their friends as they interact online especially with between people who share common interest (Sobkowicz et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2016; Xie, Qiao, Shao, & Chen, 2016). In addition, other researchers found out that users judge Facebook pages based on the friends and connections displayed on their pages, pointing to the fact that Facebook users judge their peers in terms of their affiliations to the friends in the real world (Hofstra, Corten, & Van Tubergen, 2016; Lim et al., 2013). Facebook users maintain and nurture relationships with their peers through posting, reading and status updates and chats with friends.

2.3.5 Information credibility

There is no doubt consumer are exposed to a variety of information everyday which they have to decide on whether to believe or if it's credible. According to Flanagin and Metzger (2003) Information is regarded as credible if it is believable, accurate and fair and a consumer perception on these essential elements of information is very essential in a consumer decision making process. Scholars such as Johnson and Kaye (2015) also argue that since most of the information on Facebook is generated by users themselves, many consumers are sceptical about the content and question the reliability of the information. According to Li and Suh (2015)

information credibility is defined as perceptions held people who receive information with regard to whether the information they are receiving is objective and if the medium can be subjectively regarded as credible. Researchers such as (Park, Wang, Yao, & Kang, 2011: Li & Suh, 2015) studied medium credibility looking at the design features, but a small number of studies looked at the credibility of information on social media from the viewpoint of the users. To fill this gap, this study concentrated on student political parties Facebook pages.

The fact that information on student organization Facebook pages is mainly is posted by the users and its reliability is hard to judge highlight why it is crucial to have insight on the factors that credibility of the information that is conveyed on these pages. Many studies conducted on information credibility regarded traditional media and websites leaving a gap on social media content which is largely not verified while sometimes falsified information continue to flood social network sites (Go, You, Jung, & Shim, 2016; Hocevar, Flanagin, & Metzger, 2014; Stoll, 2015). Other scholars such as Park et al., (2011), who examined information credibility on social media considered specific media such as blogs and Twitter and as a result, there is a fragmented research finding which limits consumer understanding regarding information credibility on social media. Further literature search also shows that dependency, transparency and interactivity have been used to measure medium credibility of Facebook pages from a user's perspective instead of design features and these elements were also adopted in the present study (Hocevar et al., 2014; Kim, 2012; Sarapin & Morris, 2015). This study therefore elected to examine Facebook medium credibility from the perspective of users as supported by the literature reviewed. On the other hand, message credibility was tested using information quality and argument strength dimensions. According to (Kubiszewski, Noordewier, & Costanza, 2011; Sandoval-Almazan & Ramon Gil-Garcia, 2014), medium strength refers to the extent or level that a consumer regards a particular medium to provide credible information while message credibility is used to mean how a consumer judges the actual communicated message in in terms of its credibility after considering factors such as quality of information, how accurate and current the information in. Stoll (2015) also argued that consumers are sceptical about the methods used by marketers to market their goods or services due to lack of trust. This view was supported by Go, You, Jung, and Shim, (2016) who found

out that only 20 percent of the people who were surveyed have confidence in the content posted on social media. Facebook scores the lowest of the six social media sites we analyses, with 6% of consumers saying they have no confidence at all in the information such as recommendations, reviews, ratings, scores and endorsements, followed by Instagram, where 4% of consumers say they have no confidence. Next, is a brief discussion on aspects of medium credibility and the message credibility dimension.

2.3.6 Medium Credibility

For the purpose of this study, medium credibility referred to the feeling or perception that users have that the specific medium under investigation is the only medium they can trust to get information about reality. This definition was informed by past research that argued that consumers consider a medium to be more reliable than other media when they depend on that medium to get information (Li & Suh, 2015). Based on this argument, this research posited that students who feel that they depend more on Facebook pages for their information needs were more likely to consider information and the Facebook page as a medium to be more credible. Literature that was reviewed also considered interactivity from a technical perspective although other researchers strongly felt that psychological factors must be used (Brundidge et al., 2013) . This brought to the fore interactivity as a factor that involves interaction, how easy it is to interact and establish rapport. Further studies indicated that users are likely to trust information if they are able to interact freely on the social network platform leading to the assumption that the higher the interactivity on a medium, the more likely it is to be rated as credible by users (Johnson & Kaye, 2013; Kubiszewski et al., 2011). This view is in line with that of Go et al., (2016) and Mouakket (2015) who argued that a medium is deemed transparent when users feel free to discuss openly with others on the platform. Li and Suh (2015) also observed that transparency of a medium is very important to build trust. In this regard, this study argued that the more transparent a user perceive a medium, the more credible he or she deems that medium. The next paragraph looked at message credibility.

2.3.7 Message Credibility

As highlighted above, information credibility was tested from the perspective of those who receive the information, how they objectively and subjectively judge the credibility of the information. Turning to the component of message credibility, the communicated messaged itself was examined in terms of its quality, accuracy or currency. Simply put, information credibility was also assessed based on the content on the Facebook pages. According to Baek (2014) a message argument is deemed as strong if the user who received the message regard it as convincing or valid with regard to the objective it sought to support. An objective assessment of the message completeness and its logic is used to test this assumption. Researchers such as Koo (2016) and Li & Suh (2015) found out that consumers are likely to be positively persuaded by the information and to deem it as credible if there is a positive relationship between argument strength and how the receiver perceives the credibility of the information concerned especially on social media platforms. Argument strength was married to information quality when considering message credibility.

Information quality was defined as defined as the extent to which a used regards information on a Facebook page as accurate, objective and representing reality of currency of information (Li & Suh, 2015). Consequently, information on student political parties Facebook pages was measured on how accurate and objective is the quality of information. Academics have previously investigated four dimension of Information Quality (Fong & Burton, 2008; Vodopivec, 2012) but for the purpose of this study, intrinsic information quality was considered since the study is primarily concerned with information credibility. According to Hashim and Kutbi, (2015), the rising usage of Facebook and its proneness to be used to misinform consumers has made it paramount for researchers to come up with ways to measure the credibility of information transmitted via social media platforms. The ability to evaluate Information credibility more effectively becomes very essential to social media users given than rumours spread via such platforms negatively affect individuals and society. The next section discuses user trust of Facebook.

2.3.8 User Trust

As more and more organizations set up Facebook pages to communicate with their customers, trust antecedents on the social networking platform becomes very crucial (Wang et al., 2016). According to Guinalı, Gurrea, and Flavia (2006), trust refers to the belief a person has or how an individual perceive attributes of a product or service. Scholars have divided trust into multidimensional construct such as honesty and benevolence that a consumers perceives in a product or service (Johnson & Kaye, 2009; Kim, Jin, & Swinney, 2009; Park, Choi, Kim, & Rho, 2015). Honesty is therefore the perception that one will meet fulfil undertakings and be truthful while benevolence refers to the perception that the parties involved are acting in mutual interest that will benefit both parties without malice or negative intentions (Guinalı et al., 2006). According to Ho and Li (2011) users are unlikely to trust or be motivated to use social network sites if they are worried that their private information will be used without authorisation for ulterior motives. Trust is very important in consumer exchanges and it removes insecurity and minimises the risk of undesirable consequences (Guinalı et al., 2006).

In business, trust plays a vital role to influence the intention to buy a product or a service. Consumers usually use social network sites like Facebook to interact with friends and other consumers if they trust the social network site and consumers tend to share more of their personal information increases if they trust a website or social network site (Baber et al., 2016; Johnson & Kaye, 2009; J. Kim et al., 2009: Ho & Li, 2011).This study therefore examined three dimensions of trust namely: honesty, benevolence and competence perceived in a Facebook page. Other scholars such as regarded trust as the general willingness to trust others at the individual level and is caused by socialization and life experience (Johnson & Kaye, 2009; Phua et al., 2017; Warren et al., 2014). Scholars argue that trust play a leading role in influences consumers to purchase online(Corbitt, Thanasankit, & Yi, 2003; Kim et al., 2009; MacKinnon, 2012; Shiau & Luo, 2012). Other researchers have found out that trust plays a critical role in most business transactions to reduce social complexity particularly where there are no defined rules and customs to manage the transactions. This phenomenon has been heightened by the emergence of e – commerce and social media where there is little effective regulation of users and

vendors alike (Aïmeur, Lawani, & Dalkir, 2016; Baber et al., 2016; Nedkovski, Guerci, De Battisti, & Siletti, 2017).

Initially researchers on trust sought to understand antecedents of trust or at least how consumers build trust in products and services by looking at aspects of social media functionality such as usability, ease of use, usefulness and institutional structures like assuarence, normality and feedback (Hwang & Lee, 2012). Other scholars however argued that these approaches neglected critical aspects such as social factors and only focused on activities that happens on website (Hwang & Lee, 2012).However, other scholars such as Warren et al., (2014) categorized trust into two main groups namely trusting beliefs and trusting intentions which specifically measured specific beliefs such as integrity, benevolence and ability.

According to (Chang, Shen, & Liu, 2016) , one of the challenges users of social media encounter is how to verify the validity of the information posited on social media sites and many consumers therefore have to resort to their peers for cues. The cues from peers give an (Aïmeur et al., 2016)indication that other consumers are interested in the service or product and therefore engender confidence in those interested to purchase. Other researchers have noted what they termed "herd behaviour" highlighting that consumers are more likely persuaded by publicly shared or observed information than information they already have on certain behaviour and this information shaped their beliefs and behaviours on products or services (Chen et al., 2011).

Previous studies show that social network trust, tie strength, homophiliy strongly influence how user engage on social media communities (Wang et al., 2016). According to Aimeur, Lawani and Dalkir (2016) trust on social media can be referred as the extent to which a user is willing to depend on others that they trust in order to have confidence in their online transactions. Kim et al., (2009) argued that consumer attitudes are more susceptible to change due to peer's recommendations and user trust of the information being transmitted and the source of the information. Seufert et al., (2016) also pointed out that since most content on social media is generated by the users themselves, the credibility of the individual who is sending the information helps in evaluating the message. Aïmeur et al., (2016) added that if

peers trust the source, it usually results in positive evaluation of the message and medium used to relay the information.

In another study by Aïmeur, Lawani, and Dalkir (2016), on the extent to which consumers trust electronic word of mouth, 90% of people who participated pointed out that they trust suggestions from their close friends or people they know while 70 % said they can be persuaded by recommendations from strangers. Given that Facebook has grown rapidly as tens of millions of users have adopted it to communicate and socialize (MacKinnon, 2012), it is important for researchers to understand the antecedents of trust in the interpersonal interactions on Facebook between people, the site user and the e-vendor.

Researchers such as Seufert et al., (2016), pointed that trust is very important in all spheres of social life where people interact for example in love, friendships and any other relationships. Others such as Chang et al., (2016) described trust as the general state of being the reliability or trustworthiness in terms of being moral, honest, and reliable. Earlier scholars such as Johnson-George and Swap (1982) cited in Ho and Li (2011) developed a scale which measure interpersonal trust of an individual on aspects such as general trust, reliableness and emotional trust. The Johnson- swap trust on reliability involved measuring how users keep promises and commitments, or expectations that people will honour their commitments and can be relied on. Generally, lack of trust has been a major obstacle towards the adoption of social media.

According to Lu, Fan and Zhou (2016), Facebook is very unique because is it able to provide users with a platform where they can have their own voice, but many questions are still lingering on whether people can trust the information relayed on Facebook. Scholars such as Warren et al., (2014) argues that trust is a key factor where people interact and social media complicate the trust building process due to absence of cues that build trust as those found in an offline environment. In this regard, the likelihood to trust is a necessary prerequisite needed to build trust among social media peers. If a user a high propensity to trust, the user is likely to trust other social media users and social network groups or communities.   According to MacKinnon (2012), high quality of information on social media shows that group users are proficient and well informed and have good intents towards each other

towards topical issues. The Theory of Planned Behaviour has relied on behavioural intention to forecast behaviour hence trust is seen as an important requirement belief that allows users to positively feel inclined to transact on social media and in the case of the present study, intent to vote (Fu et al., 2015).

2.3.9 Conclusion

The chapter two above discussed the findings of other studies that have been done to determine the influence of social media on the intention to vote. This provided insights into how online consumer characteristics influence consumer communication through social media particularly on Facebook. The following chapter provided detailed information on the research design and methodology that was used in the study. The population of the study, target sample, research instruments and scales are also outlined.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

In chapter three, the project's research methodology and research strategy is outlined. According to Collis and Hussey (2008) research methodology refers to the techniques that the researcher uses to gather information. Interviews, observation, surveys are some of the most commonly used methods in the social science. Feinberg et al., (2013) argue that if the researcher wishes to unravel in depth information about individual attitudes, and experiences, the researcher would use in-depth interviews. However, if the aim of the research is to gain holistic, more statistically-significant information a survey is adopted. The approach and methodologies used are specified in this chapter. The population, sampling techniques, research instruments, data processing, presentation and analysis are also presented.

3.2 The research process

The following figure 3 is a graphical illustration of the research steps that have been followed in this study.

Figure 3: The Research Process
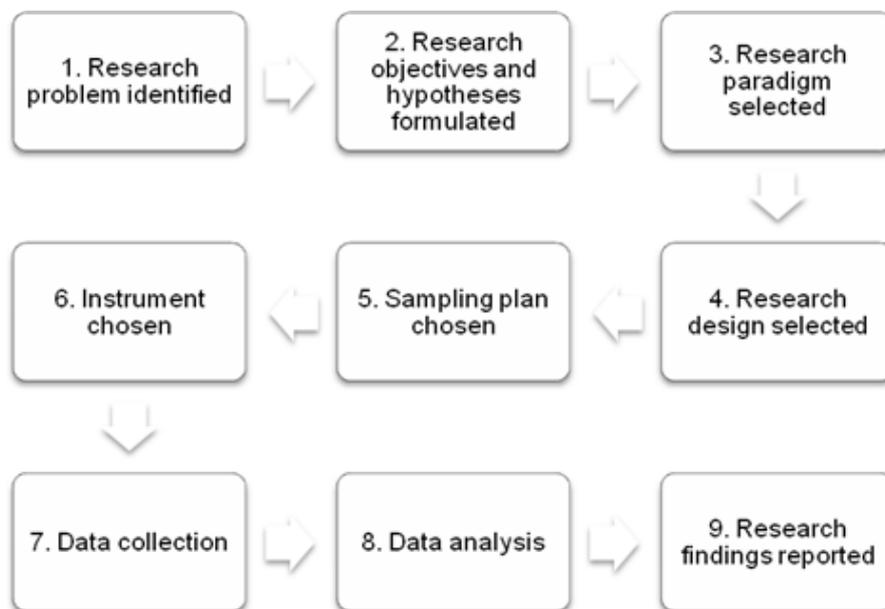
Source: Quinlan (2011)

The section 3.3 below outlines the research problem that is subject to investigation in this study.

3.3 Research Problem Identification

According to problem definition is a highly irrational, abstract procedure that employ and develops ideas toward the goal of refining them into researchable questions. One must start with a broad statement of the general market research problem and then proceed to identify its related components. Malhotra and Birks (2007) also added that this is a very important step when carrying out marketing research and it is a guideline of all the other steps in the research process. A too narrow definition misses important elements while a definition that's too broad lacks focus. The research problem should accurately be stated in order to save time, resources and to prevent failure of projects (Malhotra, and Birks 2007). This study investigated the influence of social media on the intention to vote for student political organisations in the Eastern Cape. An empirical survey of Facebook users was undertaken to understand this phenomenon and this chapter outline how this was done. Studies on social media electronic word of mouth has been performed in many areas for example commercial websites, (Syarief & Genoveva, 2015: Minton, Lee,Orth, Kim & Kahle, 2013 :Ho & Li 2011), but only a handful of studies has been done to understand its influence on political consumers. According to Pennington, Winfrey, Warner, and Kearney (2015) scholars who have studied this area have produced different results to date, which makes it very important to examine the different effects of various types of social networking communication on political behaviour. Baek (2015), studied whether social media mobilisation contribute to political participation and increased participation of citizens in political processes and the findings gave mixed opinions. However, many others scholars have confirmed a link between electronic word of mouth and purchase intention (Attia, Aziz, Friedman, & Elhusseiny, 2011; Fu, Ju, & Hsu, 2015; Gromark & Schliesmann, 2010).

Whilst the use of social media in marketing has become acknowledged as a research theme, there has been a lack of theoretical and first-hand research into consumer psychology regarding local usage of social media in political marketing strategies and practices, and as a result, a lack of proper evaluation of its impact on voters (Aghara, Nwaizugbo, & Chukwuemeka, 2015; Cass,   & Pecotich, 2005;

Ediraras, Rahayu, & Natalina, 2013). According to Gupta (2013), Facebook is used widely by consumers and in the process influence their purchase decisions. Most studies that have been carried out on electronic word-of-mouth focused on consumer purchase intention of commercial products (Gregorio & Fuschillo, 2015; Laroche,Richard, & Sankaranarayanan, 2012; Lim, Hwang, Kim, & Biocca, 2015) but the findings do not necessarily address conditions in a developing country. Although the empirical research cited (Attia et al., 2011; Dobrzynska et al., 2003; Fu et al., 2015; Gromark & Schliesmann, 2010; Syarief & Genoveva, 2015) support the assertion that consumers intention to purchase is susceptible to online word of mouth, studies in the South African context are few (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). The fact that scholars who studied this area have produced different results to date, also creates the need to examine the different effects of various types of social networking communication on political behaviour.

