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Digital media exposure, political attitudes and perceptions as antecedents of voting intentions: a Zimbabwean perspective

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University of the Witwatersrand



School of Economic and Business Sciences

Marketing Department

DIGITAL MEDIA EXPOSURE, POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS AS ANTECEDENTS OF VOTING INTENTIONS: A ZIMBABWEAN PERSPECTIVE

A THESIS
Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
(Marketing)

ABSTRACT

With the contemporary diffusion of media technology, the majority of researchers have come to position the Internet as a political instrument that has the potential to stimulate consumer behaviour. The Internet has expanded persistently as a news source and digital technologies have become more accessible and abound with user generated content. These digital media backdrops afford a valuable opportunity to empirically examine the effects of digital media effects on consumer decision-making. It is therefore important to examine how consumer perceptions and attitudes towards voting impact their decision-making in order for political marketers or politicians to develop coherent strategies that offer a conducive environment sufficient to influence voting decision-making. Whereas previous studies on voting behaviour have merely explored voting behaviour in a global context, the current study investigates the effect of digital media exposure on perceptual and cognitive constructs within a Zimbabwean context. Moreover, few studies have explored this topic in a consumer behaviour context amongst the Zimbabwean constituency. This study aims to determine whether digital media exposure influences voter-consumers' intention to vote in subsequent Zimbabwe presidential elections. In order to empirically test the effect of digital media exposure on perceived image of a political party (PI); perceived image of a presidential candidate (PPC); attitude towards voting (ATV) and voting intention (VI), a conceptual model premised on the reviewed political marketing literature was developed. The model proposed four distinct domains that drive voting intentions. In this conceptualised model, digital media exposure is the predictor variable, while perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting, perceived image of the political party, are mediators and voting intention is the single outcome variable. By exploring the significance of digital media use on voter behaviour, this study contributes towards specific contextual knowledge on consumer behaviour and political marketing in developing countries particularly Zimbabwe. The present study is positioned in the positivist research methodology, and assumes a deductive approach within the quantitative paradigm to test the proposed hypotheses. This study uses stratified probability sampling to arrive at the required number of provinces for the study. Using quantitative methodologies based on the nature of the research questions, data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire from 305 eligible voters from selected Provinces and Districts in Zimbabwe selected through stratified probability sampling to arrive at the required number of provinces for the study.The measuring instrument was designed from existing scales, which were adapted to suit the present study. The data analysis

was done in SPSS 24 for demographic data analysis and AMOS 24 was used for the structural equation modelling and path modelling.

The findings support all the hypotheses in a significant way except H1 and H5. Likewise, voter-consumers' perception of the presidential candidate has an influence on the attitude towards voting and all latter perceptual and attitudinal variables have significant influence on voting intention. Important to note about the study findings is the fact that digital media exposure has a stronger effect on perceived image of the political party (H3) than attitude towards voting (H2). However, perceived image of the political party strongly influence attitude towards voting. Remarkably, the relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting is robust. The findings indicate that digital media exposure can have a strong influence on voting intention through attitude towards voting. The contribution of this study is threefold: Firstly, by exploring the significance of digital media exposure on voting behaviour, this study adds to contextual knowledge on relationship marketing, political brand management and experiential marketing (the final stage of the mental brand responses), consumer marketing and specifically, political marketing. Secondly, as a growing body of literature explores the use of digital technology in political campaigning/marketing to create a competitive advantage, this study provides researchers with a broad understanding of this phenomenon among voting citizens in developing countries particularly Zimbabwe. Theoretically, it is positioned in political marketing and contributes to theoretical literature that focuses on consumer behaviour, branding and brand relationship. Lastly, by investigating digital media exposure and its influence on consumers' voting intention, the findings provided political marketing practitioners with a better understanding of strategies that can be employed to influence citizens' voting behaviour, through the use of digital media. The study thus submits that politicians ought to pay attention to both media agenda and brand image in order to build a positive attitude towards voting which significantly influences the intention to vote. In order to maximise voter 'purchase', marketers can implement strategies to encourage positive behaviour from voter-consumers and exploit multi-sensory experiences in order to influence voting intentions. The study makes a significant contribution to brand management literature and consumer behaviour literature by systematically exploring the impact of media exposure on brand image and attitude towards voting in Zimbabwe. The study demonstrates that political data can be used in consumer behaviour studies and provides a theoretical method for predicting voting intentions using voter behaviour in the form of voter

perception of political parties and perceived image of a presidential candidate as well as attitude towards voting. The study further highlights the significance of using digital technologies and ingenuity to create a comparative advantage as well as a differential advantage.

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DECLARATION

I, Rejoice Jealous Tobias-Mamina, declare that this research report is my own unaided work. The research report is submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Marketing at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. This report has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Signed:

At:

Date:

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1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

'As far as the laws of mathematics refer to reality, they are not certain, and as far as they are certain, they do not refer to reality' (Einstein & Jefferery 1983, p.17)

1.1 Introduction

In recent years, voting intention has received a lot of interest from both researchers and politicians. Various authors (Capelos, 2010; Caprara, 2007; Caprara & Zimbardo 2004) define voting as an expression of expectations and desires created by promises made during election campaign and influenced by the perceived image of political leaders, consistent with a personalisation of politics (King, 2002). While it is increasingly fundamental for business organisations to understand the composition and dynamics of markets as they seek to maximise sales, turnovers, and profits, it is also increasingly critical for political organisations to understand population and voter dynamics so that they can secure support and political mandates during elections. The fortunes and behaviour of a political party are dependent not only on the presence of an electorate close to its party position (Evans & Tilley, 2012; Dinas, 2014), but also on the strategic interactions of political parties in the competitive system (Anderson & Stephenson, 2011). A political party achieves its objectives more efficiently through understanding its target voters, their needs and wants, attitudes, expectations, as well as understanding the political costs associated with satisfying such needs (Kaynak, Lee & Dawson, 2014; Subhan, Brooksbank & Garland, 2015).

Political campaigning has gone through three phases, namely, pre-modern phase; modern phase and post-modern phase which predominantly depends on the media system; political system as well as other country specific factors (Stromback & Kaid, 2009; Schafferer, 2006; Scammell, 2014; Farrell & Schmidt-Beck, 2008). It is therefore essential to carry out a comprehensive analysis of factors that influence voting intention in order to explore the full potential of political marketing on a level that political parties can use to become effective in their constituencies. With the proliferation of the Internet and devices used in information communication technology, both politicians and the electorate embrace digital media such as blogs, websites, as well as social media platforms for communicating political issues. Digital media has ushered in new dynamics in human interface and communication. The major result of this activity is massive amounts of user generated content, contributing to direct access to citizens' attitudes and views.

Researchers in political marketing generally concur that traditional media affect how people participate in the political process. Towner (2012); Vreese and Boomgaarden (2006) found that traditional media sources inform and mobilise voters while Putnam (2000) argues that media effects have adverse effects on political participation. However, little research has been conducted on digital media use and its effect on participation in presidential elections (Ellison, Steinfeld & Lampe, 2007; Valenzuela, Park & Kee, 2009). Most electoral research have not exhausted the importance of perceived image of a presidential candidate and perceived image of the political party as mediating variables in voter decision-making. Kotler (1982) commented that voters rarely know or meet the candidates; they only have mediated images of the candidates, and hence they vote on the basis of those images. Several researches have positioned Internet use as a political tool with a potential to stimulate aspects of democracy, particularly American democracy (Boulianne, 2009; de Zúñiga, Puig-I-Abril & Rojas, 2009), yet their overall effects on consumer behaviour remain fairly uncertain.A wide range of academic literature has concentrated on the application of marketing principles (O`Cass, 2001), but very little on the interplay between online media, environmental stimuli and voting decision-making. The advancement of digital media has actually influenced the viral effect of user generated content in political communication. Haynes and Pitts (2009) and Lees-Marshment (2014) attribute Barack Obama's use of online media as a vital success in the 2008 American elections. However, there is limited evidence that has directly linked the use of online resources to positively enhancing consumer behaviour. Temple (2010) noted that voter's perceptions and understanding of politics are largely derived through the filters of the media. Current debates tend to focus more on electoral systems (Matlosa, 2003); not much has been done on other variables such as branding effects on intention to vote within a competitive framework though Scammell (2008) argues that branding is not a 'magic bullet' to electoral success.

The present study thus fills a gap in the literature by providing insight into the impact of digital media exposure on voting intentions of citizens in Zimbabwe in a presidential election. With the aid of a conceptual model, the present study proposes that digital media exposure as the predictor variable influences voters' perception of a presidential candidate, attitude towards voting, and voters' perception of a political party and simultaneously, the perceived image of the presidential candidate and the perceived image of the political party influences voters' attitude towards voting.

The three variables, perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting and perceived image of the political party act as mediators with voting intention as the outcome variable. Practically, this implies that when voters are exposed to political information through the digital media, notably, party websites, online news and social networks, it is expected to have a positive effect on their perceptions of the preferred presidential candidate, perceptions of the preferred political party and their attitude towards voting. This is anticipated to lead to an increase in voting intention.

This study argues that creating a conducive environment and engaging appropriate communication modes provides politicians with a distinct competitive advantage which is critical in a highly competitive and evolving Zimbabwe political market. The study is structured as follows: Chapter two (2) provides an overview of research context, Chapter three (3) discusses the theoretical groundings of the study, and Chapter four (4) discusses the empirical literature relating to the constructs of the study. The discussion on the conceptual model and hypotheses development is set in chapter five (5), research methodology is discussed in chapter six (6) and the statistical analysis is discussed in chapter seven (7) of the study. The final two chapters discuss the research findings (Chapter 8) and chapter nine (9) provides the research conclusions.

1.2 Identification of Research Gaps and Problem Statement

The current study contributes towards bridging three identified gaps in literature:

- **Political marketing in Africa:** There have been a number of studies in a global context that have studied political marketing. The African continent lacks its own discourse on political marketing and the American discourse currently dominates and informs the discourse on political marketing (Morin, 2013; Fukuyama, 2012; Henneberg, 2008). Africa needs a customised approach to political marketing, which is informed by local realities and local context. Existing theory and theoretical paradigms on political marketing are partial in terms of their impact since most the theories originate outside developing countries (Fukuyama, 2012).
- Although several studies have generally shown a positive effect of traditional media use on political awareness (McAllister, 2014; Chaffee & Loveless, 2015; Drew & Weaver, 1998; Scheufele, 2002; Wei, 2011), there is still relatively little known about digital media

as a source of political information. Whilst a great deal has been written on voter behaviour, there is a lack of knowledge on the extent to which digital media exposure influence attitudes and voting intentions. Today's voters are living in the digital age hence this knowledge is essential and has a far-reaching effect on voting and electoral outcomes. The current study proposes a unique conceptual framework with voting intention as the outcome variable and three mediators: perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting and perceived image of the political party, thus proposing a distinctive conceptual model that has not been hitherto tested.

- While previous studies have investigated digital media effects as an intervening variable; media influence on political opinion (Balmas & Sheafer, 2010; Panagapoulos, 2009); significance of media in political campaigning (Campus, Pasquino & Vaccari, 2008; Dunn, 2009; Balmas, & Sheafer, 2010; Nesbitt-Larking, 2010); a limited amount of research has been found on digital media exposure as an holistic predictor construct, and its impact on voting behaviour.