As social networking continue to grow, many businesses are increasingly advertising their products on Facebook at an international scale(de Vries et al., 2012). This increase in usage has not been matched with empirical evidence on the impact of the interpersonal influence on social media caused by social exchange on Facebook and how it affect the consumer making decision (R. Davis et al., 2014) . Clearly, the popularity of social media such as Facebook has also raised important interests about the role of social media in politics and interpersonal influence implications of such usage (Lee et al., 2014). Scholars such as Davis, Piven and Breazeale (2014) conducted a study which suggests that interpersonal influence holds the strongest correlation with the sharing and pooling of resources by users over Facebook. Significantly, this might also indicate that interactions between users on Facebook fulfil a psychological need for example peer interaction and receiving enthusiastic replies or praise (de Vries et al., 2012).

This problem will be investigated at the hand of the objectives listed in section 3.4 below.

3.4 Objectives of the Research

According to Bryman and Bell (2011:79), research objectives and hypotheses provide the guidelines for the decisions that will be taken in relation to the type of

research design used in the study. After defining the research problem above, the topic will now be narrowed down to specific objectives that stipulate exactly what the study aims to achieve. Cant, Strydom, Jooste, du Plessis and Brink (2007:59) describe research objectives as the steps a researcher towards achieving the purpose of the research. The marketing research objectives indicate broadly the purpose of marketing research. Their purpose was to discover, describe or identify causes of the problem under study (Wiid and Diggines, 2013). The objectives are divided into main objectives and sub objectives. The section below provides an overview of the objectives discussed earlier in chapter 1 of this research under section 1.3.

3.4.1 Primary research objective

- To measure the influence of social media on the intention to vote for student political organisations in the Eastern Cape.

Sub-objectives related to the main objective are listed in section 3.4.2. below.

3.4.2 Secondary research objectives

- To measure the influence of Facebook medium credibility on students intention to vote for student political organisations at Fort Hare University.

- To establish the influence of Peer communication on Facebook on the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.

- To measure the effect of users' trust of Facebook on the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.

- To measure the extent to which Identification with peers on Political Party Facebook Page influence the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.

- To measure the extent to which Tie strength with Peers on students Political Party Facebook Page influence the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.

- To measure the influence of Perceived Information credibility on students' intention to vote for student political at Fort Hare University.

- To measure the influence of Facebook message credibility on the students intention to vote for student political organisations at Fort Hare University.

3.5 Research Hypotheses

A hypothesis is a statement that makes a specific estimation about how two or more quantifiable variables are associated. The relationship between the variables must be testable and clear inferences for the variables in question must be visible (Feinberg, Kinnear & Taylor, 2013:55). The hypotheses for this study are presented in section 3.5.1.below.

3.5.1. Hypotheses

H1$_0$: Facebook medium credibility has no significant influence on the intention to vote for student political organisations at Fort Hare University.

H2$_0$: Peer communication on Facebook has no significant influence on the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.

H3$_0$: Users' trust of Facebook has no significant influence on the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.

H4$_0$: Identification with peers on Political Party Facebook Page has no significant influence on the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.

H5$_0$: Tie strength with Peers on students Political Party Facebook Page has no significant influence the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare

H6$_0$: Perceived Information credibility has no significant influence on the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.

H7$_0$: Facebook message credibility has no significant influence on the intention to vote for student political organisations at Fort Hare University.

The model below in Figure 4 clearly demonstrates the variables that were used in this study and their relationships.

Figure 4: Conceptual Model for the Study
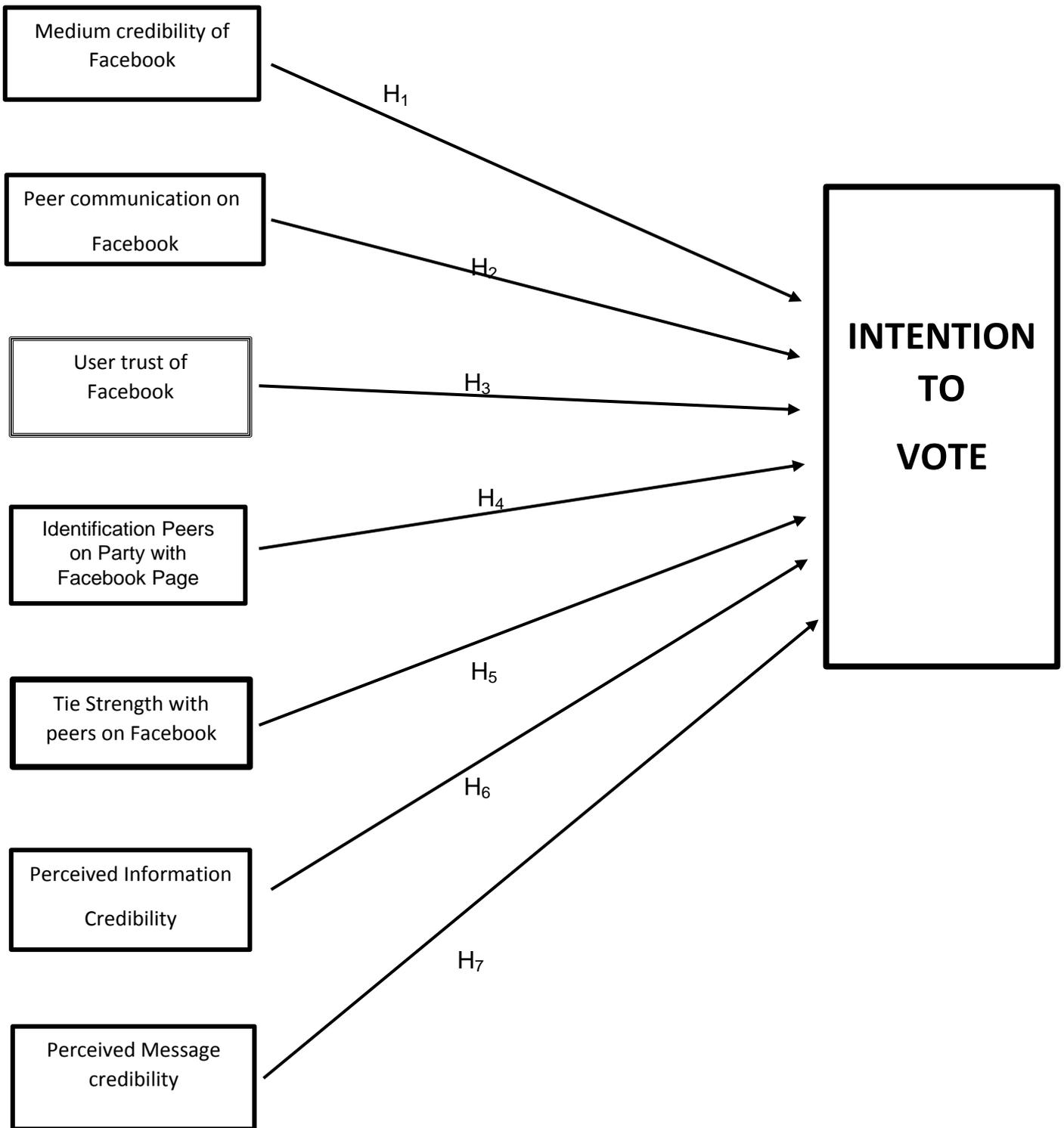
Following the formulated hypotheses and the proposed model, the significance of the study is outlined.

3.6 Research Paradigm

There are two major research philosophies that have shaped research design in modern times namely interpretivism and positivism. The interpretivism approach is concerned with the attitude and behaviours of subjects at a certain place time as a result of specific circumstances (Kashchuk & Ivankina, 2015). On the other hand, proponents of the positivist approach use social sciences to explain objective reality and these methods are used to explain past and forecast the future. However, positivism fail to explain difficulties inherent in future realities (Parsons & Descatoires, 2016). Bryman and Bell (2011) defined a research paradigm as a set of beliefs and principles used by scientists in a certain field of study in order to give direction on aspects that should be studied and how the results of the study will be interpreted. The purpose for paradigms is to determine the benchmarks for research. This study follow the positivist approach. Auguste Comte is credited with starting Positivism in the nineteenth century (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) and has asserted a deterministic and empiricist philosophy, where causes determine effects. The approach has also been centred on directly observing, quantitatively measuring and objectively predicting relationships between variables (Krauss & Putra, 2005). These two basic philosophies lay down the foundation for a research design.

3.7 Research Design

This study is a descriptive research. According to Lacobucci and Churchill (2010) there are three types of research designs that are interrelated in a continuous process. Exploratory studies are usually the initial step. Descriptive studies would investigate tentative assumptions that emerge from exploratory studies and finish with the casual research. The research design itself is a form of carefully developed and controlled plan to carry out a research investigation in order to obtain the necessary information to solve the problem at hand (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Wiid &Diggines, 2013). A research design's major purpose is to ensure that the study will be relevant to the problem and employ economic means. The design also provides a basic guideline on what will be covered in the study resulting in a master plan for undertaking the research (Lacobucci & Churchill, 2010).

Wiid and Diggines (2013) point out that there are many designs and these are usually classified according to the objectives of the research. Wiid and Diggines

(2013:55), further states that research designs are classified into three major type's namely exploratory, descriptive and causal studies in line with the fundamental objectives of the study. Based on the features of descriptive research, this study can be classified as descriptive study. Other scholars like Lacobucci and Churchill, (2010) argue that research can be conducted without a plan but the results that come out may be different from the needs of the user and therefore may not be useful in solving a problem. According to Malhotra and Birks (2007:64), the research design and plan is a charter for the research project which outlines the plan the researcher should follow, in line with the method chosen, and also establishes the steps that needs to be taken. Wiid and Diggines (2013:59), also points out that the basic designs (exploratory, descriptive and casual) can be quantitative or qualitative in nature. Qualitative methods assist the researcher to gain rich in-depth data such as reasons and motivations. On the other hand quantitative methods allow the researcher to collect data that are more statistically significant using statistical, mathematical and computational techniques. This research can therefore be regarded as a quantitative research study and quantitative data was be collected based on precise measurements using designed and authenticated instruments for collecting data. The following sections 3.8. and 3.9 briefly discuss the most pertinent elements of the research design in general and as well place them within the context of the study. Therefore, the stated research design was used with the aim to ensure that the study is applicable to the problem and used established procedures.

3.8 Exploratory research study

This type of research seeks to understand the unknown. It is mostly used   when more data is required concerning a research problem, opportunity or occurrence. This also helps to collect data that will be useful in producing more meaningful research questions. According to Lacobucci and Churchill (2010) exploratory research also seeks to acquire new insights into the phenomenon such as consumer attitudes, and preferences. Usually the data collection methods are informal and lack precision. The observer is usually part of what is observed (Wiid & Diggines, 2013). Exploratory research studies are used to express research problems precisely, develop hypothesis, determine priorities for research, simplify concepts and predict impractical ideas. This is achieved through literature search, focus groups, interviews, projectile techniques etc.

Lacobucci and Churchill (2010) also argued that in the initial phase of research, researchers lack sufficient understanding lack of sufficient understanding of the problem to articulate a specific hypothesis and this result in many explanations for any marketing problem. Exploratory research is therefore used to establish primacies when studying complex explanations. Because exploratory research deals with decision situation where limited knowledge exists, the research design is therefore flexible as it seeks to be sensitive to the unanticipated ideas and insights that were not recognized before.

3.9 Descriptive research

This study is a descriptive one and many marketing research studies involves descriptive research. While descriptive studies may portray phenomena and establish a link among variables, statements relating to cause and effect are impossible when carrying out descriptive research (Lacobucci & Churchill, 2010). The nature and aim of descriptive research is therefore significantly different in exploratory research. Descriptive research is also noticeable by a strong statement of decision problem, aims and information needs since the general aim is to give information regarding specific questions or hypotheses, the study is made to ensure correctness of the findings. This done by reducing errors and increasing the reliability of the evidence collected. Lacobucci and Churchill (2010) defined it as process that seeks to determine the frequency of something happening or the relationship that exists when two or more variables are involved .These scholars further noted that it is commonly used to define segment features, guess amount of people who behave in a particular way and make certain predictions for example through longitudinal studies, panel and sample surveys. The research design is further broken down into quantitative and qualitative research as discussed below in section 3.9 and 3.10.

3.10 Quantitative research

This study employs quantitative research techniques of gathering data. Before discussing the different data collection techniques, the difference between quantitative and qualitative research methods was examined. Wiid and Diggines (2013) define quantitative research as the gathering of information in large, representative respondent samples and the statistical calculation of outcomes . Given that numerical data was be collected, a descriptive research design was seen as the most suitable for this study in line with Wiid and Diggines (2013). This

decision was reached through estimation of facts and given that the results are generalised to the greater East london area.

Quantitative research methods utilise numbers , measurements and calculations to grasp phenomina. According to Maholtra and Birks (2007), this approach to research is the framework used for quantitative research. Wiid and Diggines (2013) further observed that this approach is highly structured than qualitative research . It is therefore easier to measure and scrutinize responses and many people can be included in the sample. Quantitative research also have large samples and use questionares, non probing questions hence fewer special skills are required for the interviewers.This approach however, is criticised for being more general in nature.

3.11 Qualitative research

Qualitative research defined as the collection, analysis and interpretation of data that can not be quantified and potted in numbers (Cant, 2005: Gerber, Nel & Kotze, 2003). It is less structured than quantitative research . Due to the nature of data collected , small sample sizes are used. According to Wiid and Diggines, (2013), qualitative research is used to examine attitudes , perceptions and motivations. Probing questionsare also used to gather more subjective and intrepritive information.This done through the use of specialised skills for interviewing and other tools like tape recorders, projection devices , video, pictures and discusion guides.

Although many scholars like Berndt and Petzer (2011) hailed it for being cheap yet rich in data generation, others have criticised it for it lack of wider application and generalisability. Qualitative methods does not use statistical analysis in their interpretation as compared to quantitative methods that interprets data statistically (Berndt and Petzer, 2011). The following section 3.6 outlined the population and sampling plan that was used in the study.

3.12 Sampling Plan

Two decisions were important in sampling namely the population and the sample. Berndt and Petzer (2011) define the population as whole group of elements that will be used in the research. The researcher made a decision on whether to use the whole population or select a sample of the population to take part. Hill, et. al.

(1999:33) argue that it is not necessary to survey all elements of a large population but only a small proportion or sample, provided that the sample information can be generalised to draw meaningful conclusions about the whole population. Wiid and Diggines (2013:181) describe sampling as a shorter route for investigating a population. The sampling plan fi rst starts by identifying the population to be studied which is followed by specifying the sampling frame. There is no sampling frame in this study. The sampling plan culminates in selecting the data collection method to be used. For this purpose, a self-administered questionnaire will be administered. The Rao Soft Sample size calculator is used to come up with the sample size. The researcher has budgeted for 5% margin of error at a 95 % per cent confidence level. With a population size of 11 818 and 50% response distribution, Rao Soft Sample size calculator recommends a sample size of 377 voters and therefore sample elements will total 377 students.

3.13 Population

Authors such as Bradley (2013:39), described population as considerations addresses key questions such as who represents the market place, who are the players, and who should be the centre of investigation and where are those subjects?. In other words, the population of a study refers to a group of individuals or items that is under investigation (Churchil & Brown, 2004:400). The target population for this study comprises registered students at the University of Fort Hare. All registered students qualify to participate as long as they have access to social media by some or other means of electronic device and be a user Facebook. The University of Fort Hare has six student political organisations namely SASCO, Youth Communist League, ANC Youth league, DASO, PASMA and DENOSA. All the organisations are using Facebook to market themselves to students and have active Facebook pages. As of 31st of April 2016, the University had 11, 818 registered students and 50 percent of the students voted during the SRC Institutional elections held in April. The University is also divided into three campus namely East London Campus, Bisho and Alice Campus. Out of the 50% (5909) students that voted in the 2016 (SRC) student leadership elections, 56% (4091) were from Alice campus and 41% (1860) from East London campus. The results show that support for the parties varies across the campuses for all the parties. Specifically the study will be conducted at the Fort Hare three campuses. This population and sample was

prefered because they produced accurate information and cost less than census. These are critical decisions as they can affect the results of the research (McQuarrie, 2006). The following section 3.10.1 discusses the sampling technique that was used in the study. Stratified sampling was used with the three Fort Hare campuses acting as the strata. Convenience sampling was further used in the stratas since there was a clear specification of the target population. This method was also chosen due to its benefits outlined below.

3.14 Sampling Techniques

According to Ganser and Riordan, (2015) two types of sampling categories exist namely probability or non-probability sampling .A correct sample helps to avoid errors that may result in the data gathered being invalid or misleading. The researcher is also mandated to decide on the sampling unit , size , procedure and wether to use probability or non probability sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The sampling technique specifies whether a probability or a non-probability technique will be used and how the sample elements are selected (Tustin, et. al., 2005:344). With probability sampling, also referred to as random sampling, all the units in the population have a probability of being selected for the sample (Cant, et. al., 2005:173). On the other hand non-probability sampling relies on the discretion of the researcher and the magnitude of the sampling error cannot be determined. Alice has more students followed by Bisho and east London Campus. The University is divided into three campus, and students from both three campuses was be sampled using stratified sampling based on student numbers of the 3 campuses in order to constitute the total sample compilation of 377 elements. Even though East London and Bisho campus has few students as compared to Alice campus, all the six political organisations are active at the campus and they seem to enjoy even support which makes stratified sampling technique the best for the study.