1.3 The Purpose and Justification of the Study

In order to fill the identified gaps, the purpose of the present study is twofold: First, it examines the influence of digital media exposure on voting intentions of Zimbabwe citizens. Second, it aims to determine the mediating role of the perceived image of presidential candidates; attitude towards voting and perceived image of the political party. For academics, this study makes a significant contribution to the existing body of literature on political marketing. For political practitioners, the present study provides insight and recommendations to politicians and political administrators on the value of political marketing.

1.4 Research Question and Research Objectives

To address the identified gaps and satisfy the study objectives, this thesis is guided by the central and subsidiary research questions. The central research question is as follows:

Does digital media exposure have an influence on the voting intentions of Zimbabwean citizens in presidential elections?

1.4.1 Research questions

Apart from the primary research question that this study aims to answer, the study has secondary questions. The secondary questions are stated in Figure 1.1

Figure 1.1: Secondary Research questions

With regards to voting, to what extent does**:**

- *digital media exposure influence perceived image of a presidential candidate?*
- *digital media exposure influence attitude towards voting?*
- *digital media exposure influence perceived image of political party?*
- *perceived image of a presidential candidate influence attitude towards voting?*
- *perceived image of a political party influence attitude towards voting?*
- *Perceived image of the political candidate influence voting intention?*
- *attitude towards voting influence voting decision?*
- *perceived image of a political party influence voting decision?*

Source: Compiled by Researcher (2015)

1.4.2 Research Objectives

The research objectives are set into theoretical and empirical objectives and are explained in the following sections.

1.4.2.1 Theoretical Objectives

A review of theoretical objectives is presented, based on key variables and their respective relationships as depicted in the conceptual model of the study as outlined on Table 1.2.

Figure 1.2: Theoretical objectives

To review literature on:
▪ *digital media exposure*
▪ *perceived image of the presidential candidate*
▪ *attitude towards voting*
▪ *perceived image of the political party*
▪ *voting intentions*
To review literature on the relationship between*:*
▪ *Digital media exposure and perceived image of the presidential candidate*

- *Digital media exposure and attitude towards voting*
- *Digital media exposure and perceived image of the political party.*
- *Perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting*
- *Perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting.*
- *Perceived image of the presidential candidate and voting intentions.*
- *Attitude towards voting and voting intentions*
- *Perceived image of the political party and voting intentions*

Source: Compiled by Researcher (2015)

1.4.2.2 Empirical Objectives

The empirical objectives of the study are shown in Table 1.3

Figure 1.3: Empirical Objectives

The empirical objectives underlying the study are to examine the relationship between:

- *Digital media exposure and perceived image of a presidential candidate*
- *Digital media exposure and attitude towards voting amongst Zimbabwean citizens*
- *Digital media exposure and perceived image of the political party.*
- *Perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting.*
- *Attitude towards voting and perceived image of a political party amongst Zimbabwean citizens.*
- *Perceived image of the presidential candidate and voting intentions amongst Zimbabwean citizens.*
- *Attitude towards voting and voting intentions amongst Zimbabwean citizens.*
- *Perceived image of the political party and voting intention amongst Zimbabwean citizens*

Source: Compiled by the Researcher (2015)

1.5 Significance and Contribution of the Study

The contributions of this study are threefold: this study adds to the existing theoretical literature in a number of fields, explicitly, relationship marketing, political brand management and experiential marketing (the final stage of the mental brand responses), consumer marketing and specifically, political marketing. Secondly, as a growing body of literature explores the use of digital technology in political campaigning/marketing to create a competitive advantage, this

study provides researchers with a broad understanding of this phenomenon among voting citizens in Zimbabwe. Additionally, this study results provide academics with a better understanding of consumer responses to multi-sensory and interactive experience in a political setting. Practically, the findings from the present study provide marketing practitioners with a better understanding of strategies that can be employed to influence citizens' voting behaviour, by using digital media. In order to maximise voter 'purchase', marketers can implement strategies to encourage positive behaviour from voter-consumers and exploit multisensory experiences in order to influence voting intentions. The study demonstrates that political data can be used in consumer behaviour studies and provides a theoretical method for predicting voting intentions using voter behaviour in the form of voter perceptions of political parties and perceived image of a presidential candidate as well as attitude towards voting. Furthermore, this study highlights the significance of using digital technologies and ingenuity to create a comparative advantage as well as a differential advantage. Digital media as a new phenomenon brings in new challenges and opportunities which require new skills important for success. Finally, while previous studies on voting behaviour have merely explored this phenomenon in a global context (Glasford, 2008; Hansen & Jensen, 2007; Sing, Leong, Tan & Wong, 1995), this study investigates the effect of digital media exposure on perceptual and cognitive constructs within a Zimbabwean context. By exploring the significance of digital media use on voter behaviour, this study contributes towards specific contextual knowledge on political marketing in Zimbabwe.

Africa`s major problem is that it has never participated in the intermediary and final stages of production (Hauntondji, 2002). Africa has always participated in the primary phase of production by producing raw materials with no attempt to add value. African scholars lack the aspiration to participate in the intermediate (theory building) and final stages of knowledge production (developing practical applications) (Hauntondji, 2002). To respond to the call of Hauntondji, this study constructs a theoretical model on how digital media exposure; perceived image of a political party; perceived image of a presidential candidate; attitudes towards voting influence voter decision-making. The theoretical model is expected to provide practical guidelines for practitioners as well as practical applications for policy makers and politicians (Hauntondji in Hoppers, 2002). The study fills the literature gap on the relationship between variables.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in four theories, namely Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 2005); Agenda Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1977); Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (Venkatesh, Davis & Davis, 2003); Structural realist voter behaviour model (Cwalina, Falkowski & Newman, 2010). An in-depth discussion of these theories is provided in chapter three.

1.6.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 2001)

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) which was proposed by Ajzen (1985) is a logical extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). In line with this, the TPB postulates that an individual's intention to perform a given behaviour (or not to perform it) is the most fundamental determinant of that action (Ajzen, 2005). The TPB posits that behaviour (B) is the direct product of behavioural intention (BI) which is a function of attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control (Ibid). TPB assumes that planned and rational decisions are motivated by self-interest and expected outcomes (Sonnenberg & Eramus, 2013). Therefore this theory is relevant in explaining behaviours that implicate voting intention. Political campaigns present narratives with which the electorate is expected to identify and these provoke attitudes. Those who intend to vote are expected to engage in selective exposure, selective perception and integration processes in order to form attitudes which guide their decision-making (Schram & Van Winden, 1991). Therefore, attitude towards voting is determined by positive or negative feelings about voting, is determined through an assessment of one's beliefs and is subject to external influence. This implies that voting intention is a result of the individual's attitude towards voting and other mediating effects, such as political party perceptions and candidate image perception. As a general rule therefore, the more favourable the attitude towards voting and subjective norms, the greater the perceived control, the stronger should be the voting intention. There is therefore a similarity to the current study's conceptual model where attitudes and perceptions influence voting behaviour. Therefore, the Theory of Planned Behaviour is applicable to this current study since it not only addresses citizens' motivation for using digital communication, but further elaborates on examining its influence on citizens' involvement in the democratic process.

1.6.2 Media influence- Agenda setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972)

Several election studies documented the significance of media in political campaigning by claiming agenda setting theory effects (Campus, Pasquino & Vaccari, 2008; Dunn, 2009; Balmas & Sheafer, 2010; Nesbitt-Larking, 2010). These authors theorise that the media have a strong influence on audiences through salience transfer, which entails the ability to transfer issues of importance from the media agenda to public versions (Weaver, McCombs & Shaw, 2004). The research on agenda setting theorise that the media have a strong influence on audiences and that it contributes in shaping the political agenda, frames issues and subjects political parties and candidates to public opinion on which the electorate builds perceptions (Camaj & Weaver, 2013; Moon, 2013; Arceneaur & Johnson, 2013). In a similar way to that outlined in this theory, the current study's conceptual model also pays close attention to the media priming and framing effect as well as providing 'curb appeal' (Westen, 2007), and its impact on perception and attitude and the impact of these on voting behaviour. The media perspective exerts substantial influence on the audience's perception and can activate previously held attitudes and viewpoints which the consumer uses in deliberating behavioural expectation.

1.6.3 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (Venkatesh, Davis & Davis, 2003)

Unified Technology Adoption and Use Theory (UTAUT) developed by Venkatesh, Morris, Davis and Davis (2003). The UTAUT hypothesises that four core constructs act as determinants of behavioural intention and usage behaviour, with four moderators of the key relationships (Venkatesh et al., 2003). These predictors are performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions. Performance expectancy is the extent to which using a technology-based service will provide benefits to consumers in performing certain activities; effort expectancy is the level of ease associated with consumers' use of technology-based services; social influence is closely related to perceived norms in TPB, and facilitating conditions are equivalent to behavioural control (Venkatesh, Thong & Xu, 2012, De Wit, Heerwegh & Verhoeven, 2011). Several researches concur with UTAUT on the predicting power of performance expectancy, effort expectation and social influence on behavioural intention (Oshlyansky, Cairnsa & Thimbleby, 2007; Šumak,Polančič &Heričko, 2010; Cheng, Liu, Song & Qian, 2008).The basis of this model correlates with the present study's conceptual model in the following ways: both are grounded in

the concept of rational behaviour and the way in which social influence and facilitating conditions influence consumers' perception, explicit and implicit attitudes and voting behaviour. The fundamental principle is that digital media provides the voting 'audience' with a voice and gives them the opportunity to engage in political conversation.

1.6.4 Structural Realist Voter Behaviour Model (Cwalina, Falkowski, & Newman, 2010)

The Structural Realist Model of Voter Behaviour suggests that voting behaviour can be driven by one or more of seven distinct cognitive domains. These cognitive domains are; issues and policies; candidate image; emotional feelings; current events; personal events, social imagery; epistemic issues (Cwalina, Falkowski, & Newman 2010). This model assumes that all domains are independent from each other and, possibly, equally essential for determining voting decisions. The structural realist model of voter behaviour assumes a mutual interface between media and cognitive domains, which is moderated by emotional feelings (Cwalina et al., 2010). Therefore, the fundamental aspect influencing voting behaviour is to evoke positive emotions toward the candidate and then to provide voters with a justification for such affect (Cwalina et al., 2013). Although, in general, most of the voters know nothing about particular politicians or candidates, they still have strong feelings toward them (Harris, Lock & Cwalina, 2010). It is possible for some of the cognitive domains directly influencing voter behaviour to be distorted by prior emotional feelings. There is a similarity to the conceptual model for the present study, candidate image and party image influence voting behaviour.

1.7 Definitions

This section provides a brief theoretical overview of each of the research constructs. A more comprehensive discussion is provided in chapter three. Firstly, the political marketing concept is defined, followed by the main variables underpinning the present study, namely, digital media exposure, perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting, perceived image of the political party and voting intention.