3.14.1 Probability sampling

Probability sampling is a process that gives all the individuals in the population equal likelihood of being selected .The researcher must guarantee that every individual has an opportunity to be selected and done through randomisation. According to Knight and Wilkin, (2010), this method is used to reduce both systematic and sampling bias.

When random selection is done accurately, the sample will be representative of the entire population.

3.14.2 Non – probability sampling

This techniques use individual judgment of the researchers to define the sample (Espinosa & Ortinau, 2016). The researcher decides which elements to include in the sample and chance selection techniques are not used.

- **Convenience sampling**

Convenience sampling was chosen as the best method for this study. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method. Subjects are designated because they are convenient, accessible and near to the researcher. Normally, sample elements are collected in terms of availability to participate in the study and their readiness to provide the required information (Espinosa & Ortinau, 2016). According to Ganser and Riordan, (2015) convenience sampling is used because it enables the researcher to complete many interviews quickly and cheaply than other methods. The next section 3.11 will therefore discusses the research instrument that was used to gather the data followed by the measurement scales in section 3.11.1.

3.15 Data Collection Process

This step involves the implementation of the methodology and research design by starting collecting data according to the established plan (Bradley, 2013:70). Wiid and Diggines (2013:73) contend that the process of collecting data starts as soon as the person who makes the decisions has decided on the necessity and feasibility of the research and gives the green light to proceed. Two general errors are commonly experienced during the data collection stage, namely; sampling and non-sampling - errors and the researcher needs to follow the specified procedures meticulously to minimise these errors (Bradley, 2013:70). It can save costs and time to first explore all relevant secondary data before embarking on collecting primary data (Wiid & Diggines, 2013:74).

Primary data can be collected in several ways and various aspects have to be considered when data is collected (Wiid & Diggines, 2013). These scholars further pointed out that primary data is collected by researchers to address a specific problem at hand.The data does not exist prior to the research as in the case with secondary data. Primary data can be gathered through surveys, observation,

experiments etc. On the other hand, Maholtraand Birks (2007;100) described secondary data as data that already exists and can be gathered from external and internal sources such as sales records, libraries and the internet. All all the information availlable through secondary data is not sufficient to solve the problem at hand, data has to be collected. Secondary data helps to bulid the objectives and provides a sound base on which the research process results can be built (Wiid & Diggines, 2013). Primary data can be collected with qualitative or quantitative research. For the purpose of this study, data was collected through a survey through the use of questionaires.

The process of collecting data will therefore focus on secondary data in the following sections.

3.17 Secondary data

Secondary data is information that has been gathered before for another purposes and not for solving the current research problem (Malhotra & Birks, 2007:94). Wiid and Diggines (2013:75) purport that secondary data from could render meaningful information to researchers about the research method used, the sample size and the scope as well as evaluating the reliability and credibility of the secondary data. Syndicated data, pooled data, databases and journals also serve as useful secondary data sources (Bradley, 2013:74). This study mainly explored textbooks, academic journals and unpublished dissertations for enlightening the research problem and for formulating the research design. Data obtained from the University records and student developer was also used in the study.

3.18 Primary data

Secondary data is usually insufficient to provide solutions to newly formulated research problems. It is, therefore, necessary to collect primary data. Primary data is new data collected to address a specific problem at hand (Gerber-Nel, Nel & Kotze, 2012:87). Wiid and Diggines (2013:88) mention two primary research approaches that could be implemented by researchers' namely quantitative or qualitative research. Both these approaches utilise distinct methods to gather primary data, namely; surveys, observations and experiments. The specific objectives set will assist in deciding on the research approach and method to implement to solve the

specific problem. This study adopted a quantitative research approach, and use a survey to collect the primary data.

3.19 Data collection instrument

A data collection instrument is a tool, such as a questionnaire, used to collect data from the research subjects (Wiid and Diggines, 2013:154). A questionnaire was be used as instrument to obtain the relevant data from the correctly sampled respondents (McQuarrie,2006:115). Cant et al., (2007:109) defined a research instrument as a tool that the researcher will use to collect data from members. Hair et al, (2007:67) further explained method is done through asking questions to people who with the relevant information. Examples of research instruments are questionnaires, focus groups, mail interviews, in-depth interviews etc. In line with Cant (2007:101), this study used the self-completion survey method in the form of questionnaires as a data collection instrument of the research.

According to Wiid and Diggines, (2013:158) this helps the interviewer to explain difficulty aspects of the research and therefore increase the rate of response. Respondents can remain unidentified and questionnaires are cheaper than other data collection techniques (Hair et al, 2007:80).Questionnaires differs from other data collection techniques in that they can be answered by the respondent without assistance (Monette et al, 2005). Collins and Hussey (2003:90) also indicated that in quantitative approach, closed ended questions are used while open ended questions are ideal for qualitative studies. For example, for a five point Likert scale (Strongly disagree=1, Disagree =2. Neutral= 3, Agree= 4 and strongly agree=5), the recording was done as follows: 1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, 5=1. The questionnaires enabled the study to gather large size of information over a short period

The researcher used a self-administered questionnaire. This method of data collection is suitable to reach this particular population and for obtaining the required data speedily and inexpensively (Cant, *et. al.*, 2007:100). The questionnaire included Likert rating scales. The ordinal scale asks participants rate the extend they agree or disagree with statements given on a particular variable (Hill & Alexander, 2000:100). The most-commonly used 5-point Likert scale allows respondents the opportunity to rank the available answers to the questions on a scale given a range of values of 1 to 5. This approach enabled the researcher to gauge the impact of

emotional response to the communication campaigns (a single Likert-scale item). Wiid and Diggines (2013:148) emphasise that a correctly designed measuring instrument is vitally important and impact the reliability and validity of the collected data. As hypothesised, the questionnaire measured six (6) independent variables. These variables together with the scales were adapted from previous studies listed in the table 1 below.

Table 1: List of Scales Adapted for the Study

No	Name of Variable	Journal Tittle	Cronbach's alpha	Author
1.	User Trust	The role played by perceived usability, satisfaction and consumer trust on website loyalty	0,84	(Flavian, Guinaliu & Gurrea,2005)
2	Peer communication, Tie Strength with peers, Identification with peers & Intention to vote	Social Media Peer Communication and Impacts on Purchase Intentions : A Consumer Socialization Framework	0,94 0,93 0,92 0,92	(X. Wang et al., 2012)
3	Information Credibility	Factors Influencing Information credibility on Social Media Platforms: Evidence from Facebook Pages	0,88	(Li & Suh, 2015)

3.20 Measurement and Scales

Generally questionnaires can include different types of questions such as open ended, multiple choice, dichotomous, as well as scaling questions. In this study, the

scaling questions were used the questionnaires to solicit data from respondents. Various scales were adopted to measure the interval level. Hoffman and Novak, (2009) measurement numbers represent fixed measurement units but have no true zero point. The data is continuous; flows logically and there are standardized differences according to Cant (2007:130). Cant (2007:130) also observed that it labels, orders, and uses constant units of measurement to show the precise value of each group of response. Examples of this are items measured on a Likert scale. Bryman and Bell, 2011 also identified many scales of measurement that are created by researchers to quantify characteristics of the variable of interest for every study. Wiid and Diggines (2013) added that it is allowed to adapt an already existing scale in order to obtain a standard measurement. The Cronbach's alpha measures were therefore adopted to test the reliability of the scale. A questionnaire drawn from the scales below was therefore handed to respondents by means of hand-distribution.

The following table shows the scales that were used in the study.

Table 2: Research Instrument

Code used in analysis	Statement number	Please put a cross in the appropriate block indicating whether you strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree or strongly agree with each of the following statements;	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Dependency		**Medium Credibility**					
MCD-1	1	I think my party Facebook page could help me to participant in related activities.	1	2	3	4	5
MCD-2	2	I think my party Facebook page could help me to get ideas about how to approach others in related issues	1	2	3	4	5
MCD-3	3	I think my party Facebook page	1	2	3	4	5

		could help me to deepen my own understanding about the events at the University				
MCD-4	4	I think my party Facebook page could help me to figure out what is happening on campus	1	2	3	4	5
MCD-5	5	I think my party Facebook page could help me to experience enjoyable media content	1	2	3	4	5
MCD-6	6	I think my party Facebook page could help me to initiate discussion with others about the content.	1	2	3	4	5
Interactivity		**When I am using my party Facebook page**					
MCI-7	7	I think communicating with other users is very easy.	1	2	3	4	5
MCI-8	8	I always communicate with other users. (e.g. make comments, give a "like", repost messages	1	2	3	4	5
MCI-9	9	I could always get a lot of responses to my posts.	1	2	3	4	5
MCI-10	10	Other users replies to my posts very quickly	1	2	3	4	5
Transparency		**When I am using my party Facebook page**					
MCT-11	11	I think the Facebook page provide unbiased, balanced coverage of information.	1	2	3	4	5
MCT-12	12	I think the Facebook page provides detail about how the news is constructed.	1	2	3	4	5
MCT-13	13	I think this Facebook page had enough editorial freedom to share	1	2	3	4	5

		information					
Argument Strength		**Message credibility**					
MSCAS-1	14	In general, the argument of information on my party Facebook page is convincing.	1	2	3	4	5
MSCAS-2	15	In general, the argument of information on my party Facebook page is persuasive.	1	2	3	4	5
MSCAS-3	16	In general, the argument of information on my party Facebook page is valid.	1	2	3	4	5
MSCAS-4	17	In general, the argument of information on my party Facebook page is logic.	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Information Quality</u>		*Accuracy; Objectivity;Understandability;Timeliness*					
MSCIQ-5	18	In general, the information on my party Facebook page is accurate.	1	2	3	4	5
MSCIQ-6	19	In general, the information on my party Facebook page is objectively presented.	1	2	3	4	5
MSCIQ-7	20	In general, the information on my party Facebook page is easy to understand.	1	2	3	4	5
MSCIQ-8	21	In general, the information on this Facebook page was sufficiently timely	1	2	3	4	5
Tie strength with peers							
TSWP-1	22	I am likely to share personal confidences with peers on my party Facebook page	1	2	3	4	5

TSWP-2	23	I am likely to spend some free time socializing with peers on my party Facebook page	1	2	3	4	5
TSWP-3	24	I am likely to perform a large favour for peers on my party Facebook page	1	2	3	4	5
TSWP-4	25	Peers on my party Facebook page are likely to perform a large favor for me	1	2	3	4	5
Identification with the peers							
IDP-1	26	I am very attached to peers on my party Facebook page	1	2	3	4	5
IDP-2	27	My peers on my party Facebook page and I share the same objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
IDP-3	28	The friendships I have with my peers on my party Facebook page mean a lot to me.	1	2	3	4	5
IDP-4	29	If my peers planned something, I'd think of it as something "we" would do rather than "they" would do.	1	2	3	4	5
IDP-5	30	I see myself as a part of the peer group on social media	1	2	3	4	5
Peer communication							
PC-1	31	I talk with my peers about my party on Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5
PC-2	32	My peers on my party Facebook page encourage me to vote	1	2	3	4	5
PC-3	33	I talk with my peers on my party Facebook page about voting for my party	1	2	3	4	5

PC-4	34	I ask my peers for advice about my party	1	2	3	4	5
PC-5	35	I obtain information on my party from my peers on my party Facebook page	1	2	3	4	5
User Trust							
UT-1	36	I think my party Facebook page usually assumes the commitments it assumes	1	2	3	4	5
UT-2	37	I think that the information offered by my party Facebook page is sincere and honest	1	2	3	4	5
UT-3	38	I think I can have confidence in the promises that my party Facebook page makes	1	2	3	4	5
UT-4	39	My party Facebook page does not make false statements	1	2	3	4	5
UT-5	40	My party Facebook page is characterized by the frankness and clarity of the services that it offers to the students.	1	2	3	4	5
UT-6	41	I think that advise and recommendations given on my party Facebook page are made in search of mutual benefit	1	2	3	4	5
UT-7	42	I think that my party Facebook page is concerned with the present and future interests of its users	1	2	3	4	5
UT-8	43	I think that my party Facebook page takes into account the repercussions that their actions could have on students	1	2	3	4	5
UT-9	44	I think that my party Facebook page	1	2	3	4	5

		would not do anything intentional that would prejudice the user					
UT-10	45	I think that the design of my party Facebook page take into account the desires and needs of its users	1	2	3	4	5
UT-11	46	I think that my party Facebook page is receptive to the needs of its users	1	2	3	4	5
UT-12	47	I think that my party Facebook page has the necessary abilities to carry out its work.	1	2	3	4	5
UT-13	48	I think that my party Facebook page has sufficient experience in marketing of services that it offers	1	2	3	4	5
UT-14	49	I think that my party Facebook page has the necessary resources to successfully carry out its activities	1	2	3	4	5
UT-15	50	I think that my party Facebook page knows its users well enough to offer them services adapted to their needs	1	2	3	4	5
ICRED-1	51	In general, I think information on my party Facebook page is believable	1	2	3	4	5
ICRED-2	52	In general, I think information on my party Facebook page is factual.	1	2	3	4	5
ICRED-3	53	In general, I think information on my party Facebook page is credible.	1	2	3	4	5
ICRED-4	54	In general, I think information on my party Facebook page is trustworthy.	1	2	3	4	5

Intention To Vote: How likely are you to vote for a student political party after learning about it on its Facebook page?

IV-1	55	Unlikely–likely	1	2	3	4	5
IV-2	56	Uncertain–certain	1	2	3	4	5
IV-3	57	Definitely not–definitely	1	2	3	4	5

Approximately how many Facebook friends do you have?								
10 or less	11-50	51-100	101-150	151-200	201-250	251-300	301-400	More then 400

In the past week, on average, approximately how much time PER DAY have you spent using Facebook?						
0-14 mins	11-50 mins	30-44 Mins	45-64 Mins	65-74 mins	75-84 mins	over 85 mins

3.21 Data Preparation

According to Wiid and Diggines (2013:93) data preparation is the process of translating information collected from the field into information that can be read the by computer software programs. There are many creterias that are used to achieve this and they differ from one study to the another. This process is done manually therefore making it time consuming and prone to errors. According to Malhotra and Birks (2007:120), numerical modification is an important in order to ensure selection of the best technique for analysing data. Three basic interelated tasks are involved in data preparation namely the data validation, editing and coding (Wiid & Diggines, 2013). Databases, tables, records, field selection as well as cleaning are also part of the process. In most cases , researchers use data base or statistical analysis programs such as Microsoft Excel And SPSS. There are various ways in which data can be categorised and aggregated. Straus and Mickey (2012) highlighted two specific ways namely numeric and categorial data. This is the most mechanical stage of the research and before all this can be achieved , there are several stages that need to be followed as illustrated below.

3.22 Data validation

The research instrument, questionnaires were examined and a decision was made whether to make use of them or not. Wiid and Diggines (2013) argue that validation is simply the process of determining whether the data collection process was done effectively and accurately. The major yardstick for inclusion at this stage is that each research instrument was tested through an interview correctly and consistently. The

guidelines for validation such as check backs, reviewing the questionare and interviewing instructions and evaluating the reputation of the interviewers as suggested by Wild and Diggines (2013) were used.

3.23 Questionnaire checking and editing

According to Wiid and Diggines, (2013), this process is concerned with the correctness, completeness of the questionnaires and observation forms. Where it is found to be necessary, the instrument is adjusted and unwanted instruments and observation forms are left out (Shiu, Hair, Bush & Ortinau, 2009). Things that were looked on at this stage and removed included incomplete and missing pages. A well prepared questionnaire helps in the collection of data with minimum errors (Lacobucci & Churchill, 2010). Poor use of literature is also discovered together with problems caused by the inability of respondent to answer the questions. These steps illustrated above were done in two stages according to Wiid and Diggines (2013) and these stages were field editing and central office editing. When editing, missing responses were rectified and it was possible to check if all respondents understood the questions and if all questionnaires were filled. Just a portion can be used when testing the questionnaire but it is important to have the full questionnaire checked.

Illegible, incomplete, inconsistent and ambiguous answers are also corrected through editing. This was done on the field and central level in line with suggestions by Wiid and Diggines (2013). Field editing was done as soon as the interview is complete. This view is supported by Cant (2007) who noted advantages with an interview on the same day in case of an inconsistent and illogical answering, the supervisors can ask the interviewer to revisit the question and rectify the problem. This helped limit the incidents of forgetting the incident. On the other hand, central editing was done in the central office where the remainder of the editing resumed (Davis, Golicic, Boerstler, Choi, & Oh, 2013). These two types of editing are an initial screening process. Central editing is very essential because preparation of results and analysis was done by analysts.

3.24 Data Coding

Coding as a process was used to classify raw data for analysis .The data was categorized according to responses and values were assigned to each class (Wiid & Diggines, 2013). In support, Krafft et al., (2015) added that codes were tags or labels

that were used to allocate units of meaning in descriptive or inferential information gathered during the study. The data were then converted into numbers before they were entered into a computer and tabulated and this ensure that the data was in a computer readable form that can be easily processed and calculated. This process was done automatically through statistical packages (Kashchuk & Ivankina, 2015).

Malhotra and Birks (2007) also added that coding comprises three steps namely the specifying the categories, allocating code numbers to the classes, and lastly compiling a manual. Every possible response must have its class of suitable size that is exhaustive and comprehensive such as "I don't know", "no answer" etc. (Wiid & Diggines, 2013) . An example of allocating codes is that of a question that may ask which gender group a respondent belongs. Males can be categorized number 1 while the females can be labelled as number 2. The numbers are then recorded in a data file. The last step will be to compile a code book that clearly states general instructions on each variable and how each question is coded on the questionnaire or observation form (Berndt & Petzer, 2011).

3.25 Data Cleaning

Data cleaning was done using statistical packages. Errors may occur when capturing data into the computer (Cant, Gerber, Nel & Kotze, 2012). Wiid and Diggines (2012) also noted that most of the errors happens during coding and capturing and examples include values that cannot be executed, data transposition (age 52 may be mistakenly captured as 25) same value entered many times, data not in sequence or completely omitted. Malhotra (2012) also agree, stating that it is the checking and rectifying of the errors that is called cleaning. The check includes checks for consistency, missing values and recording. This process is however time consuming and expensive therefore cleaning was only done after considering the quality of work that was required. Data analysis methods that were used in the study is discussed in the following section 3.13.

3.26 Data analysis

Cant (2007) described data analysis as the process of breaking down the collected information to useful and understandable data. Cant (2007) further contended that quantitative data analysis is usually achieved through the use of tools and methods such as central measures, measures of dispersion and factor analysis employed

when dealing with descriptive statistics. Cant, et al. (2007:89) point out that data analysis involves breaking down the collected data into useful and logical evidence. The collected data was cleaned and captured into spread-sheets so that SPSS could be applied to analyse the captured data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics will be used for this analysis. Descriptive statistics condense and show positivistic data while inferential statistics are used to reach reliable conclusions about the population based on the quantitative data obtained from the sample (Collis & Hussey, 2009:222). Descriptive and inferential statistical tests were done related to the normality of the data; the reliability and validity of the research instrument. In addition confirmatory factor analyses were also conducted. The information obtained was collated in the form of bar graphs, pie charts, frequencies and cross tabulations in order to arrive at useful findings and conclusions.

Generally the aim of data analysis is to convert the raw data into useful information. After the data were captured from a paper based format to a computer format such as MS Excel, it was then put into an analysis package. There are many statistical analysis packages which are used in academic and cooperate studies such as Statistical Analysis System, SAS/JMP SPSS and S-PLUS. To analyse the data the two stage structural equation modeling approach was adopted in which confirmatory factor analysis and hypothesis testing were done. This was conducted utilising SPSS 23 and AMOS 23 software.

3.27 Descriptive statistics

There are two main types of statistical analysis namely descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. According to Cant, Gerber, Nel and Kotze (2012) descriptive statistics are concerned with examining relationships and trends, identifying out layers and influential observations and summarizing data sets. Other scholars like Bryman and Bell (2011) proposed the use of descriptive statistics when attempting to characterize certain groups. For the purpose of this study, descriptive statistics was used to analyze biographical profile of respondents like gender and age.

3.28 Inferential statistics

This involves the approximation of target population values based on sample values through the creation of confidence intervals and significance testing Lacobucci and Churchill (2010). Inferential statistics are therefore associated with analyses with an

estimation or hypothesis testing focus. Most researchers use sophisticated statistical analysis software packages to conduct descriptive and inferential analysis. Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used in the analysis of relationships. In addition, the reliability of the purchase intention model was also tested using the Cronboch's Alpha method. In the sections below, there is a discussion of the nature of the data and results to be expected.

3.29 Reliability and validity

According to Wiid and Diggines (2013) reliability is the consistency of a set of measurement of a measuring instrument. The reliability of a construct determines whether the measurements of the same construct give or are likely to give the same values. Adamson and Prion (2013) emphasized that it is important to ensure that all questions of each construct are asked in the same direction before item analysis can be performed. This item analysis produces a Cronbach's Alpha value that provides a measure of reliability of the tested construct (Zhou, Gosling, Ullah, Kaczmarczyk, & Pearce, 2016). Reliability is considered good while 0, 6 and 0, 8 are considered acceptable. Reliability is considered unacceptable when below 0, 6. On the other hand, validity is concerned with the degree to which a construct measures what it was designed to measure (Wiid & Diggines, 2013). In order to test the validity of the constructs in a questionnaire, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis is performed to determine if the individual questions contribute to the constructs in the questionnaire. According to Krafft et al., (2015) validity is a compulsory requirement for all types of research studies. Kopcha, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Jung, and Baser (2014) listed the types as content validity, criterion related validity, construct validity, internal validity, concurrent validity and face validity. There are many measures to ensure validity of a research including selecting an appropriate time scale, choosing the appropriate methodology, choosing a suitable sample and that the respondent was not pressured in any way to choose specific choices among the answer sets (Meirte et al., 2016).

3.30 Statistical Modeling

Scholars defined statistical modelling as a simplified way to approximate reality mathematically and derive conclusions from the same approximations (Leontitsis & Pagge, 2007). Usually computing involves various different formulae that are useful in performing statistical researches and surveys. At times, it is required to find the

relationships among the variables of a research. It is also needed that that these relations are expressed in the form of equations. These mathematical equation used in statistical processes are known as statistical models and their main purpose is to describe the connection between two or more variables and also do formulate the relationship (DeVaney, 2016) . With regard to this study, after the sampled data was properly differentiated, SPSS was used, which a statistical program offered to the Wits Post-Graduate class to measure information. A measurement model was therefore discussed and a detailed discussion of the elements that were measured will be discussed next.

3.31 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient

Cronbach's (alpha) is a measure used as an estimate of the reliability of a psychometric test. In other words, a Cronbach's alpha is a statistic used to investigate the internal consistency of a questionnaire(Christmann & Van Aelst, 2006; Leontitsis & Pagge, 2007). Cronbach's alpha is a measure used to assess the reliability, or internal consistency, of a set of scale or test items. In other words, the reliability of any given measurement refers to the extent to which it is a consistent measure of a concept, and Cronbach's alpha is one way of measuring the strength of that consistency. The resulting ($a\alpha$) coefficient of reliability ranges from 0 to 1 in providing this overall assessment of a measure's reliability. If all of the scale items are entirely independent from one another (i.e., are not correlated or share no covariance), then ($\alpha\alpha$) = 0; and, if all of the items have high covariances, then ($a\alpha$) will approach 1 as the number of items in the scale approaches infinity. In other words, the higher the ($\alpha\alpha$) coefficient, the more the items have shared covariance and probably measure the same underlying concept. Although the standards for what makes a "good" $\alpha\alpha$ coefficient are entirely arbitrary and depend on your theoretical knowledge of the scale in question, many methodologists recommend a minimum $\alpha\alpha$ coefficient between 0.65 and 0.8 (or higher in many cases); $\alpha\alpha$ coefficients that are less than 0.5 are usually unacceptable, especially for scales purporting to be unidimensional (Pinto, Fogliatto, & Qannari, 2014).

3.32 Composite Reliability

Composite Reliability is regarded as a measure of the overall reliability of a collection of heterogeneous but similar items. Scholars argue that it produces more precise

estimates of reliability than those provide by Cronbach alphas (Zhou & Gosling, 2015). Composite reliability is regarded as reliable if it is above 0, 70.

3.33 Average Value Extracted (AVE)

The Average Value Extracted (AVE), is defined as the extent of variance as indicated by in the construct in relationship with the degree of variance caused by error in measuring (Brzyski, Kozka, Squires, & Brzostek, 2016). AVE is also used to evaluate the convergent validity plus discriminant validity of a construct. Loading of AVE should be more than 0.50.

3.34 Convergent Validity and Discriminant Validity

According to Scrima, (2015) discriminant validity, also known as divergent validity experiments whet her theories or dimensions that are not theoretically connected, rather separate (Sarstedt, Wilczynski, & Melewar, 2013). Convergent and discriminant validity are regarded as a type of construct validity. They work hand in hand to come up with construct validity. In order to demonstrate convergent validity, researchers must prove that measures that are required to be related are indeed related. These two theoretical positions need to be combined in order to come up with construct validity. According to Fornell and Lacker as cited in (Kim & Kim, 2010), all factor loadings should be greater than 0.70 in order to calculate Average Variance Extracted (AVE). However the suggested benchmark for AVE should be 0.50. If the AVE is 0.5 or more, it shows that there is convergent validity. On the other hand, Discriminant validity is used to show the degree to which a construct is different from other constructs by making parallels with the correlation for each construct.

3.35 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The Confirmatory Factor analysis (CFA) is a tool used for statistical researchers as a means to examine hypotheses of the constructs that the research topic is intending to measure and finally provides an empirical basis for interpretation (Guin et al., 2016). According to Brzyski et al., (2016) a hypothesis testing is the main reason to employ CFA. CFA is a logical device which permits an investigator to assess theories in interrogation with the objective of giving an experiential foundation for scientific analyses (Bright et al., 2015). It comprises of a great amount of factors which are detached into a lesser amount of aspects and all factors are connected simultaneously (Bright et al., 2015). CFA generally targets at examining the essential

variance configuration of a group of interrelated constants (DeVaney, 2016) . Most researchers employ both confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in examining data. These two statistical tools are largely the same except that exploratory analysis explores and give information regarding the number of factors needed while confirmatory factor analysis allows researchers to state the number of factors needed and determine the latent variable related. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) can therefore be used to reject or accept the theory used to measure the data.

3.36 Structural Equation Modelling and Path Modelling

Structural equation modeling is a statistical tool that is used by researchers to compute structural relationship between variables under study and underlying constructs (Adedeji, Sidique, Rahman, & Law, 2016). The equation that is formed give basis to the covariance matrix of the measures under study. Upon establishing the parameters of the models, the covariance matrix is then compared with covariance matrix from the data. If there is a consistent relationship between the matrices, the equation is regarded appropriate to explain the relationships between the measures. Usually, SEM is basically a combination of both path and measurement model and this method is commonly used by researchers because it give approximations of the dependencies in a single analysis (Guin et al., 2016). In this case, endogenous and exogenous variable are used. The endogenous variables are also equated to dependent variables as much as they are the same with independent variables. The measurement model is therefore used to show how the variables that were measured integrate to form a theory while the structural model endeavour to show a relationship between the constructs (Scrima, 2015). The study included the use of SEM to examine and in determining the degree to which the factors in this research actually related to each other.

3.37 Traditional Statistical Methods and Structural Equation Modelling

3.37.1 Chi-square

Chi-square is a mathematical test that researchers employ to commonly use to match data that was observed with data the researchers anticipate to get using a specified hypothesis (Leontitsis & Pagge, 2007) . In other words a chi square statistic

is a measurement of how expectations compare to results. Chi-square tests are a family of significance tests that give us ways to test hypotheses about distributions of categorical data. This topic covers goodness-of-fit tests to see if sample data fits a hypothesized distribution, and tests for independence between two categorical variables. A chi-square goodness-of-fit test examines how well a sample of categorical data fits a hypothesized distribution(Leontitsis & Pagge, 2007). Pearson's chi-squared test is used to assess two types of comparison: tests of goodness of fit and tests of independence (Lin et al., 2016). A test of goodness of fit establishes whether an observed frequency distribution differs from a theoretical distribution. On the other hand, a test of independence assesses whether unpaired observations on two variables, expressed in a contingency table, are independent of each other. Standards nearer to zero designate an enhanced fit; and could also be used to openly associate the fit of nested representations to the information (Zhou & Gosling, 2015).

3.37.2 Chi-square Comparative Fit Index (CFI)

According to Kim & Kim (2010), the fit indices in structural equation modeling are used to test if the model is acceptable and if the model has specific paths that can be deemed to be significant. If the fit indices are accepted it does not mean that the relationships are strong but most of the fit indices come from the chi-squire value which stands for the difference between the observed covariance matrix and the model covariance matrix (Hou, Wu, & Du, 2017). This fit index is also used to show comparison between the model wanted and another alternative for example the independence model. To this extent, it can be concluded that the CFI stand for the degree in which the researcher's model of interest is seen as more accurate than the null model. The CFI is therefore regarded as satisfactory if it is 0.90 or more.

3.37.3 Goodness of fit Index (GFI)

The goodness of fit index is a tool used to show how well data align with the prescribed observations. The measures usually sum up the inconsistency between values obtained and the values that are anticipated in the model under study (Nitzl, 2016). These Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) measures are normally used in hypothesis

testing. GFI is also used to examine the appropriateness amongst the theorized framework and the experiential covariance medium and a value above 0.9 specifies a satisfactory fit for the framework (Wang, Xie, Chen, Yang, & Yang, 2013).

3.37.4 Incremental Fit Index (IFI)

The incremental fit index is usually not affected by the size of the sample and values have to be above 0.90 for it to be regarded as acceptable although sometimes the index can be more than 1. The IFI is computed by calculating the difference between the chi-squire of the null model and the targeted model. After that, the researcher then calculate the difference that exist between the target model and values obtained in order to come up with a ratio that represents the IFI (Adedeji et al., 2016).

3.37.5 Normed Fit Index (NFI)

The Normed Fit Index (NFI) is used to measure the discrepancies between assessments made by chi- squire and those of the target theory and the index scores 0.95 it is regarded as satisfactory (Nitzl, 2016). The NFI indices range from 0 to 1. 1 is regarded as the acceptable index. Usually, the fit in small samples is undervalued (Nitzl, 2016).

3.37.6 Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)

The Tucker Lewis Index serves the same purpose with the NFI the value of the indices are small, which makes the model to be deemed as less acceptable particularly when the model involved is multifaceted. In order to obtain the Tucker Lewis Index, the researcher must divide both the targeted model and the independence model with the analogous values in order to come up with Chi-squire (Nitzl, 2016). After that the researcher needs to calculate the differences found between the comparative chi- squires and divide it by the chi-squire for the independence model and subtract 1. The TFI is regarded to be of a small size as it is lower than the GFI and indices of 0.90 0r 0.95 are considered as acceptable for this index (Scrima, 2015).

3.37.7 Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)

The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation stands for the average of the covariance residuals. Usually is normally used for a perfect fit although the maximum

is limitless (Scrima, 2015). Since there is no limit on the maximum, RMSEA is referred to as hard to interpret and there is no agreement among researchers on models that should be acceptable leading to some researchers who have opted to use a standard model to overcome this problem. Scrima, (2015) proposed that RMSEA be less than 0.8 or the upper confidence interval should not be more than 0.08.

3.37.8 Correlation

The Pearson correlation was used to describe the nature of the relationship between two variables i.e. strong and negative, weak and positive, statistically significant. According to Wang et al., (2013), correlation shows that there is a relationship or pattern that exists but it does not mean one variable is the cause of the other. For example there may be a strong positive correlation between participation on an advertising campaign on Facebook and the increased number of young people joining Facebook in the following month, however this correlation cannot tell if the advertising campaign is the reason why many young people are joining Facebook.

3.38 Conclusion

This chapter specifically outlined all the procedures that the study used and adhered to in terms of data collection, data collection instruments and data analysis. In other words, the methodology and research design chapter is the basis upon which the study was undertaken. The population under study was defined together with the sampling procedures that were followed. The sample size and sample elements were also given and data was collected from those designated elements. These statistical tools were discussed further in the following chapter on data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the research methodology for the chapter, where the research design was discussed in full. This chapter provides an outline of data analysis conducted the findings and the interpretation of data. The data was first assessed for accuracy and thereafter was categorised in order to undertake appropriate analysis. Editing included checking missing data, legibility and reliability when classifying data collection. In chapter four (4) the research data collected was reported in great detail. SPSS 23 software was utilised in conducting reliablitity tests such as the Cronbach's alpha and discriptive statistics for aspects such as gender and age of participants. Thereafter AMOS 23 was employed assessing model fit and to testing the proposed relationships of the study.

4.2 Structural equation modeling (SEM)

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was adopted for the purpose of analysing research data collected for the study.This was found prudent because Structural equation modeling (SEM) has in recent years emerged as leading statistical approach to test theory in a number of academic disciplines (Nusair & Hua, 2010). Overall, SEM has serves two principle purposes: (1) it allows for the approximation of a series, but independent, multiple regression equations simultaneously, and (2) it has the ability to incorporate latent variables into the analysis and accounts for measurement errors in the estimation process (Nusair & Hua, 2010). This study used of Structural Equation Modelling to conduct Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Path Modelling (Hypothesis Testing).

4.3 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics describe the basic features of the data in the study. The findings of this study begin with a discussion on the descriptive data. The biographical profile of the respondent such as age and gender are presented in the following sections respectively.

Table 3: Gender Distribution

				Valid	Cumulative
Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Percent	Percent
Valid	Male	194	50,9	50,9	50,9
	Female	187	49,1	49,1	100,0
	Total	381	100,0	100,0	

As observed in table 3 there were 381 participants in total both male and female. Male participants accounted for 50,9% (194 out of 381) of the total sample whereas female respondents accounted for 49,1 % (194 out of 381) of the total sample. It can be observed in table 3 above that male representation was over 50% of the total sample whereby women represented a slightly smaller position of the sample as indicated by 49% of the total sample. Although the findings obtained shows that there are more males than females who participated in the survey, this might simply be an indication that more males were more willing to respond to the survey than females. However, this does not provide an answer to the above purpose as the higher percentage in male respondents does not mean there are more affected by social media influences towards intention to vote for their respective political parties. It may simply mean that more men responded to the questionnaires than females. Overall it could be concluded that the surveys were fairly distributed among both genders.