Political Marketing Concept

Political marketing is the process through which political contestants and views are focused on the voters in an effort to satisfy citizens' political needs and subsequently, to win their support. Newman (2012) defines political marketing as the application of marketing principles and processes in political promotions or campaigns by various individuals and societies. Political marketing concepts build on a merger between marketing and politics, thus it is an important component of consumer behaviour. The political product is an amalgam of three components, party image, leadership image and policy assurances, and voter-centric mentality (O'Cass, 2009). Newman (2012) describes marketing as need assessment approach to product innovation that depends on market information to guide market inquiry and product development. The essence of marketing is that manufacturers develop products after researching the perceived needs of the targeted consumers. Consequently, political behaviour built on the marketing concept is expected to execute research on political products and adapt to and satisfy perceived needs of the target voter-consumers (Peng & Hackley, 2009). Therefore, political marketing is about market astuteness, managing needs, the molding of a political product and how the political actors behave in relation to the political markets (Henneberg, 2002; O'Cass, 1996; Butler & Collins, 2002; Lees-Marshment, 2004). The marketing concept places the customer at the beginning rather than the end of the production-consumption cycle (Baker, 1991), similarly the political marketing concept sets voter-consumers as the basis rather than the end of the electoral cycle. Both the voter and the consumer are viewed as individual information recipients, and probably seeking out information, processing this information to build an attitude toward the political products. Thus, with the growth and complexity of political marketing, there is still no consensus on the definition of political marketing.

Digital Media Exposure

Digital marketing and its related terms, such as Internet/online marketing, are commonly used to describe the use of technologies in marketing efforts. However, there is no consensus on what is constituted in each term (Farrah, 2010; Melewar & Smith, 2003). Several researchers agree that media have played a major role in the widespread dissemination of marketing information (Trainor, Andzulis, Rapp & Agnihotri, 2014; Rowley, 2016). Schulz and Lauterborul (1993) define media exposure as any opportunity for a reader, viewer, and listener to see or hear an advertising message in a particular media vehicle. Literature reveals that it is difficult to draw a clear line

between digital and social media, as the social elements are increasingly integrated into the established interactive digital media environment (Sharma, 2002). Digital media is defined as digital communications technologies that enable entities to engage in mediated communication that include the Internet and broadband networks, advanced telecommunications networks and digital broadcasting, whose aim is to facilitate interactions, collaborations and the sharing of content (Richter & Koch, 2007). Consumers' purchase decision is affected by the comments of their significant others on social media and friends' attitude can influence consumer selection of a service or good (Hacıefendioğlu, 2011; Forbes & Vespoli, 2013). Thus, voter decision-making is a result of social influence and media exposure. Research has generally confirmed that there are significant positive relationships between the use of digital media and political participation and knowledge, during election campaigns (Boulianne, 2009; Dalrymple & Scheufele, 2007; Tolbert & McNeal, 2003).

Perceived image of the presidential candidate

A growing literature highlights the significance of perceived image of a presidential candidate as a determinant of voting in contemporary democracies. Stephen, Harrison, Husson and Albert (2004) define candidate image as a potentially controllable set of meanings attached by voters to those seeking political office. The perceived image of a presidential candidate component represents the candidate's personality as perceived by the voter (Ben-Ur & Newman, 2002). Therefore, a candidate's image or political party image consists of how voters perceive the candidate or the political organisation, perceptions based upon both the subjective evaluations made by the voters and the messages, utterances, attributes, qualities transmitted by the candidate or the political party. However, the effect of perceived image of a presidential candidate in the citizen's vote intention remains uncertain as a result of the potential reciprocal causation between perceptual evaluation and other vote determinants (Garzia, 2012). Although political marketing can succeed with repackaging and repositioning the leader candidate (Newman, 2010), there is no clear conceptual understanding of how this affects voters, the media, and other stakeholders (Henneberg, Scammell & O'Shaughnessy, 2009). Extant political marketing literature generally concurs that candidates' image has a significant positive impact on the voters (Harrop, 1990; Newman, 1994; Bacha, 1995). However there is a lack of theoretical consensus regarding the nature and constitution of candidate images.

Attitude towards voting

Attitude is generally understood as a psychological state that predisposes an individual to act positively or unfavourably to an event or situation. An individual's attitude toward voting is a result of evaluation of beliefs and subjective norms towards voting in an election (Ajzen, 2001). In most of the behavioural theories that explain the process of behaviour formation, attitude is recognised as one of the most important influences on behaviour (Ajzen, 2005). Several empirical findings reveal that attitude predicts information search (Blackwell et al., 2001), patronage (Moye & Kincade, 2003), and behaviour intention (Ajzen, 2005; Hernández, Jimenez, & Martin, 2010; Grandón et al., 2010). Hasbullah, et al. (2016) revealed that attitude towards online shopping has a significant positive relationship with intention to buy online. The finding was consistent with TRA and planned behaviour which indicated a positive linkage between attitude and behaviour and supported Xing's (2013) earlier research. Shim, et al. (2001) showed that consumers' attitudes toward Internet shopping positively affected their intentions to purchase via the Internet. These findings of a direct effect of attitudes toward internet shopping on intentions to purchase from the Internet are consistent with the reasoned action and planned behaviour theories, which hold that attitude is a determinant of behavioural intention.

Perceived Image of the Political Party

The ability of an organisation to prosper arises from its competitive advantage over other organisations operating within its market sector (Whiteley, 2000). Porter (2008) and Mckinsey (2008) highlight the significance of competitive market forces in organisational performance. The progress, success or failure of a political organisation or nation state is measurable on the basis of the existence of institutions and structure of electoral management (Fukuyama, 2012). Fukuyama (2012) argues that ideas that drive history exist first of all in the realm of human consciousness, that is, on the level of ideas rather than election year proposals. These ideas provide a worldview embedded in beliefs, opinions and assumptions that guide behaviour and influence conduct (ibid). Communities and political parties are formed around unifying standpoints. Political parties are the medium of social transformation and political order as they carry beliefs and philosophies. Classical liberalism recognises the basics of competition, democratic freedom, transparency, market opportunity and choice as preconditions for the success or failure of nation states and political organisations (Ake, 2000; Norris, 2015). Political choice is about social and behavioural

attributes of people, their leadership preferences, and how these are realised in establishing sustainable political leadership (Ha, & Lau, 2015, Caprara, Vecchione & Schwartz, 2015). Comprehensive political marketing is applicable to the whole behaviour of a political organisation, the way parties design and promote their products, the way individual candidates organise for success (Lees-Marshment, 2015). Creating a valid brand is an expedition founded on a vision, philosophy, values, identity and self-knowledge. Branding create an identity around a political party that makes it easier for citizens to remember who they are (Cristea, 2015; Scammell, 2015; Peters & Watermayer, 2012). However, extant literature reveals that there is no consensus on the components of brand image.

Voting Intention

The basic assumption of most extant researches on voting decision-making is that voters are incapable of dealing with the intricacies of politics, hence voters rely on heuristics to simplify political decision-making and guide their individual behaviour. Purchase intention is a combination of consumers' interest in and the possibility of buying a product. In the same vein, voting intention is a combination of voter-customers interest in and possibility of voting. Several studies found a strong relationship between attitude and preference toward a brand (political party/presidential candidate) (Kim, Kim & Johnson, 2010; Kim & Ko, 2010b; Kim & Lee, 2009; Lloyd & Luk, 2010). How then do people decide whether to vote or not vote? Do they base their decision on cost-benefit analysis? Based on the heterogeneity assumption, it cannot be assumed that all voters use similar criteria when making voting decisions. The Columbia School attribute voting choice to sociological effects (Berelson et al., 1954), and the Michigan School focused on socio-psychological influences (Campbell et al., 1960; Miller & Shanks, 1996) and the rational choice based on utility maximisation (Downs, 1957; Popkin, 1991). Thus, voting intention can be regarded as the individual voter-consumer’s willingness or reluctance to participate in electoral process at some future date. Several studies reveal a significant relationship between social pressures and voting intention (Belanger & Eagles, 2007; Glynn et al., 2009) although Morar, Venter and Chuchu (2015) found the contrary.

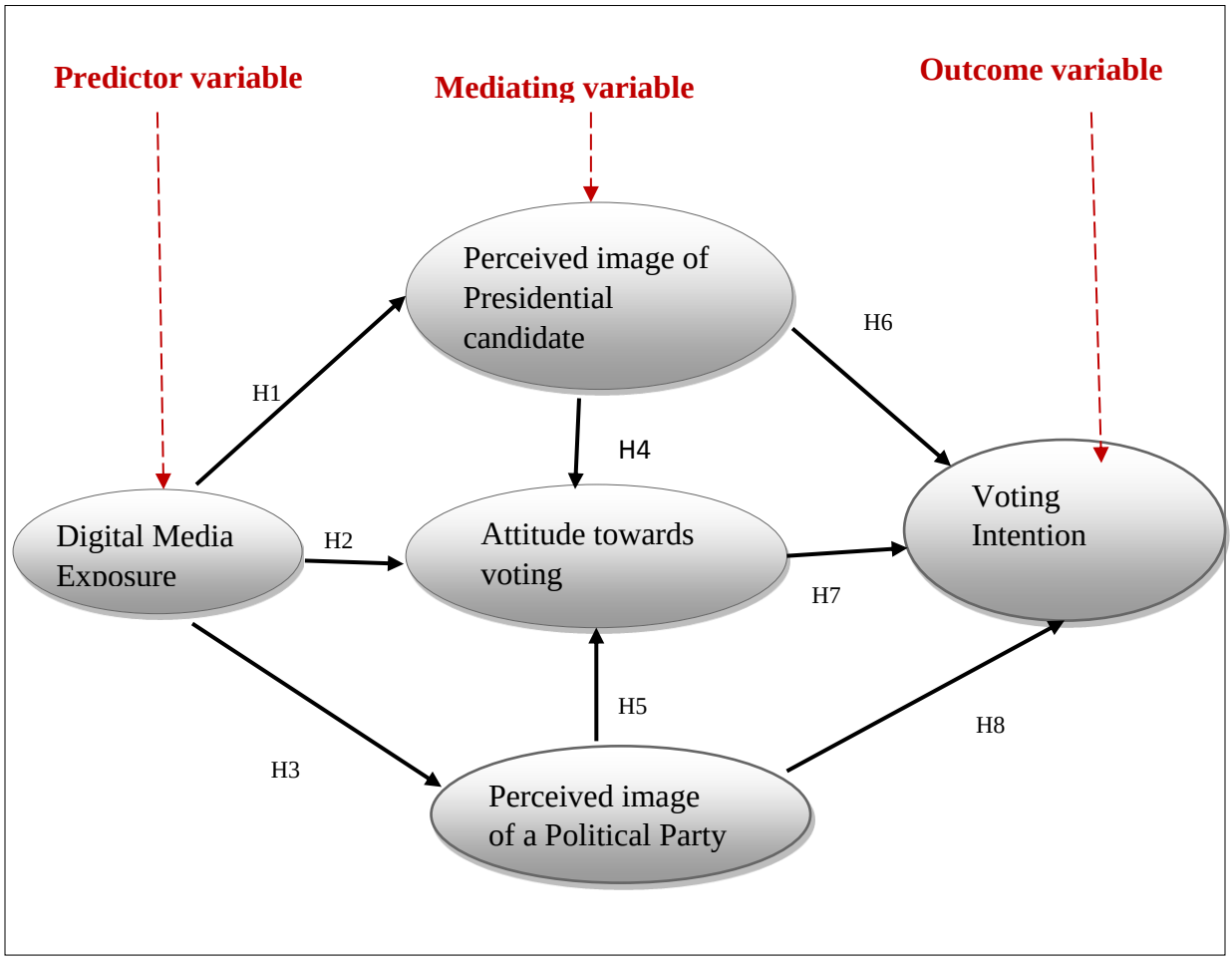
Voter-consumers

Voter-consumers are prospective voters who are able to provide a vote basing the exchange on their beliefs, values and expectations. Voters are consumers of political brands since there is no line dividing their subjective experience as consumers or as voters. These voter-consumers are exposed to a multitude of stimuli relating to political candidates, parties and different agendas. They are expected to engage in selective exposure, selective perception and integration processes in order to achieve an attitude which guides them to either vote or not vote.

1.8 Conceptual model of the study

In order to empirically test the effect of digital media exposure on perceived image of a political party (PI); perceived image of a presidential candidate (PPC); attitude towards voting (ATV) and voting intention (VI), a conceptual model premised on the reviewed political marketing literature was developed. The model proposed four distinct domains that drive voting intentions. In this conceptualised model, digital media exposure is the predictor variable, while perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting, perceived image of the political party, are mediators and voting intention is the single outcome variable. Figure 1.4 depicts this conceptualised research model. The key proposition is that voting intention can be driven by a combination of one or more of the domains in a given election. A comprehensive discussion on the hypothesis development is provided in Chapter 5. The hypothesised relationships between the research constructs are discussed hereafter.

Figure 1.4: Conceptual model



Source: Compiled by Researcher (2015)

Derived from the conceptual model, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: There is positive relationship between d*igital media exposure and perceived image of the presidential candidate.*

H2: There is positive relationship between d*igital media exposure and attitude towards voting.*

H3: There is positive relationship between d*igital media exposure and perceived image of a political party.*

H4: There is positive relationship between p*erceived image of a presidential candidate and attitude towards voting.*

H5: *There is a positive relationship between perceived image of a political party and attitude towards voting.*

***H6**: There is a positive relationship between perceived image of a political candidate and voting intentions*

***H7:** There is a positive relationship between attitude towards voting and voting intentions*

***H8:** There is a positive relationship between perceived image of a political party and voting intention.*

1.9 Research Design and Methodology

The present study is positioned in the positivist research methodology, and assumes a deductive approach within the quantitative paradigm to test the proposed hypotheses. The basic ontological assumption associated with the notion of positivism is that the social world is seen as having properties that can be measured and that have structures and relationships that are consistent and stable (Denscombe, 2007). The epistemological assumption associated with positivism is that social reality can be discovered by observation and by the measurement of properties of objects. Furthermore, by way of an empirical study, data was collected from 305 respondents, by distributing survey questionnaires to a selected sample. This study used stratified probability sampling to arrive at the required number of provinces for the study. In order to reduce systematic error, proper training of interviewers and adherence to proper norms of developing and conducting surveys was undertaken. The sample was drawn by an area probability method that relies on Zimbabwean census figures and maps of the country. The sample for the survey was drawn using stratified probability sampling from a database of approximately 3 292 366 (ZCNR, 2012). Zimbabwe has ten (10) administrative provinces. Using systematic sampling, four out of ten provinces were selected; Harare, Masvingo, Mashonaland Central and Bulawayo. Each of the selected provinces is stratified into districts: Harare province has four districts; Masvingo province has seven districts, Bulawayo province has five districts and Mashonaland Central province has seven districts and the number of respondents was apportioned proportionally to each province (ZCNR, 2012). After categorising the respondents into the mentioned strata proportional to their population, application of a stratified sampling technique was applied to collect the data from the respondents. The final sample for the survey at district level was drawn using random sampling where people could be reached in numbers, at shopping centres for urban respondents and growth points for rural respondents. The questionnaire for the survey was based on the constructs of the predictive model of voting intention: digital media exposure; perceived image of a presidential

candidate; perceived image of a political party; attitude towards voting; and voting intention. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: A, B, C and D. 'Section A' represented the demographic profile; 'Section B' represented questions on the independent variable, C was on mediating variables while D had questions on the dependent variable. Twenty eligible voters were sampled as part of the pilot testing. Pilot testing is done to make adjustments to improve the efficacy and clarity of questionnaire (O'Neill, 2000; Malhotra, 2010). Changes were made to questions whose loadings were below 0.5 through the application of 'Item-to-item correlation' and 'Cronbach's alpha if item deleted' columns in the SPSS statistical analysis. Questions that attracted complaints from respondents after the pilot testing were also noted and compared with the outcome of the preceding analysis to determine their limitations before they were eliminated or corrected to reduce errors in the actual data collection.

The measuring instrument was designed from existing scales, which were adapted to suit the present study. All variables were customised from pre-existing scales on a seven-point Likert scale as supported by Sauros and Dumas (2009) anchored by 1=strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree to express degree of agreement. The following scales were used: digital media exposure is measured on a four-item adapted from Gasser, Cortesi, Malik and Lee (2012). Perceived image of the presidential candidate was measured on a five-item scale measure adapted from Weaver (1996) and Kiad (2004). Perceived image of the political party was measured using a seven-item scale adapted from Evan and Andersen (2005) and Kaperer (2004). Voting intention was measured on a four-item scale adapted from Fishbein and Ajzen (1975); Levy and Gende-Guterman`s (2012) five item purchase intention scale, Glynn, Huge and Lunney (2009) two- item voting intention scale. Attitude towards voting was measured on a four item scale adapted from Ajzen (2001).

The data analysis was done in SPSS 24 for demographic data analysis and AMOS 24 was used for the structural equation modelling and path modelling. Reliability of the measurement instrument was tested using the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient, Composite Reliability Index and the Average Value Extracted (AVE). To ensure validity, the convergent validity, discriminant validity, and the Average Value Extracted (AVE) were observed. Further, model fit was determined by examining the chi-square, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI) and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The research design and methodology are further discussed in chapter six.

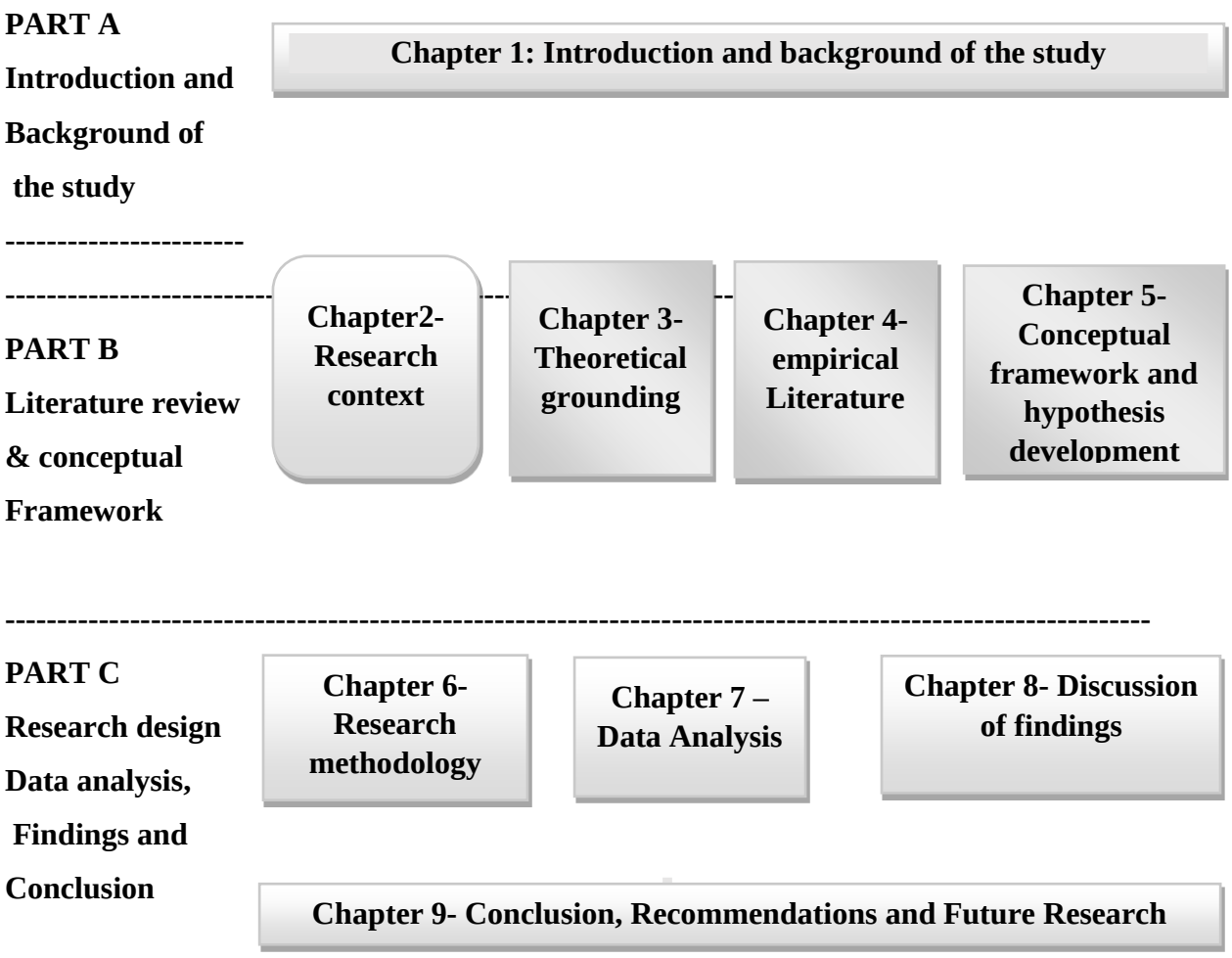
1.10 Ethical consideration

The participants in the study were informed that all information is kept strictly confidential. Participation in this study was completely voluntary and respondents were allowed to withdraw from the study at any stage. The participants were informed they were free to leave out any questions they so wished and that there would be no negative consequences, implications or penalties. The data would not be sold to a third party, and was used for academic purposes only. All questionnaires were anonymous and the study did not expose the potential participants to any harm. Ethical clearance certificate was granted by the University of the Witwatersrand upon application.

1.11 Thesis structure

This thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 1 provides an introduction and background to the study, Chapter 2 provides an overview of the research context, Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical groundings of the study, Chapter 4 discusses empirical literature relating to the constructs of the study, this is followed by a discussion on the conceptual model and hypotheses development in Chapter 5, followed by the research methodology in Chapter 6, statistical analysis is discussed in Chapter 7. Findings of the study are discussed in Chapter 8 and lastly the concluding remarks are presented in Chapter 9.

Figure 1.5: Thesis Chapters



1.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides an overview of the whole thesis. The conceptual model is introduced making a proposition that digital media exposure has a positive influence on voters' perception of a presidential candidate, attitude towards voting, and voters' perception of a political party and simultaneously, the perceived image of the presidential candidate and the perceived image of the political party influences voters' attitude towards voting. The research gap and research questions are formulated to aid the formulation of the hypotheses. Quantitative research methodology is enumerated. Significance and contribution o the study is identified. The next chapter elaborates the research context.