Table 4: Gender Distribution

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 8-27	308	80,8	80,8	80,8
	28-37	62	16,3	16,3	97,1
	38 and older	11	2,9	2,9	100,0
	Total	381	100,0	100,0	

In the table 4 above the distribution of the participants age is presented. The most represented age group was the 18-27 having (308 out of 381) participants shown by 80%. This was then followed by the 28-37 age group that had (62 out of 381) participants shown by 16,3%. The least represented age group was the 38 and older age group that had (11 out of 381) participants shown by 2,9%.

Figure 5: Age Distribution
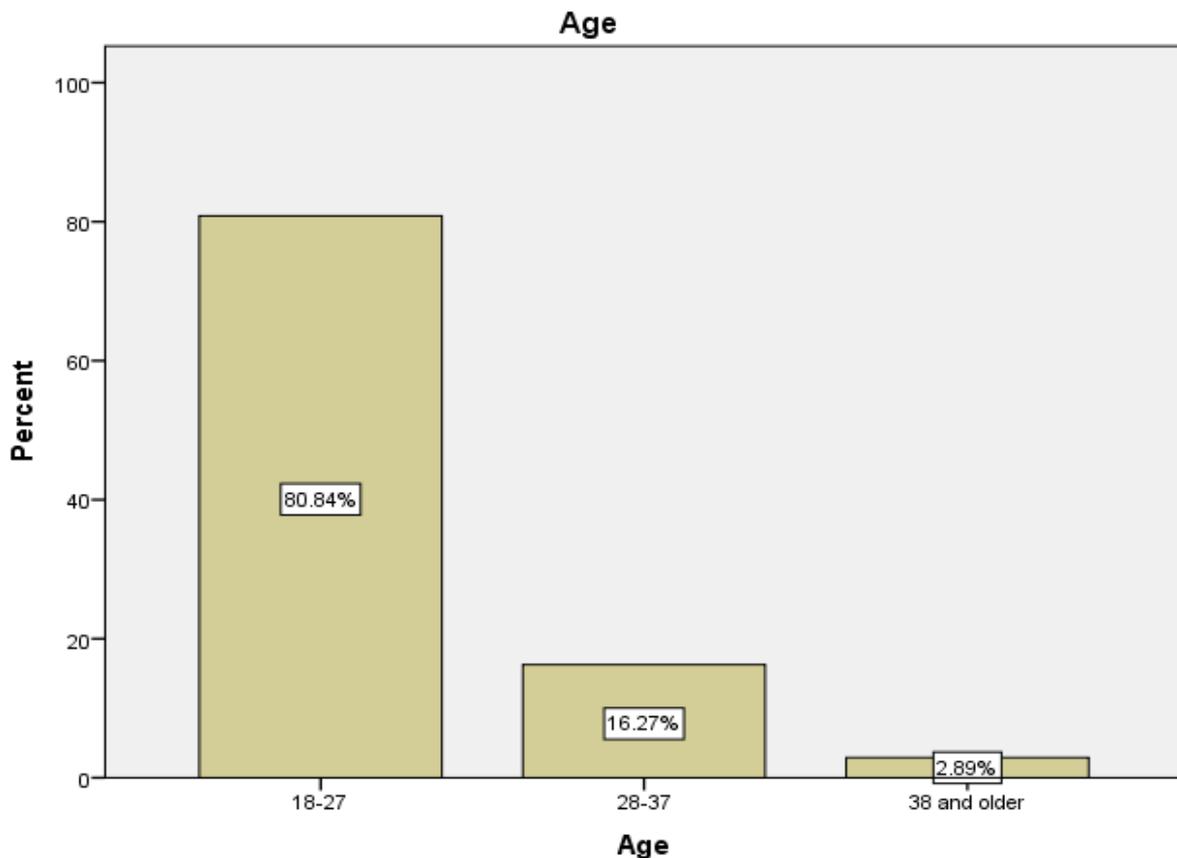
In figure 6 above it was clearly visible that the most represented age group was the 18-27 having (308 out of 381) participants shown by 80%. This was then followed by the 28-37 age group that had (62 out of 381) participants shown by 16,3%. The least represented age group was the 38 and older age group that had (11 out of 381) participants shown by 2,9%. The findings in figure 6 above shows that the respondents between the 18-27 has a large number of respondents but this may just be an indication that the majority of the respondents who were given the questionnaires are between that age group. There is however a strong indication that many young people are active on social networks particularly Facebook as pointed out under literature study in chapter 2. The literature that was reviewed showed that young people are using Facebook to connect with peers by adding them to networks of friends, which facilitates communication, chief among consumer groups, thereby creating a great value of information shared on Facebook (Jin & Kwok, 2014; Lim et al., 2013; Meacham, 2016). This new channel of consumer socialization through Facebook has changed consumer behaviour with great consequences for the

consumer decision process and marketing communications (Habibi, Laroche, & Richard, 2016).

Table 5: Facebook usage intensity

				Valid	Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Percent	Percent
Valid	10 or less	3	,8	,8	,8
	11-50	2	,5	,5	1,3
	51-100	24	6,3	6,3	7,6
	101-150	27	7,1	7,1	14,7
	151-200	44	11,5	11,5	26,2
	201-250	10	2,6	2,6	28,9
	251-300	71	18,6	18,6	47,5
	301-400	80	21,0	21,0	68,5
	More then 400	120	31,5	31,5	100,0
	Total	381	100,0	100,0	

The table and bar graph above indicated the number of facebook friends that potential voters have indicating voter intensity. It could be observed that the number of facebook book friends that particpants of the study ranged from 10 or less to more than for 400 friends. The smallest being leass than 1% of the total sample to the largest grouop being 31% of the total sample.

Table 6: Time Spent on Facebook

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Time Spent on Facebook				
Valid	0-14 mins	1	.3	.3	.3
	11-50 mins	11	2.9	2.9	3.1
	30-44 Mins	50	13.1	13.1	16.3
	45-64 Mins	37	9.7	9.7	26.0
	65-74 mins	42	11.0	11.0	37.0
	75-84 mins	100	26.2	26.2	63.3
	over 85 mins	140	36.7	36.7	100.0
	Total	381	100.0	100.0	
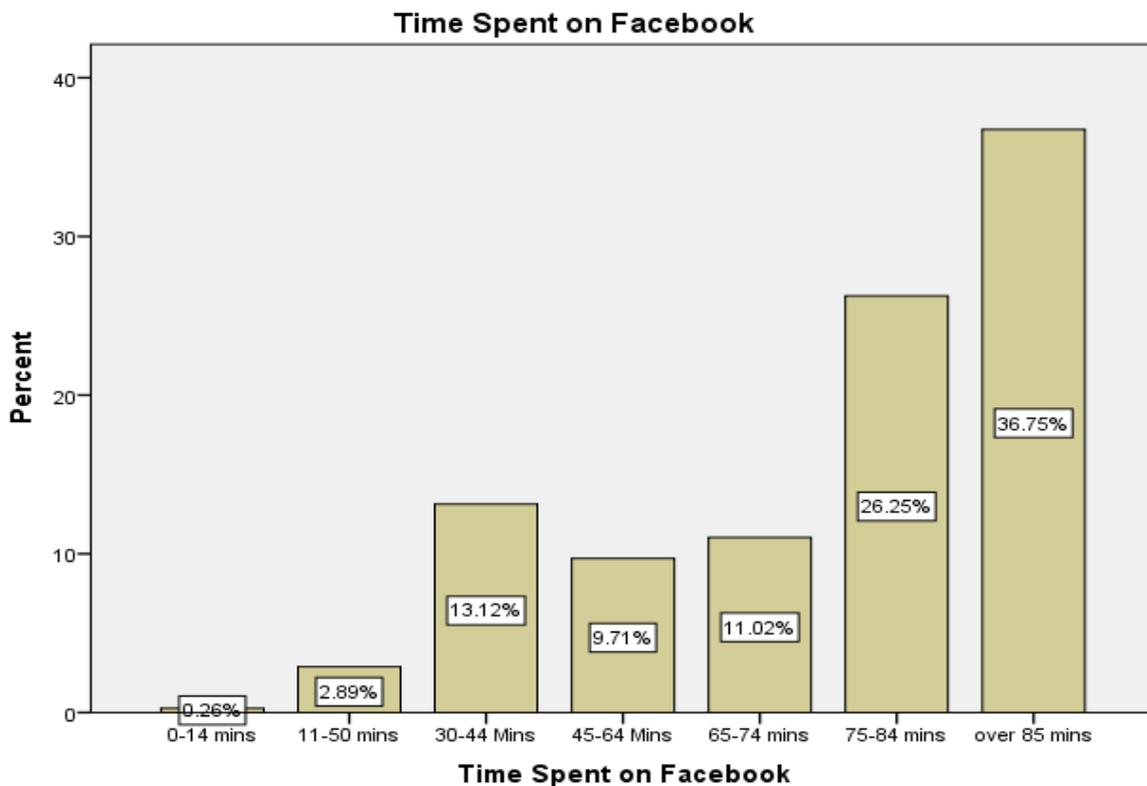
The table and bar graph above indicated the time participants of the study spent on facebook also. It could be observed that potential voters spent anything from 0-14 minutes of facebook to over 85 minutes. The smallest group was represented by

0.26% of the sample and the largest group was represented by 36.75% of the sample.

4.4 Inferential statistics

As indicated in chapter three, inferential is statistics concerned with making predictions or inferences about the population from observation and analysis carried out on the sample (DeVaney, 2016). The following section therefore focusses on reporting the findings of the procedures testing reliability of the measurement instruments. This study used structural equation modelling to analyse the data and various packages of this statistical method will be discussed.

4.5 Reliability of measurements Instruments

Chapter three describes reliability tests as tests which are done to determine the consistency of the measures used in the study. There are three factors that are prominent and can be used in relation to reliability namely stability, internal reliability `and inter observer consistency (Wiid & Diggines, 2013). This study used internal reliability and was tested through the use of Cronbach's alphas. Confirmatory factor analysis was undertaken since the items used in the study were adopted from other studies. Confirmatory analysis is used to verify the factor structure in the set of observed variables (DeVaney, 2016). During data analysis, a problem was observed with some items that were overlapping onto other variables. The medium credibility scale had 13 scales and one item was removed, stated as (MEDC 7), "I think communicating with other users is very easy". Message credibility scale had 8 items and 4 of them had low factor loadings so they were removed. The items that were removed from the message credibility scale are (MSG-1) "In general, the argument of information on my party Facebook page is convincing", (MSG 2) – "In general, the argument of information on my party Facebook page is persuasive", (MSG 3) – "In general, the argument of information on my party Facebook page is valid" and (MSG 8) "In general, the information on this Facebook page was sufficiently timely". Tie Strength with Peers scale had four items and one item was removed from the scale, stated in the questionnaire as (TSWP) - "Peers on my party Facebook page are likely to perform a large favour for me". I identification scale had 5 items and one item stated as (IDP5), "I see myself as a part of the peer group on social media" was removed. User Trust had more items that were removed than another scale that was adopted. These items were states as (UT1) – "I think my party Facebook page

usually assumes the commitments it assumes", (UT2), - "I think that the information offered by my party Facebook page is sincere and honest", (UT3), - "I think I can have confidence in the promises that my party Facebook page makes", (UT4)–"My party Facebook page does not make false statements", (UT5) – "My party Facebook page is characterized by the frankness and clarity of the services that it offers to the students", (UT6) – "I think that advise and recommendations given on my party Facebook page are made in search of mutual benefit", (UT 8), "I think that my party Facebook page takes into account the repercussions that their actions could have on students" and lastly (UT 9) – "I think that my party Facebook page would not do anything intentional that would prejudice the user" was also removed. This could be due to the fact that the statements were not satisfactorily responded to, giving rise to the need for amendments. The statements were therefore removed and factor analysis was run again to measure the consistent of the remaining statements. The same method of extraction and rotation were used and the results proved that the statements are still valid as shown in table above. The confirmatory factor analysis model used is illustrated below.

Figure 6: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model
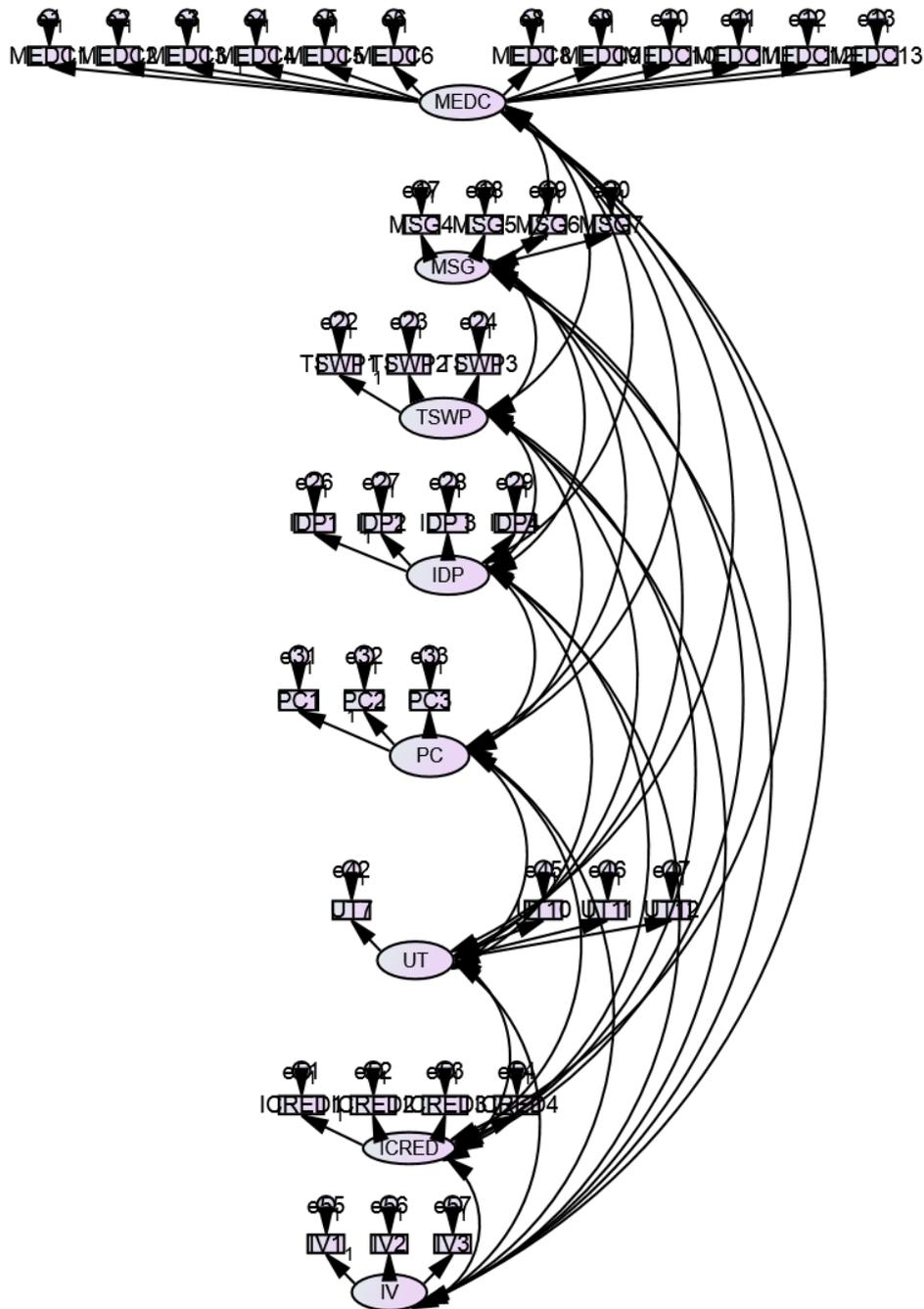
KEY: *MED: Medium credibility, MSG: Message credibility, TSWP: Tie strength with peers, IDP: Identification with the peers, Peer communication, UT: user trust, ICRED: Information credibility, IV: Intention to vote.*

4.6 Model Fit

After development of the confirmatory factor analysis model, model fit indicators were calculated and presented (all highlighted in yellow).

Table 7: Chi-square (CMIN/DF)

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	264	501,628	439	0,021	1,143
Saturated model	703	0	0		
Independence model	37	7063,806	666	0	10,606

It can be observed in the table above that chi-square (CMIN/DF) was 1,143 which was noticeably below the required threshold of 3.

Table 8: GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	0,052	0,935	0,896	0,584
Saturated model	0	1		
Independence model	0,227	0,373	0,338	0,353

It can be observed in the table above that the goodness of fit index (GFI) was higher than the recommended threshold of 0.9 with an acceptable value of 0.935.

Table 9: NFI, RFI, IFI, TLI, CFI

Model	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
	Delta1	rho1	Delta2	rho2	
Default model	0,929	0,892	0,991	0,985	0,990
Saturated model	1		1		1
Independence model	0	0	0	0	0

It can be observed in the table above that the norm fit index (NFI), relative fit index (RFI), incremental fit index (IFI), Tucker Lewis index (TLI), confirmatory fit index (CFI) were higher than or close to the recommended threshold of 0.9 with an acceptable values of 0.935, 0,929, 0,892, 0,991, 0,985 and 0,990.

Table 10: RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	0,019	0,008	0,027	1
Independence model	0,159	0,156	0,162	0

It can be observed in the table above that RMSEA was below the recommended 0.06 proving robust reliability since it sat at 0,019.

4.7 Structural Model

Figure 8 is the presentation of the structural Model. This model was used in the second stage of SEM. The purpose was to test the hypothesised relationships that were later on discussed.

Figure 7: Structural Model
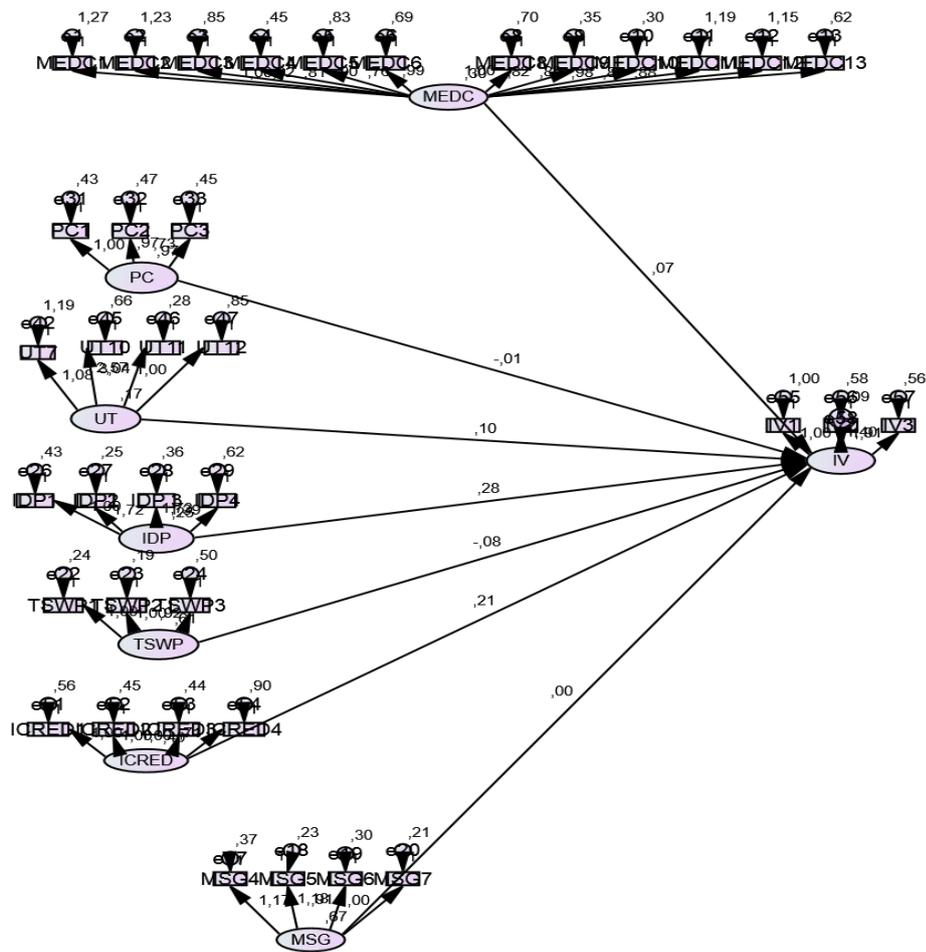
KEY: *MED: Medium credibility, MSG: Message credibility, TSWP: Tie strength with peers, IDP: Identification with the peers, Peer communication, UT: user trust, ICRED: Information credibility, IV: Intention to vote*

Table 11 : Composite Reliability Calculation

Standised regression Estimates (all variables and instruments included)				Composite reliability (CR)			
					mmation of error ter		CRη=(Σλyi)2/[(Σλyi)2+(Σεi)]
				(ΣλYi)²	éi	Σéi	CR
PC	<---	PC1	0,832	5,631	0,308	1,117	0,834
	<---	PC2	0,810		0,344		
	<---	PC3	0,731		0,466		
UT	<---	UT7	0,374	6,180	0,860	2,229	0,735
	<---	UT10	0,790		0,376		
	<---	UT11	0,919		0,155		
	<---	UT12	0,403		0,838		
ICRED	<---	ICRED1	0,644	5,963	0,585	2,464	0,708
	<---	ICRED2	0,682		0,535		
	<---	ICRED3	0,688		0,527		
	<---	ICRED4	0,428		0,817		
IDP	<---	IDP1	0,607	8,720	0,632	1,774	0,831
	<---	IDP2	0,864		0,254		
	<---	IDP3	0,820		0,328		
	<---	IDP4	0,662		0,562		
TSWP	<---	TSWP1	0,848	5,9195	0,281	1,011	0,854
	<---	TSWP2	0,874		0,236		
	<---	TSWP3	0,711		0,494		
IV	<---	IV1	0,342	2,4932	0,883	2,110	0,542
	<---	IV2	0,557		0,690		
	<---	IV3	0,680		0,538		
MSG	<---	MSG4	0,844	11,7238	0,288	0,830	0,934
	<---	MSG5	0,896		0,197		
	<---	MSG6	0,809		0,346		
	<---	MSG7	0,875		0,234		
MEDC	<---	MEDC1	0,437	3,5119	0,809	2,450	0,589
	<---	MEDC2	0,414		0,829		
	<---	MEDC3	0,433		0,813		
	<---	MEDC4	0,590		0,652		
	<---	MEDC5	0,416		0,827		
	<---	MEDC6	0,548		0,700		
	<---	MEDC8	0,547		0,701		
	<---	MEDC9	0,606		0,633		
	<---	MEDC10	0,665		0,558		
	<---	MEDC11	0,443		0,804		
	<---	MEDC12	0,379		0,856		
	<---	MEDC13	0,524		0,725		

KEY: MED: Medium credibility, MSG: Message credibility, TSWP: Tie strength with peers, IDP: Identification with the peers, Peer

communication, UT: user trust, ICRED: Information credibility, IV: Intention to vote.

The formula for composite reliability is presented below:

(CR): CR$_\eta$ = (Σλyi)^2/ [(Σλyi)^2+ (Σεi)]

Composite Reliability = (square of the summation of the factor loadings)/ {(square of the summation of the factor loadings) + (summation of error variances)}

Table 12: Accuracy Analysis Statistics

		Descriptive Statistics				Cronbach's Test		C.R. Value	Factor Loading
		Mean Value		Standard Deviation		Item-total	□ value		
PC	PC1	3,512		1,185		0,722			0,832
	PC2	3,638	3,664	1,174	1,115	0,710	0,831	0,834	0,810
	PC3	3,843		0,985		0,656			0,731
UT	UT7	3,430		1,176		0,362			0,374
	UT10	3,115	3,411	1,327	1,215	0,628	0,715	0,735	0,790
	UT11	3,228		1,347		0,685			0,919
	UT12	3,871		1,011		0,362			0,403
ICRED	ICRED1	4,010		0,937		0,474			0,644
	ICRED2	3,940	3,952	0,959	0,964	0,554	0,692	0,708	0,682
	ICRED3	4,047		0,911		0,530			0,688
	ICRED4	3,811		1,049		0,361			0,428
IDP	IDP1	4,034		0,822		0,542			0,607
	IDP2	3,661	3,693	0,991	0,978	0,738	0,826	0,831	0,864
	IDP3	3,504		1,050		0,720			0,820
	IDP4	3,572		1,050		0,623			0,662
TSWP	TSWP1	3,913		0,952		0,770			0,848
	TSWP2	4,018	3,925	0,869	0,944	0,738	0,854	0,831	0,874
	TSWP3	3,843		1,011		0,659			0,711
IV	IV1	3,782		1,070		0,255			0,342
	IV2	4,005	3,836	0,921	1,008	0,369	0,522	0,542	0,557
	IV3	3,719		1,032		0,393			0,680
MEDC	MEDC1	3,144		1,283		0,526			0,437
	MEDC2	3,121	3,765	1,221	1,176	0,481	0,798	0,596	0,414
	MEDC3	3,596		1,026		0,492			0,433
	MEDC4	3,982		0,835		0,533			0,590

	MEDC5	3,879		1,001		0,317			0,416
	MEDC6	3,879		0,995		0,422			0,548
	MEDC8	4,031		0,984		0,381			0,547
	MEDC9	4,215		0,744		0,463			0,606
	MEDC10	4,370		0,731		0,479			0,665
	MEDC11	3,302		1,216		0,485			0,443
	MEDC12	3,276		1,159		0,423			0,379
	MEDC13	4,381		0,926		0,375			0,524
MSG	MSG4	3,745		1,195		0,218			0,844
	MSG5	2,661	3,163	1,337	1,248	0,623	0,638	0,934	0,896
	MSG6	2,567		1,327		0,658			0,809
	MSG7	3,677		1,132		0,223			0,875

KEY: MED: Medium credibility, MSG: Message credibility, TSWP: Tie strength with peers, IDP: Identification with the peers, Peer communication, UT: user trust, ICRED: Information credibility, IV: Intention to vote

As indicated above in the accuracy analysis table, mean values ranged between 3 and 4 thereby confirming that the data was fairly distributed since these values where in close proximity to each other. In addition the standard deviation values ranged from 0,835 to 1,995 which fell between the recommended thresholds of -2 to +2 also proving fair distribution of the data. For reliability the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the item to total values were calculated respectively. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranged from 0,638 to 0,854 surpassing the required 0.6. However Intention to vote (IV) had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.522 that fell short of the recommended 0.6 but however it was fairly close. This short fall on Intention to Vote could have been caused by some responses that were contradictory maybe due to lack of understanding of this variable or differences in opinions by respondents. Since this is an outcome variable linked to all the predictor variables, it was not removed from the model. All the Composite reliability values ranged from 0.708 to 0,934 exceeding the recommended 0.6 confirming robust reliability of the research data. Lastly, most of the factor loadings exceeded 0.5 proving that the items of the study loaded reliably.

4.8 The Pearson's Inter-construct Correlation Matrix

Correlation provides a single number that describes the degree of relationship between the two variables. A correlation merely indicates that a relationship exists but it does not mean that the variable is the cause of the other (Brzyski, Squires, & Brzostek, 2016; Wang, Xie, Chen, Yang, & Yang, 2013). This study used the Pearson Inter-construct correlation as the statistical measure since both variables were measured at interval level. The table below presents the interconstruct-correlation matrix which was used to check for discriminant validity. Discriminant validity was important in making sure that all the constructs in the conceptual model completely measured separate aspects of the research from each other and this was observed through all the correlations being lower than 1. The further the correlation values were from 1 the more valid the correlations where.

Table 13: Correlations

Correlations								
	PC	**UT**	**ICRED**	**IDP**	**MSG**	**MEDC**	**IV**	**TSWP**
PC	1							
UT	.455**	1						
ICRED	,098	.217**	1					
IDP	.163**	.204**	.179**	1				
MSG	,040	.136**	.127*	.493**	1			
MEDC	.258**	.277**	.187**	.495**	.327**	1		
IV	,051	.237**	.284**	.303**	.159**	.225**	1	
TSWP	.115*	.116*	.301**	.434**	.391**	.358**	,097	1
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).								
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).								

KEY: MED: Medium credibility, MSG: Message credibility, TSWP: Tie strength with peers, IDP: Identification with the peers, Peer communication, UT: user trust, ICRED: Information credibility, IV: Intention to vote.

4.9 Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses were tested using correlation coefficients. Statistically significant correlation co-efficient range between 0 and 1. The null and alternative hypotheses are therefore accepted or rejected based on the level of significance between the variables tested by the hypotheses. In this study, the independent variables were

Medium credibility, Peer communication, User Trust, Identification with peers, Tie strength with peers, Information credibility and message credibility while intention to vote represented the dependent variable tested.

Table 14: Hypothesis Table

Hypothesis		Estimate	P-Value	Outcome
MEDC ⟶	IV	0,073	0,121	Supported but not significant
PC ⟶	IV	-0,007	0,762	Unsupported and not significant
UT ⟶	IV	0,099	0,11	Supported but not significant
IDP ⟶	IV	0,283	***	Supported and significant
TSWP ⟶	IV	-0,083	0,014	Unsupported but significant
ICRED ⟶	IV	0,208	***	Supported and significant
MSG ⟶	IV	-0,004	0,882	Unsupported and not significant

KEY: MED: Medium credibility, MSG: Message credibility, TSWP: Tie strength with peers, IDP: Identification with the peers, Peer communication, UT: user trust, ICRED: Information credibility, IV: Intention to vote

NB: Level of significance (p value < 0.05) and (p value < 0.001)

4.10 Hypothesis Results

Hypothesis testing was done using Pearson correlation tests. Correlation is regarded as significant at the 0.01. The stars indicated in the table 4.7 denote the significance level of the variables concerned. The following are the results for each of the hypotheses that were tested.

4.10.1 H1. Medium credibility and Intention to vote (MEDC and IV)

It can be observed in the table above that Medium credibility and Intention to vote (MEDC and IV) had an estimate of 0,073. This relationship was supported but not significant. This was because it matched the proposed hypothesis that Medium credibility influenced the intention to vote but however the resulting p-value of 0.121 proved that it was an insignificant relationship as it was above the 0.05. This implication was that the more credible a message on social media appears to be the more likely voters would make a decision to vote based on it. However because message credibility did not have a significant impact on the intention to vote it meat

that voters relied on other elements of influence to vote and not only the messages perceived credibility.

4.10.2 H2. Peer communication and Intention to vote (PC and IV)

It can be observed in the table above that peer communication and intention to vote (peer communication and IV) had an estimate of -0,007. This relationship was both unsupported not significant. This was because it matched the proposed hypothesis that peer communication influenced the intention to vote but however the resulting p-value of 0,762 proved that it was an insignificant relationship as it was above both 0.05 and 0.001 used for this study. This implication was that the more the more peers communicated on social media the less they were likely to vote and a possible reason could be that peers could have discouraged each other on social media.

4.10.3 H3. User trust and Intention to vote (IDP and IV)

It can be observed in the table above that user trust and intention to vote (UT and IV) had an estimate of 0,099. This relationship was supported but not significant. This was because it did not match the proposed hypothesis that user trust influenced the intention to vote. The resulting p-value proved that it was an insignificant relationship as it had a p-value level of significance of 0.11 which was greater than both the 0.05 and 0.001 used for this study. This implication was that just because users trust Facebook it did not necessarily mean that they are going to make their voting decision solely based on that.

4.10.4 H4. Identification with peers and Intention to vote (IDP and IV)

It can be observed in the table above that user trust and intention to vote (IDP and IV) had an estimate of 0,099. This relationship was both supported and significant at the (p value < 0.005) and the (p value < 0.001) as indicated by a p-value of ***. . This was because it matched the proposed hypothesis that identification with peers influenced the intention to vote but however the resulting p-value proved that it was an insignificant relationship. This implication was that the more potential voters identify with their peers the more likely they are to make voting decisions based on that.

4.10.5 H5. Tie strength with peers and Intention to vote (TSWP and IV)

It can be observed in the table above that tie strength with peers and intention to vote (TSWP and IV) had an estimate of -0,083. This relationship is unsupported but significant inversely. This was because it did not match the proposed hypothesis that tie strength with peers influenced the intention to vote. The p-value was significant at both the (p value < 0.05) and the (p value < 0.001) as indicated by 0.014. The implication was that tie strength with peers greatly led to voters not potentially voting.

4.10.6 H6. Information credibility and Intention to vote (ICRED and IV)

It can be observed in the table above that information credibility and intention to vote (ICRED and IV) had an estimate of 0.208. This relationship was both supported and significant. This was because it matched the proposed hypothesis that information credibility influenced the intention to vote. The p-value was significant at both the (p value < 0.05) and the (p value < 0.001) as indicated by ***. The implication was that the more potential voters perceive information of social media platforms such as Facebook to be credible the more they are likely going to vote based on that information.

4.10.7 H7. Message credibility and Intention to vote (MSG and IV)

It can be observed in the table above that Message credibility and Intention to vote (MSG and IV) had an estimate of -0,004. This relationship was both unsupported and not significant. This was because it matched the proposed hypothesis that message credibility influenced the intention to vote and the relationship was also not significant. Infact it had an inverse effect on voter intention.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the data analysis and interpret the findings of the results that were obtained in the study. The findings of this study began with a discussion on the descriptive data. The biographical profile of the respondent such as age and gender were presented in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 respectively. The information obtained shows that there are more males than females who participated in the survey. Out of the 381 who responded, 308 were between the age of 18 and 27, followed by those between the ages of 28 to 37 with 62 respondents and respondents who are over 38 years and above constituting a total of 11 respondents. The intensity of Facebook usage by voters was also discussed in this section. It was observed that

the number of Facebook book friends that participants of the study had ranged from 10 or less to more than 400 friends. The smallest being leass than 1% of the total sample and the largest group being 31% of the total sample. Potential voters also spent anything from 0-14 minutes of facebook to over 85 minutes. The smallest group was represented by 0.26% of the sample and the largest group was representated by 36.75% of the sample.

Section 4.3.1 focussed on the findings of the procedures used in testing reliability of the measurement instruments. For reliability the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the item to total values were calculated respectively. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranged from 0,638 to 0,854 surpassing the required 0.6. However Intention to vote (IV) had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.522 that fell short of the recommended 0.6 however was fairly close. The chapter also dealt with factor analysis which was based on confirmatory factor analysis since there was an amendment to the statements. The factor analysis was confirmed to be valid although validity in all the scales.