2 CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research context by outlining the background into political marketing, followed by the evolution of the Zimbabwean political environment from independence to post independence 2016, and lastly, an overview of the activation strategies used by the various political parties in their effort to position themselves and their presidential candidates as superior brands on the political market. Political institutions representing a system, receive stimuli from their surroundings and at a certain threshold, these stimuli elicit responses (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). From this agenda setting perspective, the aim is to find out how a digital media agenda influences voting decision-making of the critical mass during presidential elections in Zimbabwe. The use of information shortcuts is an indisputable fact of life (Long, 2012). Using decision-making heuristics, some individuals may rely on social group cues to guide their behaviour (Healy & Malhotra, 2013), while others may turn to political parties, political leaders, or even politically informed friends or neighbours. This builds on Downs's (1957) insight that it is not rational for the typical citizen to be fully informed, and thus, the individual uses decision-making shortcuts. Early political scientists attributed political influence to social groups defined by organisational membership, perceptions of social identity and socio-economic status (Lazarsfeld, Gaudet & Berelson, 1944; Campbell, Miller & Stokes, 1960), while Putman (2000) identified personal relationships as the primary source of social influence. Several studies found positive social network effects on behaviour and choice attributable to specific social interactions (Sinclair 2012, Sokhey & McClurg 2012, Mann & Klofstad, 2012b).

It is in the self interest of political actors to either be positively or negatively responsive to the public stimuli that determine the probability of retaining office. The Zimbabwean society, just as any other black African society, exists as a sense of belonging that provokes a natural submissiveness to the mystique of higher authority (Lassiter, 2002). It is this sense of *"Africanness"* that influences the "reasoned action" amongst communities in Zimbabwe (Ajzen, 2010). The African adage that says '*I am because we are'* reflects the tendency towards societal influence and the subjective nature of decision-making inherent within the Zimbabwean society interacting within a media environment of the moment (Mbigi, 2014). Digital media is functional not just for its facility in distributing messages, but also for its efficacy in offering a mechanism

for engagement on the part of those motivated by the message. The period 1979 to 2016, which covers three decades, has created social cleavages which are a reflection of the current Zimbabwe political environment. For each decade, the general context and issues are discussed, and an examination of the media used therein, focusing on how infrastructure development continues to influence the political marketing in Zimbabwe.

The electoral impact of technologies, such as digital media, continues to be a focal point of research: the use of different types of technology (Salzman & Salzman, 2016; Lilleker, Tenscher & Štětka, 2015), the way in which candidates and parties represent themselves online (Margolis & Resnick, 2000), and the impact of new channels on normative democratic values (Copeland & Römmele, 2014). The two principal claims on the impact of digital technologies on democracy implicitly acknowledge the notion of technological and social determinism (Clarke, 2016). Technological determinism observes innovation as the most significant variable shaping our societal, political and cultural systems, and social determinism views societal and political factors as the variables that outline the impact of technology (Dafoe, 2015, Chadwick & Stromer-Galley, 2016). Information and communications technologies (ICTs) have increasingly found a place as direct channels of communication from and to political parties and candidates in various countries (Chen & Smith, 2010; Steenkamp & Hyde-Clarke, 2014).

2.2 Research context

In the following section, the context of the study is discussed. Firstly, media in Zimbabwe during the pre-1980 to 2016; an overview of political marketing is discussed, followed by Zimbabwe as a study area, then lastly the political trajectory of Zimbabwean politics.

2.2.1 Media in Southern Africa – pre-independence

During the nationalist /liberation era in the 1960s and 1970s, radio broadcasts in Southern Africa were a key source of information and a tool for political mobilisation and propaganda, but radio broadcasts by political liberation movements were mostly illegal, being in contravention of conventional practice. The radio stations were mostly based in and piggybacking on host radio stations in the newly independent African nations. The South West Peoples Organisation (SWAPO) broadcast from Radio Cairo in the early 1960s. The Voice of Namibia officially started with the Namibian Hour broadcast from Tanzania in 1966, before being hosted by radio Zambia

in 1973. After the collapse of Portuguese rule in Angola in 1977, South Africa's Africa National Congress (ANC) was offered studio time as Radio Freedom in Luanda. Zimbabwean nationalists were granted airtime by Egypt from as early as 1958, before broadcasting from Tanzania in 1963. Then, Ghana hosted Voice of Zimbabwe (VOZ) until 1966. In 1967, VOZ broadcast from Zambia then from Mozambique. Using this propaganda tool, VOZ was important in mobilisation through news bulletins on the struggle, war communiqués, speeches by nationalist leaders and revolutionary songs (Wachanga, 2007).

Liberation era broadcasting projects were generally effective in capturing mass emotions, mobilising people, and gearing them towards the first independence elections (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011). Public agendas were thus formed as a result of the prioritisation and continuous repetition of topics that generated interest and resonated with the audiences (McCombs, 2005, 2006). However, although at independence, personnel from 'freedom stations' were integrated into the state broadcasting machinery, no attempts were made to open the airwaves to competition and opposing voices, in the spirit of independence and freedom. The government controlled media continued to set the media and public agenda; as a result, independent broadcasters could not easily participate (Moyo, 2013).

2.2.2 Media in Zimbabwe- 1980 to 2016

The media in Zimbabwe has been divided into two distinct categories; government controlled media and privately owned media. These categories distinguish how media has been used as a political tool in Zimbabwean politics. The agendas pursued by different forms of media have been dependent on ownership and funding. The extensive exposure of the country's land revolution in the local and international media, mainly after the launch of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) in the year 2000, corroborates the influence of the media on agenda setting and public opinion formation. The different forms of media determine which issues members of the public think and talk about. Through various discursive practices and interpretative agendas, the media direct the public's attention to certain issues and formulate certain mental pictures and perceptions in readers (McCombs, 2002).

2.2.2.1 Government controlled media

i. Print media, Digital media

Extant literature confirms that radio has been the most accessible source of public affairs information and news in most developing countries (Kalyango, 2011). Zimbabwe has had three categories of print media; the mainstream press, rural newspapers and an independent press. With a literacy rate of 83.6%, readership of newspapers is affected by the rural and urban divide and also by the nature of distribution (World Factbook, 2016). However, the circulation of newspapers has largely been limited to urban areas as a result of distribution networks which use either railway or road transport. This has meant that most rural areas, where about 70% of the population lives, are inaccessible because of the generally poor road infrastructure (World Factbook, 2016). It further implies that Zimbabwe's print media is generally ill suited to provide vital linkages between the separate constituent parts of the wider political and national systems (Ngugi, 1995). However, printed newspapers and magazines require physical distribution which can be a challenge in times of political instability.

In 1981, the Mass Media Trust (MMT) was formed to run the national public media on behalf of government and the citizens. Members of the trust were appointed by the minister. As a result, it became very easy for the minister to be directly in charge of the MMT as he dictated to them what to do. However, while government wanted to control the mass media, it also at the same time, needed donor assistance and funding which came on condition that it upheld the principles of a free media and an independent judiciary. In 1995, the MMT Board amended the Trust deed to allow the President and the Minister of Information direct control and influence on the media board. In 1982, Zimbabwe witnessed what is termed the Matabeleland crisis. The Zimbabwe government in its bid to create a one party state moved the government forces into the Matabeleland region (home to the Ndebele ethnic group that comprises about 15% of the total Zimbabwean population) to squash the support base of the major opposition party, ZAPU. The Matabeleland crisis marked a dark period in the history of Zimbabwean media agenda setting as it led to the establishment of a culture of self-censorship, fear and government eulogizing in the public media (Moyo, 2003).

In 2008, an independent publication, the Daily News, was banned from circulation in many parts of Mashonaland East Province as it was believed to be pro-opposition, the MDC. Further, the introduction of satellite broadcast and the electronic media contributed to the decline in newspaper

readership period from 2002 onwards. (AllAfrica, 2003a). The Internet grew to epitomise a platform where individuals, political parties and activists could find expression. The massive expansion of digital and social media was fortuitous, as these created impromptu platforms for political expression. However, the government controlled media has faced much criticism.

ii. Public Broadcasting

Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) is a commercial public service broadcaster which is funded through licence fees and advertising. ZBC is divided into two sections, Zimbabwe Television (ZTV) and Radio services. While television enjoys about 55% national coverage, radio has close to 65% national coverage. Since 2015, two commercial radio stations have become operational, StarFM owned by Zimpapers (Government owned) and ZiFM owned by AB Communications (owned by the Minister of Information, Communication and Technology). StarFM has mobile applications, allowing the functionalities of live streaming and live broadcasts. The licences amounted to expansion of the media that is directly under state control and is associated with the ruling elite. Therefore, the state controls the public sphere by using controls to set the agenda and present biased narratives. ZBC has the wide coverage through its four radio stations; denying opposition political organisations access to the airwaves while giving the government and the ruling party unfettered access to the broadcast media. Government activities and statements are prominently featured on radio and television, while government opponents are barely featured, except negatively or when being insulted. Pronouncements from the President and members of the first family usually lead radio and television news broadcasts, even when they involve nothing more than ordinary events. The ZBC 'monopoly' led to the mushrooming of donor funded satellite radio stations that are broadcasting from outside Zimbabwe, Voice of the people from Netherlands and Voice of America from America. However, the Internet has given hope to Zimbabwe, recording 11.9 million active mobile subscribers (Potraz, 2015).

2.2.2.2 Privately owned media

i. Print, digital media

It has been suggested that in countries where opposition political parties are weak owing to state repression, the privately-owned media can occupy the role of opposition (Hyden & Okigbo 2002). The privately-owned media in Zimbabwe has been used by organisations opposing the government as the democratisation agenda apparatus. The democratic agenda broadly embraced by the mainstream civil society and the general public, has led to a serious polarisation between

government controlled media, and privately-owned media, as well as the general Zimbabwean society, hence it is highly opinionated (Moyo, 2003). Women, academics, churches, pressure groups and other opposition political parties make use of privately-owned media in articulating their respective interests and participation in the public sphere. However, the privately-owned media suffers the dilemma of how to be critical of its government without necessarily playing into the hands of other manipulative global forces that may not be authoritarian in orientation, but in motive (Moyo, 2003). Mostly, political agendas set in these privately-owned media conform to the interests of their sponsors.

The launch of *The Daily News* in 1999 by Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ), a group supported by a syndicate of local and foreign institutional and private investors (Waldahl, 2004; Ronning & Kupe 2000) marked the beginning of a new era in Zimbabwean media history. *The Daily News* threatened the dominance of the state controlled daily: *The Herald*. However, the government was sceptical about foreign owned media, as the then Minister of Information, Chen Chimutengwende, argued that foreign investment in the media and donor support for media ventures in the country posed a threat to national security and national sovereignty (Rønning 2000). *The Daily News* and a host of other privately owned media were loudly critical of government policies. As Waldahl (2004) noted, that the news coverage of *The Daily News* was in favour of regime change in Zimbabwe as shown from its far-reaching and analytically negative presentation of (President) Mugabe and ZANU (PF) than from any systematic account of the MDC's political qualities and activities. From a competitive paradigm perspective, these subscribed to an independent watchdog role, seeking to expose government malfeasance (Waldahl, 2004). Geoff Nyarota having exposed the '*Willowgate scandal'* while working for government controlled media *The Chronicle*, was virtually dismissed from *The Chronicle* and became the founding editor of *The Daily News*, which continued exposing the scandal. However, in some instances, one doubts whether the so-called private media is indeed private. From a dominance paradigm perspective, the media is subject to control by political elites, media owners and those in position of authority and serves the interest of more dominant, private, selfish interests of society stratified along class, sex and ethnicity (Freedman, 2015). When Trevor Ncube, a prominent Zimbabwean journalist and publisher, became the majority shareholder of '*The Standard'* and '*The Independent'* and the South African '*Mail and Guardian'*, criticism of the government by the three newspapers assumed tribal

dimensions, considering that Ncube is originally from the Ndebele tribe (Mano, 2005). When Sunsleey Chamunorwa (Reserve Bank Governor's former spokesman) became the editor-in-chief of the *Financial Gazette* from 2009, the newspaper assumed a pro-RBZ (Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe) stance and sang praises of reforms instituted by the bank. These three cases present evidence that proprietors tweak editorial policies in the newsroom.