After development of the confirmatory factor analysis model, model fit indicators were calculated. The chi-square (CMIN/DF) was 1,143 which were noticeably below the required threshold of 3. Goodness of fit index (GFI) was higher than the recommended threshold of 0.9 with an acceptable value of 0.935. The norm fit index (NFI), relative fit index (RFI), incremental fit index (IFI), Tucker Lewis index (TLI), confirmatory fit index (CFI) were higher than or close to the recommended threshold of 0.9 with an acceptable values of 0.935, 0,929, 0,892, 0,991, 0,985 and 0,990. RMSEA was also below the recommended 0.06 proving robust reliability since it sat at 0,019.The diagram representing the structural Model and confirmatory factor analysis were also included in this chapter. These models were used in the second stage of the structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to test the hypothesised relationships that were later on discussed. Hypothesis testing was done using Pearson interconstruct-correlation matrix to check for discriminant validity.

The first hypothesis that measured the relationship between Medium credibility and Intention to vote (MEDC and IV) had an estimate of 0,073 which means this relationship was supported but not significant. This was because it matched the proposed hypothesis that Medium credibility influenced the intention to vote but

however the resulting p-value of 0.121 proved that it was an insignificant relationship as it was above the 0.05. The second hypothesis measured the relationship between Peer communication and Intention to vote (PC and IV) and had an estimate of -0,007. This relationship was both unsupported not significant. The third hypothesis sought to find the link between user trust and intention to vote (UT and IV) and had an estimate of 0,099. This relationship was supported but not significant because it did not match the proposed hypothesis that user trust influenced the intention to vote. The fourth hypothesis dealt with the relationship between identification with peers and intention to vote (IDP and IV), which had an estimate of 0,283. This relationship was both supported and significant. The fifth hypothesis regarded the relationship between Tie Strength with peers and intention to vote (TSWP and IV) which had an estimate of -0,083. This relationship was unsupported but significant inversely. The implication was that tie strength with peers greatly led to voters not potentially voting. The sixth hypothesis measured the relationship between information credibility and intention to vote (ICRED and IV) which had an estimate of 0.208. This relationship was both supported and significant and based on this outcome it can be argued that more potential voters perceive information of social media platforms such as Facebook to be credible and they are likely going to vote based on the information they get on Facebook. The last hypothesis dealt with the relationship between Message credibility and Intention to vote (MSG and IV) which had an estimate of -0,004. This relationship was both unsupported but not significant. The following chapter five outlined the summary of the study, its limitations and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

Chapter one of the studies provides the foundation for the study. It included the objectives, design, methodology and benefits of the study in chapter two. This was followed by an in-depth discussion of literature review that laid down the theoretical and empirical review of the study. Chapter three dealt with the methodology and the data collection strategy used in the study. Data analysis and interpretation was discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter five provides essentially an overview of the study that includes summaries for literature review in section 5.2, objectives in 5.2.1, methodology in section 5.2.2. The limitations of the study are discussed in 5.3 followed by recommendations and conclusion in chapter 5.4 and 5.5 respectively. Next is a brief discussion of the study overview as discussed in the above paragraph.

5.2 Overview of the study

The Internet, particularly social media have changed how consumers and marketers communicate as consumers on social networks are exposed to large amounts of information (Boulianne, 2015).The influence of reference group peers on consumer behaviour especially in social networks has also been well documented (Crawshaw, 2012; Hofstra et al., 2016; Meacham, 2016; Momoc, 2013). This study sought to understand how social media affect the intention to vote in the context of electronic word of mouth. A survey was done on Facebook. The main objectives included measuring the influence of predictor variables such as medium credibility, message credibility, tie strength with peers, identification with the peers, peer communication, user trust, information credibilit on the intention to vote.

Researchers such as Kaplan and Haenlein , (2011) defined social media as "a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content.". This study was based on the Plan behaviour Theory (Ajzen, 1985) . Ajzen's theory posits that a change in behaviour is caused by attitude, which is itself caused by change in beliefs due to reliable sources of information. The theory posits that if people view the recommended behaviour as constructive (attitude) and if they

feel that other people who are important to them would be happy if they perform the behaviour (subjective norm), this will motivate the doer to perform and it increases their likelihood to actually do it.

The proliferation of social media meant that consumers are exposed to a lot of information every day and in such circumstances, the credibility or believability of the information becomes very essential (Seufert et al., 2016). Many information consumers are therefore concerned about how they can evaluate information credibility yet few studies have examined this matter especially on social media platforms. The spread of smartphones has also resulted in an explosion of mobile social networking tools (Attia et al., 2011). These social networking tools have revolutionized interpersonal interaction by greatly facilitating communication between users, leading to the popularity of social network sites such as that we see today (Al-kandari & Hasanen, 2012; Boulianne, 2015).

Peer communication referred to the interactions consumers have on social media with regard to products and services (Bramoullé, Djebbari, & Fortin, 2009; Sarapin & Morris, 2015; Wang et al., 2012). According to Boulianne, (2015), consumers usually discuss consumption matters on social media sites such as Facebook and this influence their behaviour towards products and services. According to Wang et al., (2012),Tie strength with peers refers to the degree that a person is eager to associate with peers on social network sites, whether close or distant colleagues. Strong ties on social media leads to the transfer of more helpful information and therefore has larger impact on receivers than do weak ties (Huszti et al., 2013; Marder et al., 2016). On the other hand, Identification with the peer group refers to a situation when a person develops we-intentions and wants to maintain a positive, self-defining relationship with a group, values relationships with the community, and is willing to engage in community activities (Brundidge et al., 2013b; Gromark & Schliesmann, 2010; Rodriguez-Gonzalez et al., 2015). Scholars such as Li and Suh (2015) defined information credibility as the perceptions of information receivers in terms of whether the information they are receiving is objective and if the medium can be subjectively regarded as credible. Medium credibility also referred to the feeling or perception that users have that the specific medium under investigation is the only medium they can trust to get information about reality. Turning to the

component of message credibility, the communicated messaged itself was examined in terms of its quality, accuracy or currency. According to Guinalı, Gurrea and Flavia (2006), trust refers to the belief that a person has or how an individual perceive attributes of a product or service. Scholars have divided trust into multidimensional construct such as honesty and benevolence that a consumers perceives in a product or service.

Lovari & Parisi (2015) also discovered consumers on Facebook pages encounter a variety of marketing messages and other information from the host company. This allowed members to fulfil their information needs related to a purchase or voting decision of a specific brand (Cvijikj, Cetin, Karpischeck, & Michahelles, 2013). In other words, according to (Sarapin & Morris, 2015) the more the user browses a Facebook page related to a specific party, the more likely he/she is to be exposed to information and marketing messages that may be useful. Previous researchers such as Wang, Min, & Han, (2016) has shown that information obtained in at online social network affects the consumer's decision making process. Consumers therefore tend to interact with peers on social networks about consumption matters, thereby influencing their attitudes towards products and services.

5.2.1 Study objectives

The main objective of the study was to measure the influence of social media on the intention to vote for student political organisations in the Eastern Cape. Sub-objectives related to the main objective are listed below.

- To measure the influence of Facebook medium credibility on students intention to vote for student political organisations at Fort Hare University.
- To measure the influence of Peer communication on Facebook on the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.
- To measure the effect of users' trust of Facebook on the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.
- To measure the extent to which Identification with peers on Political Party Facebook Page influence the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.

- To measure the extent to which Tie strength with Peers on students Political Party Facebook Page influence the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare.
- To measure the influence of Perceived Information credibility on students' intention to vote for student political at Fort Hare University.
- To measure the influence of Facebook message credibility on the students intention to vote for student political organisations at Fort Hare University.

5.2.2 Summary of Methodology

The study started with establishing the research process which was adopted from Quinlan (2011). The process was broken down into nine basic steps with the first step being research problem identification followed by the objectives and hypotheses. The third step discusses the research paradigm and then the design and sampling plan of the study respectively. The process also includes the research instrument, data collection, analysis and the findings of the study (Krafft et al., 2015). This section will briefly look into this broken down stages. Espinosa and Ortinau (2016) argues that the research problem should accurately be stated in order to save time, resources and to prevent failure of projects.

This study investigated the influence of social media on the intention to vote for student political organisations in the Eastern Cape. This problem arose from the fact that studies on social media electronic word of mouth has been performed in many areas for example commercial websites, (Syarief & Genoveva, 2015: Minton, Lee,Orth, Kim & Kahle, 2013 :Ho & Li 2011), but only a handful of studies has been done to understand its influence on political consumers. According to Pennington, Winfrey, Warner, and Kearney (2015) scholars who studied this area also produced different results to date, which made it very important to examine the different effects of various types of social networking communication on political behaviour. The increase in usage of social media has also not been matched with empirical evidence on the impact of the interpersonal influence of social media on consumer making decision (R. Davis et al., 2014). Clearly, this raised important questions about the role of social media in politics and interpersonal influence implications of such usage (Lee et al., 2014) .

An empirical survey of Facebook users was undertaken to understand this phenomenon. This study followed the positivist approach centred on directly observing, quantitatively measuring and objectively predicting relationships between variables (Krauss & Putra, 2005). Given that numerical data was collected and based on the features of descriptive research, this study can also be classified as both descriptive and quantitative research study and quantitative data was collected based on precise measurements using designed and authenticated instruments for collecting data. The target population for this study comprised registered students at the University of Fort Hare. All registered students qualified to participate as long as they have access to social media by some or other means of electronic device and be a Facebook User. There was no sampling frame in this study. The sampling plan culminated in selecting the data collection method to be used. For that purpose, a self-administered questionnaire was administered. The Rao Soft Sample size calculator was used to come up with the sample size. With a population size of 11 818 and 50% response distribution, Rao Soft Sample size calculator recommended a sample size of 377 voters and therefore sample elements were a total 377 students. The University is divided into three campus, and students from both three campuses was be sampled using stratified sampling based on student numbers of the 3 campuses in order to constitute the total sample compilation of 377 elements. Convenience sampling was further used in the stratas.

The study also mainly explored textbooks, academic journals and unpublished dissertations for enlightening the research problem and for formulating the research design. Data obtained from the University records and student developer was also used. Primary data was collected using a questionnaire as an instrument to obtain the relevant data from the sampled respondents. The questionnaire included Likert rating scale which asked participants to indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree with statements given on a particular variable. As hypothesised, the questionnaire measured six (6) independent variables using scales that were adapted from previous studies. After receiving a data collection instrument from from the field, an examination of the data was done. This stage involved data validation, questionaire checking and editing, data coding, data cleaning. To analyse the data the two stage structural equation modeling approach was adopted in which confimatory factor analysis and hypothesis testing was conducted. This was done

ulitising SPSS 23 and AMOS 23 software. The data analysis strategy involved both descriptive and inferential statistics techniques. Descriptive statistics examined the age, gender of the respondents, voter Facebook usage intensity while inferential statistics were used for confirmatory analysis. The study also undertook correlation and reliability tests.

5.3. Conclusions and Recommendation for objectives

In section 5.3.1 to 5.3.8 the recommendations regarding the study objectives are discussed. These recommendations were outlined based on the findings, followed by recommendations for future research.

5.3.1 Conclusion and recommendations for secondary Objective one

The first secondary objective of the study was to measure the influence of Facebook medium credibility on students' intention to vote for student political organisations at Fort Hare University. The findings show that there is a relationship between medium credibility and intention to vote but the relationship is not significant. This was because it matched the proposed hypothesis that Medium credibility influenced the intention to vote but however the resulting p-value of 0.121 proved that it was an insignificant relationship as it was above the 0.05. This implication was that the more credible users view a medium such as Facebook, the more they are likely to make a decision to vote based on it.The literature reviewd had posited that medium credibility is significant in consumer decision making especially in this area of user generated content on social media (Brundidge et al., 2013; Gilbert, 2012). This study did not depart from this crucial findings although the relationship was found not be significant when it comes to its impact on the intention to vote. However because medium credibility did not have a significant impact on the intention to vote it means that voters may rely on other elements of influence to vote and not only on the perceived credibility of the medium used to transmit or share information.

In light of these findings related to the first secondary objective, it is recommended that marketing practitioners and campaign managers pay attention to the credibility of the medium they use when designing marketing communications strategies. Medium credibility had been found to play positive role in influencing intention to vote, however it may not be useful for them to focus on the credibility of the medium alone. The findings show that medium credibility as a factor in isolation has an

insignificant impact on the intention to vote which means they need to be cognisant of other influences that may that affect intention to vote.

5.3.2 Conclusion and recommendations for secondary objective two

The second secondary objective was to measure the influence of Peer communication on Facebook on the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare. This relationship was both unsupported not significant. This was because it matched the proposed hypothesis that Medium credibility influenced the intention to vote but however the resulting p-value of 0,762 proved that it was an insignificant relationship as it was above both 0.05 and 0.001 used for this study. The implication was that the more peers communicated on social media the less they were likely to vote and a possible reason could be that peers could have discouraged each other on social media.

Previous studies had argued that socialisation theories could be applied to social media settings (Alassiri, 2014; Matzler, Strobl, Stokburger-Sauer, Bobovnicky, & Bauer, 2016), and findings of this study supports this narrative with unique insights into peer communication and its impact on consumer attitudes in an online consumer socialization process. Although most studies in this area had focussed on the impact of consumer socialization agent such as parents, mass media, school, and peers (Jin & Kwok, 2014; Meacham, 2016; Rosenzweig, Grinstein, & Ofek, 2016) , this study has massive theoretical significance in that consumption-related peer communications describes socialization processes that take place in virtual communities of information consumption. These finding are clear proof that socialisation on social media remains a complex process that involves many variables that has not been previously considered in traditional socialisation theory and theoretically, researchers are encouraged to delve deeper into this wide research area. The fact that findings related to this objective shows peer communication on Facebook does not always in a positive decision to vote highlights the need for interactive marketing practitioners, online advisers, and social media website operators and politicians to engage and interact with potential consumers in order to encourage an increased sense of intimacy with consumers, and build all important relationships with potential consumers. In line with this, it is further recommended that marketers who use social media tools should actively monitor peer communication by target consumers, audit the effectiveness of the two routes

from peer communication to intention vote, and handle with care any negative peer communication about products and services transmitted by written messages in order to minimise the negative effects of peer communication on social media.

5.3.3 Conclusion and recommendation for secondary objective three

The third objective regarding the study was to measure the effect of user' trust of Facebook on the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare. The findings show that there is a relationship between user trust and intention to vote although not significant. The implication of this was that users may trust Facebook but that did not necessarily mean that they would make their voting decision solely based on that. Studies in this area had shown that trust plays a great role on consumer purchase decision (Beldad, van der Geest, De Jong, & Steehouder, 2012; Corbitt et al., 2003). This study confirmed findings in the literature as cited above althought the influence was found not to be significant enough. In light of this, there are various managerial and theoretical insights that can be learnt from these findings. Firstly, the results underscored why marketing practitioners must be sensitive to changes in consumer behaviour patterns and identify new areas of consumer values and interest which helps to build trust as a by-product of marketing and interface with social media. Secondly, it is suggested that marketers customise their communication offerings in a way that integrate the values, needs, and wants that consumers express in writing on their social media platforms in order to build trust with their customers.

5.3.4 Conclusion and recommendation for secondary objective four

The fourth objective regarding the study was to measure the influence of identification with peers on Facebook on the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare. This relationship was both supported and significant at the (p value < 0.005) and the (p value < 0.001) as indicated by a p-value of ***. This was because it matched the proposed hypothesis that Medium credibility influenced the intention to vote. This implication was that the more potential voters identify with their peers the more likely they are to make voting decisions based on that. This finding is in line with literature reviewed which suggested that peer communication on social media should be used to reinforce peer communication that encourages long term identification or personal gain to

social media group members (Jin & Kwok, 2014; Meacham, 2016). In light of this, it is recommended that marketers and campaign managers should constantly monitor the positive social effects of social media usage and stimulate peer communication among consumers who are less socially connected in order to maximise the benefits that comes with social identification online. Further, it is recommended that more efforts be put on enriching the social media experience of users to ensure that peer communication does not mislead or overwhelm those users who prefer less complex message exchanges through social media. Marketers can also do more using structural and content features to encourage users to learn more about services being offered by highlighting commonalities between peers on Facebook.

5.3.5 Conclusion and recommendation for secondary objective five

The fifth objective regarding the study was to measure the influence of Tie strength with peers on Facebook on the intention to vote for student political organisations at the University of Fort Hare. It was observed that Tie Strength with peers and intention to vote (TSWP and IV) had an estimate of -0,083. This relationship is unsupported but significant inversely. This was because it did not match the proposed hypothesis that tie strength with peers influenced the intention to vote. The p-value was significant at both the (p value < 0.05) and the (p value < 0.001) as indicated by 0.014. The implication was that tie strength with peers greatly led to voters not potentially voting. The findings show that tie strength with peers has a negative effect on voting intention. The findings of this study with regard to this objective departs from the position in the literature which argued that tie strength has a positive influence on consumers intention to vote (Gilbert, 2012; Gupte & Eliassi-Rad, 2012; Phua, Jin, & Kim, 2017). As a matter of fact, according to this study, tie strength actually negatively influence the intention to vote. It is important to note that the literature that was reviewed related mainly on the intention to purchase commercial products while the current study focussed on the intention to vote. This maybe explained by the assumption that consumers are more likely to vote influenced to buy certain products (Seufert et al., 2016) but the same finding has proved not to be true with intention to vote. The finding is very significant because it point to the need for more academic research in this area and specifically, future research can be done to understand or have insight on the influence of tie strength in a political marketing context. Following the finding related to this objective, it is

therefore recommended that marketers must do more to discourage peer communication on social media that strengthen both individual - level tie strength with peers and group-level identification with a peer group and instead look for other social media cues that can persuades users of social media to vote.

5.3.6 Conclusion and recommendation for secondary objective six

The sixth objective regarding the study was to measure the influence of Facebook information credibility on the intention to vote for student political organisations at University Fort Hare. The findings of this study show that the relationship between information credibility and intention to vote was supported and significant. This was because it matched the proposed hypothesis that information credibility influenced the intention to vote. The p-value was significant at both the (p value < 0.05) and the (p value < 0.001). The implication was that the more potential voters perceive information of social media platforms such as Facebook to be credible the more they are likely going to vote based on that information. The finding of this research related to this objective confirms what has been reviewed in the literature (Kindler, Solomon, & Stauffer, 2013; Lim et al., 2013; Meacham, 2016; Syarief & Genoveva, 2015) that information credibility plays a leading role in consumer purchase decisions.

Theoretically, these findings are very significant as they broaden our understanding of the factors that affect information credibility from the users' perspective. Although rumours are a common thing on social media, the credibility of information is very crucial is social media is to be sustainable. The findings provide insight for information providers that they should pay attention to different aspects of the information credibility if they want to ensure that users see their user generated content as credible and therefore useful. It is also recommended that managers should ensure high level of interactivity and transparency on social media. It is also important that users are taught how to filter information in order to get truthful and reliable sources of information on social media for example through paying more attention to argument strength of a message.

5.3.7 Conclusion and recommendation for secondary objective seven

The objective regarding the study was to measure the influence of Facebook message credibility on the intention to vote for student political organisations at

University Fort Hare. The results of the study show that Message credibility and Intention to vote (message Credibility MSG and IV) had an estimate of -0,004. This relationship was both unsupported but not significant. This was because it matched the proposed hypothesis that message credibility influenced the intention to vote. This hypothesis was not supported and in fact it had an inverse effect on voter intention. Literature studied on the role of message credibility on the intention to vote had shown that message credibility is important and may sway the intention of the voters (Flanagin & Metzger, 2003; Koo, 2016b; Li & Suh, 2015). The study had a differed from findings of the literature that was reviewed. Instead it found that the the credibility of messages on Facebook had no significant influence on the intention to vote. Similarly, like the influence of tie strength on the intention to vote, it is important to fully explored the context of the study which may have contributed to the differences in the findings, i.e, the study was on the intention to vote not intention purchase commercial products where most of the studies has been done. It is argued here that factors that has an influence on consumer purchase decisions may have a limited role on consumers voting decision as illustrated by this finding. In light of this, it is recommended that marketers and marketing managers adopt a holistic approach that considers all factors or cues that may bear on the decision making of the voters to vote instead of paying too much attention on the credibility of messages on Facebook. Investing in research on social media cues that affect consumers will help save money and time and avoiding focussing on cues that may misleading them , for instance, it was found in this study that infact the credibility of messages on Facebook play a limited role in influencing voting decisions.

5.3.8 Conclusions and recommendations regarding primary objectives

The main objective of the study was to measure the influence of social media on the intention to vote for student political organisations in the Eastern Cape. The literature reviewed examined the role of social media predictor variables such as medium credibility, message credibility, tie strength with peers, identification with the peers, peer communication, user trust, information credibility on commerce and political marketing and an influence was asserted (Binsahl, Chang, & Bosua, 2015; Bramoullé et al., 2009; Li & Suh, 2015; MacKinnon, 2012; Phua et al., 2017a; Syarief & Genoveva, 2015). The findings of this study confirm a strong relationship between social media and intention to vote for student political organisations in the Eastern

Cape. The main findings of the study were that all the proposed hypothesis were supported with the exception of that of peer commnication and tie strength with peers on the intention to vote. It was also important to note that identification with peers had the strongest impact on the intention to vote while the message credibility had the weakest. The implication was that users feel that the ability to identify with each other influenced their voting intentions however the message itself was irrelevant. This finding is very important to marketers and organizations operating on social media particularly Facebook. It is recommended that they seriously considers the role of social media on the decision to vote if they are to develop effective social networking campaign strategies and build strong consumer-brand - relationships.

5.3.9 General recommendations to marketers

The first one is that companies and political parties must make use Facebook to market their products or services and to encourage voters to vote. This has many benefits that extend beyond consumers or voters just interacting with one another on the social networks. Organisations can actually develop customised products or services to appeal to specific buyer segments like the youth who constitute the largest group of people using Facebook.

The results showed that the largest number of respondents were between the ages of 18-27. Male respondents were also more than female. While these figures may not explain the causal relationship between the variables, it is evident that many young people are using social networks like Facebook to communicate with each other as illustrated in the literature review. In light of this important finding, it is recommended that marketers target this generational group as a niche market for their products.

The literature study and findings also confirmed growth in use of social media, specifically that Facebook have far reaching implications on advertising. It is therefore recommended that marketers use interactions on Facebook as a form of electronic word of mouth to build their brands on social media platforms.

Relying on the results of this study, the findings also provide a lot of valuable insights on social media marketing and how marketers can come up with a guideline for a social media marketing imperative that takes into consideration interpersonal factors

that influence consumer decision making processes. On the other hand, Facebook has become an important channel for building consumer- brand relationships. Marketers can target opinion leaders on social media and encourage them to spread positive messages regarding selected brands in their personal networks and discourage them from sharing negative information with their networks(Hofstra et al., 2016; Lovari & Parisi, 2015).

The literature study in chapter two confirmed that many businesses are increasing resorting to social media in doing business. Lu et al., (2016) pointed out that as social networking increase social commerce, Facebook will undoubtedly be one of the most prominent tools to conduct social commerce activities. The results of this study makes it very crucial to recommend the need for businesses and marketers to come up with innovations that encourages voters who use Facebook to vote in order to tap on the potential mentioned by Lovari and Parisi (2015).It is clear that Facebook, as a social networking site present a unique opportunity for consumers to interact with multiple companies or organisations within one site, with relatively little effort (Shiau & Luo, 2012), becoming a very potential point of sale for products or services.

Lastly, advertisers can take advantage of the easy to reach, voluntary and segmented audience in a cheaper way by posting their advertisements or campaigns on Facebook compared to other channels. According to Raman, Sani, & Kaur (2014), the power of Facebook lies in the fact that it is organized around its users, making it easy utilize user interconnectedness in order to reach large audiences at a relatively low cost. In this regard, marketers can match customers with the product or services they are searching for and come up with personalised marketing communications strategies to meet their customer needs.

5.3.10 Limitations and Recommendations for future research

Despite these interesting findings, this study had many limitations which may be tackled in future research. For instance future research could benefit from employing larger and more diverse samples. In addition, we believe that our research represents exploratory stages in the development of an extended understanding of online information assessment. The respondents were drawn only within East London area. What shapes human behaviour in one region may not be the same in

another region. The results found out there is a strong relationship between social media and the intention to vote. While this may be true in East London, the results may not be truly generalizable to the whole of South Africa. Factors that influence vote intention may differ with regions and cultures of   the people affected as they try to locate themselves in the context of the research predictor influences. It is recommended that similar studies be carried in other areas out to gain a broader understanding of the phenomenon.

The suggestions for future research is that the presented study only focused on face book as a social media outlet for assessing voter intention and it would be interesting to find out what would result from the use of other social media platforms such as twitter and what's app. Also since this study was only conducted with respondents in the Eastern Cape it would be interesting to find out what would be the outcome if participants are sourced from other provinces like Gauteng and the Western Cape to see if they would respond similarly or differently to the same questions. Furthermore, this was a quantitative research. Although the data could be generalized on a large population, it does not reflect much on the personal insights of the respondents. It is important and recommended that a qualitative study be carried out in the form of focus groups or personal interviews in order to understand the role played by social media when making voting decisions.

5.5 Final conclusions

After discussing the recommendations and limitations of the study, this section provides the final conclusion based on extensive literature review, data analysis and findings from chapter one to chapter four. This chapter essentially summarised the whole study from the literature review, followed by the methodology. It also recapped the objectives before proceeding to outline recommendations regarding the findings and for possible future study.

The findings of this study confirm a strong relationship between social media and intention to vote for student political organisations in the Eastern Cape. The main findings of the study were that all the proposed hypothesis were supported with the exception of that of peer commnication and tie strength with peers on the intention to vote. It was also important to note that identification with peers had the strongest impact on the intention to vote while the message credibility had the weakest. The implication was that users feel that the ability to identify with each other influenced

their voting intentions however the message itself was irrelevant. A large number of respondents where between the age of 18 to 27. This shows the demographic importance of this age group in marketing on social networks.

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ANNEXURE

Ethics Research Confidentiality and Informed Consent Form

Dear respondent

My name is Tapiwa Chininga and I am a Masters student in the department of Business Management at the University of Fort Hare. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting a study on **"The influence of social media on the intention to vote for students political organizations in the Eastern Cape".** I am interested in finding out more

about the impact of social media in our lives. This research will help students and political organizations to understand the effect of social media on their political activities. Your participation is being invited for the purpose of this research. Conducting of the research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee and the Ethical clearance certificate number is RUN211SCHI01.

Please understand that you are not being forced to take part in this study and the choice whether to participate or not is yours alone. However, we would really appreciate it if you do share your thoughts with us. If you choose not take part in answering these questions, you will not be affected in any way. If you agree to participate, you may stop me at any time and tell me that you don't want to go on with the interview. If you do this there will also be no penalties and you will NOT be prejudiced in ANY way. Confidentiality will be observed professionally.

I will not be recording your name anywhere on the questionnaire and no one will be able to link you to the answers you give. Only the researchers will have access to the unlinked information. The information will remain confidential and there will be no "come-backs" from the answers you give.

The interview will last around 10 minutes. I will be asking you a questions and ask that you are as open and honest as possible in answering these questions. Some questions may be of a personal and/or sensitive nature. I will be asking some questions that you may not have thought about before, and which also involve thinking about the past or the future. We know that you cannot be absolutely certain about the answers to these questions but we ask that you try to think about these questions. When it comes to answering questions there are no right and wrong answers. When we ask questions about the future we are not interested in what you think the best thing would be to do, but what you think would actually happen.

If possible, I would like to come back to this area once i have completed my study to inform you and your community of what the results are and discuss the findings and proposals around the research and what this means for people in this area. Should you have any further queries, please contact the researcher on (+27) -747419772 or via email at chiningatapiwa@ymail.com and the researcher will answer any questions that you may have during or after the project.

INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby agree to participate in research regarding the impact of social media in our lives. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop this interview at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally.

I have received the telephone number of a person to contact should I need to speak about any issues which may arise in this interview.

I understand that this consent form will not be linked to the questionnaire, and that my answers will remain confidential.

I understand that if at all possible, feedback will be given to my community on the results of the completed research.

…………………………..
Signature of participant   **Date**:………………………..

I hereby agree to participate in the study

…………………………..
Tapiwa Chininga [Principal Researcher]   **Date**:………………………..

1.   **Gender**

Male	
Female	

18 – 27	
28 – 37	

2. Age | **38 or older** |

Code used in analysis	Statement number	Please put a cross in the appropriate block indicating whether you strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree or strongly agree with each of the following statements; **Medium Credibility**	Strongly disagree	disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Dependency							
MCD-1	1	I think my party Facebook page could help me to participant in related activities.	1	2	3	4	5
MCD-2	2	I think my party Facebook page could help me to get ideas about how to approach others in related issues	1	2	3	4	5
MCD-3	3	I think my party Facebook page could help me to deepen my own understanding about the events at the University	1	2	3	4	5
MCD-4	4	I think my party Facebook page could help me to figure out what is happening on campus	1	2	3	4	5
MCD-5	5	I think my party Facebook page could help me to experience enjoyable media content	1	2	3	4	5
MCD-6	6	I think my party Facebook page could help me to initiate discussion with others about the content.	1	2	3	4	5
Interactivity		**When I am using my party Facebook page**					
MCI-7	7	I think communicating with other users is very easy.	1	2	3	4	5
MCI-8	8	I always communicate with other users. (e.g. make comments, give a "like", repost messages	1	2	3	4	5
MCI-9	9	I could always get a lot of responses to my posts.	1	2	3	4	5
MCI-10	10	Other users replies to my posts very quickly	1	2	3	4	5
Transparency		**When I am using my party Facebook page**					
MCT-11	11	I think the Facebook page provide unbiased, balanced coverage of information.	1	2	3	4	5
MCT-12	12	I think the Facebook page provides detail about how the news is constructed.	1	2	3	4	5
MCT-13	13	I think this Facebook page had enough editorial freedom to share information	1	2	3	4	5
Argument Strength		**Message credibility**					
MSCAS-1	14	In general, the argument of information on my party Facebook page is convincing.	1	2	3	4	5
MSCAS-2	15	In general, the argument of information on my party Facebook page is persuasive.	1	2	3	4	5
MSCAS-3	16	In general, the argument of information on my party Facebook page is valid.	1	2	3	4	5
MSCAS-4	17	In general, the argument of information on my party Facebook page is logic.	1	2	3	4	5
Information							

Quality		*Accuracy; Objectivity;Understandability;Timeliness*					
MSCIQ-6	18	In general, the information on my party Facebook page is accurate.	1	2	3	4	5
MSCIQ-7	19	In general, the information on my party Facebook page is objectively presented.	1	2	3	4	5
MSCIQ-8	20	In general, the information on my party Facebook page is easy to understand.	1	2	3	4	5
MSCIQ-9	21	In general, the information on this Facebook page was sufficiently timely	1	2	3	4	5
Tie strength with peers							
TSWP-1	22	I am likely to share personal confidences with peers on my party Facebook page	1	2	3	4	5
TSWP-2	23	I am likely to spend some free time socializing with peers on my party Facebook page	1	2	3	4	5
TSWP-3	24	I am likely to perform a large favour for peers on my party Facebook page	1	2	3	4	5
TSWP-4	25	Peers on my party Facebook page are likely to perform a large favor for me	1	2	3	4	5
Identification with the peers							
IDP-1	26	I am very attached to peers on my party Facebook page	1	2	3	4	5
IDP-2	27	My peers on my party Facebook page and I share the same objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
IDP-3	28	The friendships I have with my peers on my party Facebook page mean a lot to me.	1	2	3	4	5
IDP-4	29	If my peers planned something, I'd think of it as something "we" would do rather than "they" would do.	1	2	3	4	5
IDP-5	30	I see myself as a part of the peer group on social media	1	2	3	4	5
Peer communication							
PC-1	31	I talk with my peers about my party on Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5
PC-2	32	My peers on my party Facebook page encourage me to vote	1	2	3	4	5
PC-3	33	I talk with my peers on my party Facebook page about voting for my party	1	2	3	4	5
PC-4	34	I ask my peers for advice about my party	1	2	3	4	5
PC-5	35	I obtain information on my party from my peers on my party Facebook page	1	2	3	4	5
User Trust							
UT-1	36	I think my party Facebook page usually assumes the commitments it assumes	1	2	3	4	5
UT-2	37	I think that the information offered by my party Facebook page is sincere and honest	1	2	3	4	5
UT-3	38	I think I can have confidence in the promises that my party Facebook page makes	1	2	3	4	5
UT-4	39	My party Facebook page does not make false statements	1	2	3	4	5
UT-5	40	My party Facebook page is characterized by the frankness and clarity of the services that it offers to the students.	1	2	3	4	5
UT-6	41	I think that advise and recommendations given on my party Facebook page are made in search of mutual benefit	1	2	3	4	5
UT-7	42	I think that my party Facebook page is concerned with the present and future interests of its users	1	2	3	4	5
UT-8	43	I think that my party Facebook page takes into account the repercussions that their actions could have on students	1	2	3	4	5
UT-9	44	I think that my party Facebook page would not do anything intentional that would prejudice the user	1	2	3	4	5
UT-10	45	I think that the design of my party Facebook page take into account the desires and needs of its users	1	2	3	4	5
UT-11	46	I think that my party Facebook page is receptive to the needs of its users	1	2	3	4	5
UT-12	47	I think that my party Facebook page has the necessary abilities to carry out its work.	1	2	3	4	5
UT-13	48	I think that my party Facebook page has sufficient experience in marketing of services that it offers	1	2	3	4	5
UT-14	49	I think that my party Facebook page has the necessary resources to successfully carry out its activities	1	2	3	4	5
UT-15	50	I think that my party Facebook page knows its users well enough to offer them	1	2	3	4	5

		services adapted to their needs					
		INFORMATION CREDIBILITY					
ICRED-1	51	In general, I think information on my party Facebook page is believable	1	2	3	4	5
ICRED-2	52	In general, I think information on my party Facebook page is factual.	1	2	3	4	5
ICRED-3	53	In general, I think information on my party Facebook page is credible.	1	2	3	4	5
ICRED-4	54	In general, I think information on my party Facebook page is trustworthy.	1	2	3	4	5

Intention To Vote: How likely are you to vote for a student political party after learning about it on its Facebook page?

IV-1	55	Unlikely–likely	1	2	3	4	5
IV-2	56	Uncertain–certain	1	2	3	4	5
IV-3	57	Definitely not–definitely	1	2	3	4	5

Approximately how many Facebook friends do you have?

10 or less	11-50	51-100	101-150	151-200	201-250	251-300	301-400	More then 400

In the past week, on average, approximately how much time PER DAY have you spent using Facebook?

0-14 mins	11-50 mins	30-44 Mins	45-64 Mins	65-74 mins	75-84 mins	over 85 mins

Thank you very much for your participation in this survey!!