Reporting the land issue, the private media refused to historicise and contextualise the land issue, preferring to treat it within the narrow framework of 'property rights' and 'rule of law' which is alien to Zimbabwe culture, creating an impression through its framing of local news, that its main audiences were the international community when the government was striving for 'a single voice' on the land issue. While the privately-owned publications viewed themselves as independent, unprejudiced and impartial, the conflict of views with the state-controlled media drove the two newspapers beyond the boundaries of professionalism and ethics (Chari, 2010). Much of the privately-owned media primarily offered unqualified support to the MDC, resulting in the government branding *The Daily News* an opposition mouthpiece (Chikowore, 2000). Media reports of national issues, therefore, took place in a context of intense political and media polarisation, which characterised a fractured society. The media filter the access to public space and accordingly, to the political sphere. Corporations and media proprietors and sponsors are configured as gatekeepers of public space (Castells, 2009). Curran (2002) noted that the market can give rise, not to independent watchdogs serving the public interest, but to corporate mercenaries which regulate their critical analysis to suit their private purpose.

ii. Private Broadcast media

In 2001, there was the re-emergence of underground radio broadcasting in post-independence Zimbabwe. This became a significant means for disseminating alternative viewpoints in an environment where free communicative space is threatened. Short Wave Radio Africa and Voice of America are the major clandestine radio stations that have been broadcasting into Zimbabwe since 2001(Ndlela, 2010). By suppressing these radio broadcasts through jamming signals and intimidating listeners, the government inadvertently raised people's interest and made these stations more visible and more popular than they otherwise would have been. These radio stations are generally known to be popular sources of information in Zimbabwe, the 'underground' nature

of their operations, as well as their consumption, make their audience ratings measurement complex, particularly through 'official' audience survey channels such as the Zimbabwe All Media and Products Survey (ZAMPS) ratings (Mabweazara, 2013).

As a matter of fact, the Zimbabwe electorate are not passive victims of governing state propaganda. Instead, new communicative spaces are devised outside the prevailing media domain and access alternative viewpoints from an assortment of emerging platforms. Subsequently, the opposition MDC distributed shortwave pirate radios in the rural areas as an alternative to the state broadcast. These pirate radio broadcasts have leveraged their operations on new digital technologies such as the Internet and the mobile phone, setting up interactive news websites on which they post news bulletins as well as offer programming on demand through podcasting and live audio streaming (Barker, 2010). In addition, all news and current affairs programmes are archived and available for download from the stations' websites. The radio stations' websites have become one of the main avenues through which they interact and engage with their audiences. Similarly, contact with audiences is sought and triggered through social networking sites such as Facebook. An explosion in mobile phone ownership among both elite and poor has facilitated a wide and expansive distribution of news content from the radio stations. In 2016, Zimbabwe has eight offline and online radio stations and one television broadcaster.

Access to accurate and reliable information is fundamental in decision-making. However, in emerging democracies, where there are government restrictions on media freedom, it is particularly complex for citizens to find reliable sources of information (Dahdal, 2012; Noueihed & Warren, 2012; Al-Kandari & Hasanen, 2012). Despite Zimbabwe government's systematic efforts to regulate the public media through the enactment of legislation such as Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIIPA), other sources of non-mediated political information have been increasing due to the proliferation of the Internet, social media and smart phones (Fox & Ramos, 2011; Maarek, 2011; Howard, 2006). The control of the national media has been subtle, internal and external reasons have been used to justify the control of the media (Moyo, 2003). The Internet has afforded access to diverse information sources and opportunities for citizens and organisations to exchange information and engage in civic life (Shah et al., 2005; 2001). Social media in particular, offer systems and platforms that conform naturally to a political discussion network with family, friends, and acquaintances (Moy & Gastil, 2006), revealing how consumers connect to those brands in which

they have an interest (Davis, Piven & Breazeale, 2014) and strengthening brand relationship by providing interaction and participation as well as providing brand advocacy (Carlson, Suter, & Brown, 2008) and fostering a sense of belonging through interaction and engagement (Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton(2012).

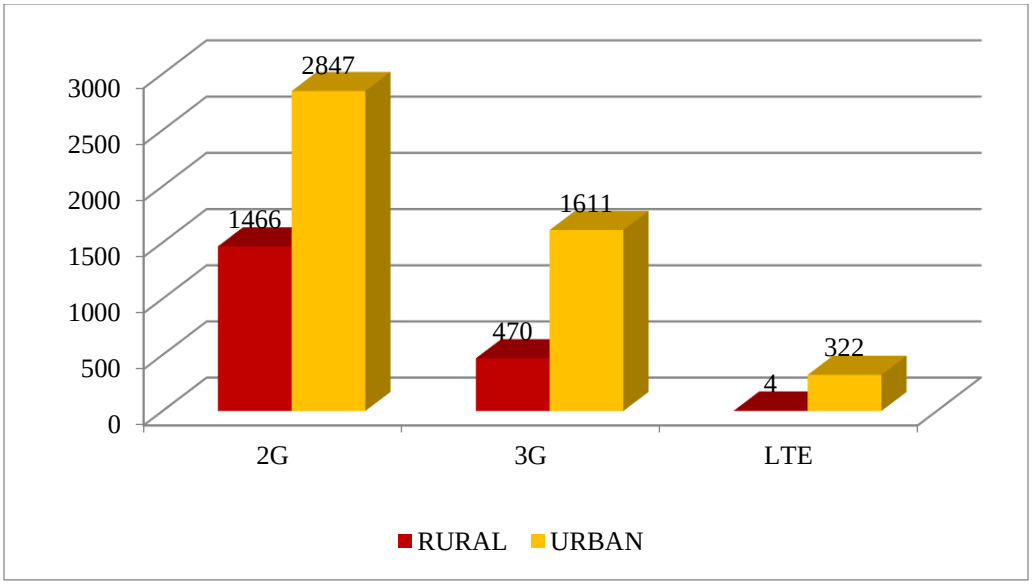
2.3 Diffusion of the Digital media: Growing but Unequal Access

There has been a global upsurge in the use of digital media platforms during the 21st century (Field, 2016). Politicians around the globe are using media platforms such as Twitter, MySpace, Facebook, WhatsuApp and organisation websites to reach out to the electorate (Dabner, 2012). Barack Obama's success in the 2008 Presidential election is attributed to the use of the social media advertisement as campaign tool (Cogbur & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011). A firm's website plays a key role in influencing consumers' perceptions of products and services, and subsequently, in influencing the final product choice (Casalo, Flavian & Guinaliu, 2007). In a similar vein, political websites provide the electorate with information that influences their perceptions, views and final decisions concerning specific political issues. In the first decade of independence, Zimbabwe aggressively engaged in social and physical infrastructure development, laying the foundation for access to communication. This enabled Internet connectivity and mobile phone coverage and helped minimise the urban and rural divide. It is now possible for rural people to access news and entertainment on satellite television, accessed through free to air decoders and digital satellite television (DSTV) decoders which remain uncensored.

Zimbabwean population that uses the online media has been rising exponentially, with an Internet penetration rate of 49.8 % (6 703 518 subscribers), slightly below Kenya which tops the list of African countries with 69.6% (Potraz, 2016). It has a mobile penetration rate of 96.5% (18 992 082 subscribers) (Potraz Quarterly Report, 2016). The diffusion of the Internet in Zimbabwe compares favourably with other SADC countries, such as South Africa, with a penetration rate of 52.25% and Zambia at 20.4%. While use of the Internet is increasingly widespread in Zimbabwe, it remains most common among the middle and upper classes due to the country's rather high level of economic inequality as well as rural and urban dynamics. Following radical market-oriented economic reforms under the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in the 1990s, income distribution has remained highly skewed: the Zimbabwe GINI coefficient for 2014 was 48.1 and Zimbabwe GDP per capita of 1130.4. However, the Zimbabwe mobile operators since then have embarked on an aggressive 'mobile telephony' infrastructure development, erecting

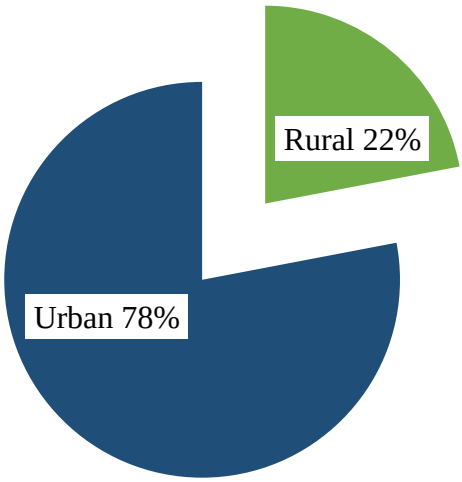
6720 base stations nationwide, 1940 base stations servicing the rural areas and 4780 servicing the urban population (Potraz Quarterly Report, 2016). Of the total 6720 base stations, 78% cater for the urban population and 22% rural as shown on Figure 2.1 below:

Figure 2.1: Distribution of the mobile telephony infrastructure



Source: Potraz Quarterly Report (2016)

Figure 2.2: Cumulative distribution of mobile infrastructure



Source: Potraz Quarterly Report (2016)

Although digital media is an increasingly global technology, the way it is used within any country responds largely to national-level variables and the state of digital media diffusion and its political impact depend upon the ways in which it is used by political actors.

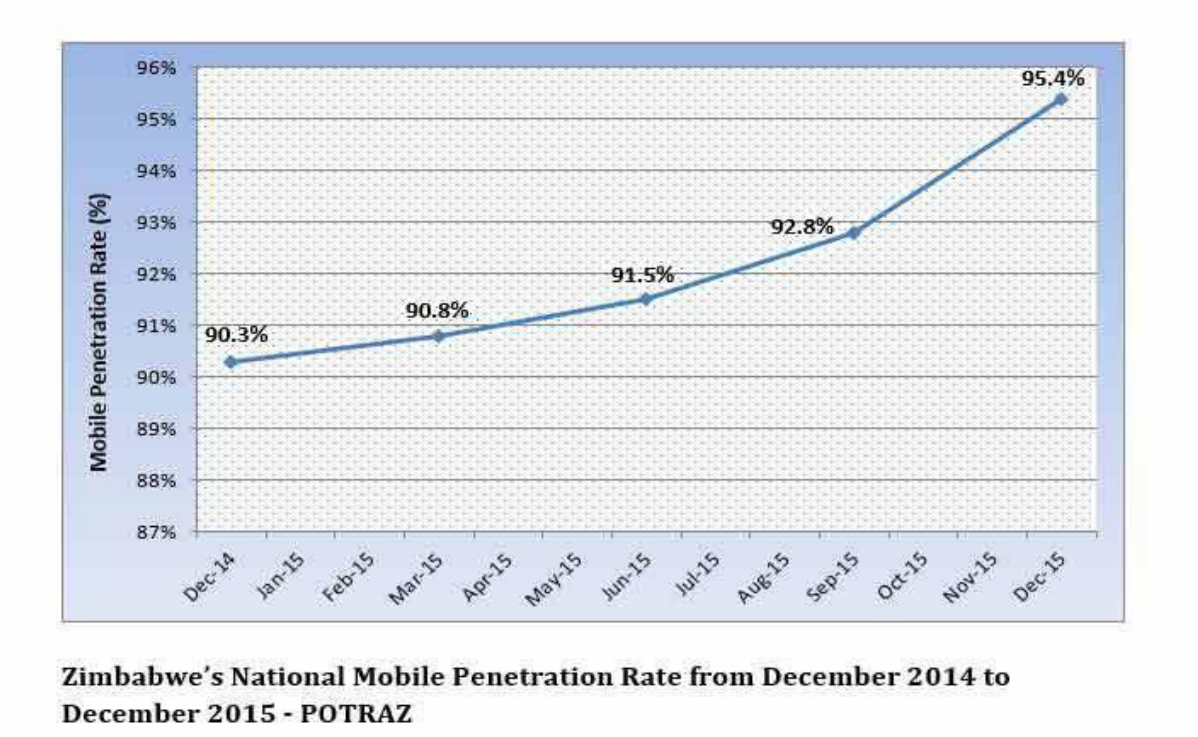
Furthermore, social media has become a vital link between Zimbabwean locals and the widely spread Diaspora as it has provided instant dissemination of opinions and information. In the run-up to the 2013 election, Zimbabwean blogger 'Baba Jukwa', 'Mai Jukwa' and 'Grade 7' Facebook, and web pages became a meeting point for activists. Zimbabweans (including the Diaspora) utilized the Baba Jukwa Facebook page for information and updates. It was also possible to retrieve links to check voter registration status. However, online media has distinct advantages. Firstly, these online platforms do not need any licence to operate and are therefore open to everyone. This means that politics is no longer an exclusive preserve of the elite with barriers of entry to the general public. These developments are re-molding the field of politics, recasting a new cadre of politician, and shaping new fields of political marketing (Wu, 2014). Secondly, the media platform has a viral effect, which means information is instantaneously available at nominal cost. Thirdly, the platforms offer communication opportunities beyond the control or limitations of governments. In Zimbabwe, media platforms face a stiff challenge as Government constantly threatens to control use of the media (Kpaduwa, 2013).

However, there are growing numbers of politicians in the country with Facebook accounts that they use to communicate and interact with their constituencies. ZANU PF Minister, Jonathan Moyo, is popular with his Twitter account which he uses to set the media agenda and as a marketing tool to propagate the government policy issues. Youth are drawn to vibrant virtual forums such as Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, where engagement and discussions with politicians at a personal level are possible without the pretensions of rehearsed rallies. This is a reflection of developments and experiences in other countries within the continent. President Uhuru Kenyatta's use of social media and digital communication was instrumental in his 2008 election campaign. His Facebook page received close to 500 000 followers. Most parliamentarians are active on Facebook. Through the digital media reactions, feedback, conversations and debates are generated online and the multiplier effect of the shared messages impacts on the broad spectrum of the electorate. Conversely, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), the Official Secrets Act, the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), and the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act presents a contradiction as they constrain access to information. Private radio stations are prohibited hence opposition parties resort to digital media in oreder to campaign. ZANU PF has monopoly of the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation.

2.3.1 Use of mobile phones and Internet accessibility

Zimbabwe's experience confirms that the accessibility of the Internet and mobile phones increases the demand for information. Figure 2.3 shows the increase in mobile penetration rate from 2014 to 2016.

Figure 2.3: Zimbabwe`s National Mobile Penetration Rate 2014 to 2015



Zimbabwe's National Mobile Penetration Rate from December 2014 to December 2015 - POTRAZ

Source: Potraz Quarterly report, 2015

According to the Internet World Statistics website, as of December 31(2011), there were approximately 1,445,717 Internet users, constituting 12% of the country's population (Internet World Stats, 2012). In 2015, this increased to 95.4%. Zimbabwe's mobile penetration rate increased from 92.8% in the third quarter 2015 to 96.5% in the first quarter 2016 (Potraz Quarterly Report, 2015) (See Figure 2.5). Affordable rates in accessing the Internet and the wide national coverage and its interactivity gave impetus to demand for information through social networks such as Twitter and Facebook in both rural and urban areas (Potraz Quarterly Report, 2016). These media platforms opened up spaces for communication, engagement and political advocacy. These developments added new opportunities to political players to communicate without season. With the advent of the Internet on cell phones or handsets, it became possible for the rural populace to access the Internet and to contribute to political debates. This is complimented by the advent of online newspapers, news portals, video streaming, periscope and blogging.

2.4 Government Systems: An increasingly personalised politics

There is an ongoing debate between political researchers on the institutional consequences of presidential and prime ministerial systems. Linz, Lijphart, Haggard and McCubbins (1990) argue that parliamentary systems are more effective, and that they lead to a more stable democracy. On the contrary, Shugart, Mainwaring, Wilson and Schramm (1997) argue for the superiority of the presidential system. However, there is no consensus on the superiority of one system over the other. These systems differ on electoral policy. One of the fundamental roles of society in democratic and other political systems is to make decisions about political issues. Literature has shown that the study of electoral choice has been a core theme in research on political dynamics in democratic nations, and past research has yielded dramatic progress in our knowledge about how voters reach their decisions. Scholars from the Columbia School defined the sociological parameters of electoral choice (Berelson et al., 1954), and the Michigan School extended this knowledge to include the socio-psychological influences on political choice (Campbell et al., 1960; Miller & Shanks, 1996). Both traditions began with the assumption that many voters were ill prepared to deal with the complexities of politics; thus, voters relied on shortcuts, such as group cues or affective partisan loyalties to simplify political decision-making and guide their individual behaviour.

At independence in 1980, Zimbabwe adopted a parliamentary system of governance where the President (Canaan Banana) became the ceremonial head of state (President) and Robert Mugabe became the Prime Minister with executive powers. This system of governance was operational in Zimbabwe from 1980 to 1987 and changed to a presidential system in 1987.

The contemporary understanding of Zimbabwe's political system is anchored in the extensive authority of the president as enshrined in the Zimbabwe Constitution (2013). The presidential candidate is a nominee from the contesting political parties. Presidentialism tends to subordinate parties to individual politicians, both in government and during electoral campaigns (Boas, 2015). Notwithstanding the power of parties, several institutional factors contribute in making individual candidates the central players in presidential election campaigns. The politics of Zimbabwe takes place in a framework of a full presidential republic, where the president is elected by majority vote and where a run-off is held if no candidate wins a majority (51^{+}%) in the first round (Zimbabwe Constitution, 2013) . The president is the head of state and government and commander in chief of the defence forces. However, the government exercises the executive power while the legislative

power is vested in both the government and parliament. The Zimbabwe president is particularly powerful with regards to the country's legislature, and in terms of control of the legislative agenda. Speeches from the throne can be used as a check on whether the manifesto commitments actually get to legislative programmes. Accordingly, we can trace policies from their initial appearance in party platforms to their formal articulation in the speech from the throne and to their eventual enactment. Zimbabwe political parties have strong societal roots, and a non-elitist image among the electorate, meaning that candidates increasingly seek to align themselves with the party image during campaigns and make indirect, mediated appeals to the electorate. This development was first experienced in the watershed election of 2008, pitting Mugabe of ZANU-PF against Tsvangirai of the opposition MDC. Neither candidate obtained a majority; leading to a run-off in June 2008. However, all participating parties in their campaign did not emphasise party image but rather placed more emphasis on the individual candidates.

Zimbabwe has been under the rule of one leader and the same governing party for 36 years; therefore, the same players have been at the helm of Zimbabwe politics. Downs (1957) suggests that political parties, similar to individual politicians, are mainly motivated to win office. Joining the government to acquire the spoils of office is a motivation generally attributed to politicians in Zimbabwe. As in all presidential systems, the president of Zimbabwe appoints cabinet members who do not answer directly to parliament, unless explicitly convened to do so by a specific committee. There is no institutional congregation of the ministers, such as council of ministers. The president calls for individual informal meetings with ministers and meets and chairs the full cabinet once every week. The President's agenda control is provided for in the Zimbabwe Constitution (2013). The President, as part of the executive, organises the support for its legislative agenda on a partisan basis. ZANUPF politburo, which is the ruling party's supreme governing body, operates as the defacto parliament, where agendas are set and deliberated only to be endorsed in parliament. Information to the public is directed through a polarised state media. In the legislative assembly, the governing party has the majority members of the legislature, hence they are able to influence the parliamentary agenda.

The government controlled print and electronic media have been refocused to foster what is termed national identity, culture and national integrity. However, in reality, these are music, drama and film that promote the ruling party ideals and propaganda. In Zimbabwe, the ruling party perceives

itself as a quintessence and expression of national interests. The Government controlled media lack diversity and plurality of views, primarily because of the belief that the governing party is the only legitimate representative of the interest of the critical mass. Any view divergent to that of the state and the governing party is branded as against the Zimbabwe populace.

2.5 An overview of political marketing

Political marketing refers to a series of strategic and tactical planned activities aimed at spreading political meaning to party members, media and potential sources of funding, as well as the electorate (Nursal, 2004; O`Cass, 2001b). The general fundamental philosophical assumption of contemporary marketing theory is the centrality of the marketing concept. When a political party or candidate applies the marketing concept to the political process, they must be in a position to adapt to and satisfy voters' needs (Mauser, 1983; Newman & Sheth, 1987; Reid, 1988). Candidates and political parties dispense information in order to produce a shift in behaviour and to maintain voter support (Nimmo, 1970). Enforcing this behaviour shift requires sufficient understanding of the values placed by voters on selected criteria when making voting decision (Newman & Sheth, 1987). Any study of political marketing possibly needs to focus on parties as they are, to some extent, the architects of contemporary politics.

2.6 Zimbabwe as the study area

Zimbabwe is a land-locked country in Southern Africa. It was formerly called Rhodesia, named after Cecil John Rhodes, who led the British South African Company that colonised the then Rhodesia in 1890. Zimbabwe became independent from British colonial rule in 1980, after a protracted war of liberation. The name Zimbabwe is derived from the name Dzimbahwe which was the original name for the Great Zimbabwe ruins built by the Lemba tribe during the 11th century (Parfitt & Tudor, 2002). Zimbabwe shares borders with four countries, South Africa to the south, Zambia to the north, Mozambique to the east and Botswana to the west. The study area is shown on figure 2.4 below:

Figure 2.4: Zimbabwe on the geographical map of Africa



Source: GraphicMaps.com (2016)

Zimbabwe is divided into ten (10) administrative provinces which are, in turn, divided into smaller geographical and governmental entities called districts which represent a sub-unit of regional government within the provinces: cities and towns fall into the different provinces.

Voters elect within the provinces and districts where they are registered despite possibly residing in another province. Votes are then tabulated by ward to arrive at the state total, which determines the winning national candidate. The winner on the national level is determined by the total of the Electoral College representing all the provinces in the following way: each province is assigned voting constituencies delineated according to census figures as shown on Table 2.1

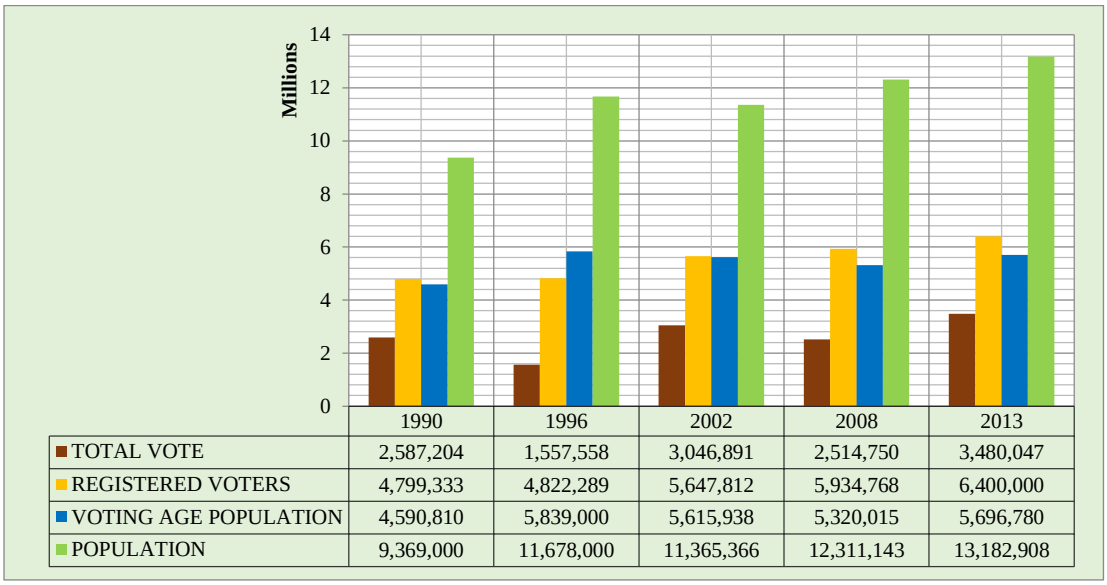
Table 2.1: Zimbabwe population distribution

Province	**No. of districts**	**National assembly constituencies**	**Population**
Harare	7	29	2123132
Mashonaland Central	8	18	1152520
Mashonaland East	9	23	1344955
Mashonaland West	7	22	1501656
Midlands	8	28	1614941
Masvingo	7	26	1485090
Manicaland	7	26	1752698
Bulawayo	4	12	1200337
Matabeleland North	7	13	749017
Matabeleland South	8	13	683893
TOTAL	72	210	

Source: Central Statistical Office, 2016

The candidate that wins the majority of aggregated votes becomes the President. While Zimbabwe has a population of about 15 966 810 people, only 40% (5 658 624) remain registered as voters (Worldometer, 2016). However, voting trends in Zimbabwe depict various population and political dynamics, as depicted in Figure2.5 below.

Figure 2.5: Time series of voting in Zimbabwe 1979 to 2013

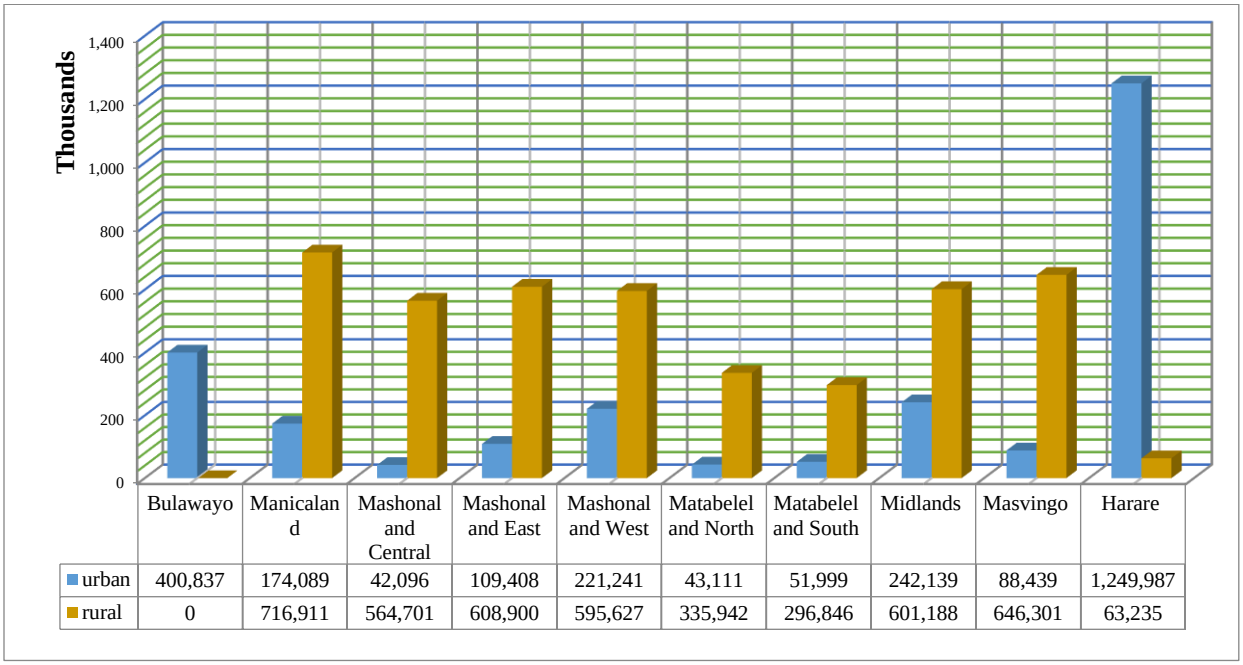


	1990	1996	2002	2008	2013
TOTAL VOTE	2,587,204	1,557,558	3,046,891	2,514,750	3,480,047
REGISTERED VOTERS	4,799,333	4,822,289	5,647,812	5,934,768	6,400,000
VOTING AGE POPULATION	4,590,810	5,839,000	5,615,938	5,320,015	5,696,780
POPULATION	9,369,000	11,678,000	11,365,366	12,311,143	13,182,908

Source: (Central Statistical Office, 2016)

This means that while the number of registered voters has increased in absolute terms, this has not been significant relative to the population as the proportion has remained constant. In fact, while the number of registered voters has increased over the years, the number of voters has remained below seven million. This reflects growing voter apathy and, among other factors, the need for aggressive marketing among political players. However, the projected eligible voter population in Zimbabwe for 2018 election is shown on figure 2.6

Figure 2.6: Projected voting population: 2016



	Bulawayo	Manicaland	Mashonaland Central	Mashonaland East	Mashonaland West	Matabeleland North	Matabeleland South	Midlands	Masvingo	Harare
urban	400,837	174,089	42,096	109,408	221,241	43,111	51,999	242,139	88,439	1,249,987
rural	0	716,911	564,701	608,900	595,627	335,942	296,846	601,188	646,301	63,235

Source: Central Statistical Office, 2016

From the statistics, it shows 37.2% urban voters and 62.8% rural voters with a projected voting population increase of 15.95% from 2013 to 2016. However, the key determinants of electoral victory in Zimbabwe presidential elections include the rural-urban dynamics of voting behaviour (Mandaza, 2002).

2.7 An overview of Zimbabwe`s political trajectory

Observers of the Zimbabwe political landscape are most likely to assume that the country was, until the 1990's, a one-party state due to ZANU PF`s dominance of the political landscape (Kriger,2012; Sithole & Makumbe, 1997). The rationale for such an assumption is that for the better part of the 1980`s, Zimbabwe's political leadership and the ruling party aggressively advocated for a one-party system. This view is reinforced by the socialist ideology which the leadership proclaimed during this period. The truth, however, is that Zimbabwe was on no account a socialist state and has never been a one-party state, de jure or de facto before or after independence in 1980 (Sithole,1997). From 1979's "internal settlement", general and presidential elections have been held at regular intervals, 1979, 1980, 1985,1990, 1996, 2002, 2008 and 2013 (ZESN, 2016). Nine political parties contested the 1980 election at independence, but only ZANU-

PF and ZAPU-PF emerged as the strongest contenders (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012). The electoral system used for the 1979 election was proportional representation (PR) based on the party list system and this was abandoned towards the 1985 elections, to be replaced with a first-past-the-post system. In the 1990 elections, the Presidential election was introduced as a separate ballot/vote from the parliamentary votes and this continued thereafter; 1996, 2002, 2008 and 2013 respectively. However, elections were harmonised as from 2008, this implying that all presidential, parliamentary and local government elections would be held simultaneously, in a measure supposedly to cut costs (Booysen, 2009).

The Zimbabwean party system can precisely be described as multiparty in form, but fundamentally two–party in function. Until the formation of the MDC in 1999, competition for government was dominated by ZANU PF. Consequently, any study of political marketing in Zimbabwe needs to focus on the parties as they have the major influence. Within the Zimbabwe political landscape, parties strive to gain the competitive edge over the other.

2.7.1 Presidential elections in Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwe Presidential election is held once every five years (Zimbabwe Constitution, 2013). The Zimbabwe Constitution stipulates that a president can only serve for two terms if elected. The election process involve several stages, firstly the primaries, in which presidential candidates compete for their party nomination. Once the parties elect their presidential nominees, the campaign for the general election starts. Currently in Zimbabwe there are two main parties: Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). However, other non-party affiliated candidates for presidency can also run as independents, although independent candidates have never gained any significant power, enough to sway the election results in favour of one or the other main candidates other than the ruling party candidate.

2.7.2 Political parties in Zimbabwe

A political party is defined as an autonomous institutional coalition of citizens seeking to contest elections in the hope of gaining control over governmental power (Downs, 1957; La Palombara & Weiner, 2015). The Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) were militant organisations that fought a war against the white minority

government in Rhodesia. The origins of ZANU are traced to a split from the mainstream Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) in 1963 (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007). Since then, these two parties fought in the liberation struggle as separate entities, though fighting a common enemy, the white minority government led by Ian Smith.

Although the first decade after independence witnessed the presence of several political parties in Zimbabwe, most of these never enjoyed the space to develop into formidable opposition parties. In 1989, there was the formation of two political parties; the Zimbabwe Unity Movement, ZUM led by Edgar Tekere and FPZ led by Enoch Dumbutshena. While the political environment was not conducive for growth of opposition parties, the two parties were essentially reactive. Given that during this period, the political environment was characterised by violence and intimidation, along with the politicisation of the military and public services, the two parties failed to impact significantly on the country's political market. Nevertheless, political authority in Zimbabwe has been based on clientelistic practices, patronage and rent seeking.

The period 1990 to 1994, as ZANU-PF sought to consolidate its strengths on the political market, opposition strongholds were emerging. The National Constitutional Assembly was formed in 1994 advocating for a new Zimbabwean constitution. This became the centerpiece of new opposition voices to Government policies. Zimbabwe convened a Constitutional Referendum in 2000 whose results further reflected the growing dissent within the civic society, rural and urban communities. This dissent was given printing space by emerging private media houses (Zaffiro, 2001). As the NCA developed community outreach programmes to vote for or against the constitution referendum, new political spaces for debate opened up, thereby paving the way to the creation of the MDC. The emergence of the opposition MDC can then be attributed to developments of the constitutional advocacy front. The formation of the MDC in 1999 brought tension between the largely urban-based labour movement, civic society and the government. The MDC and the independent media became increasingly vocal and critical of the government and the governing party, resulting in censorship of the media. In spite of Government controls of the media, pirate civic print media in the form of posters, pamphlets, magazines, and public forums, offered alternative open platforms for political debate. However the emerging opposition had a weak point that was utilised by the governing party. The weak point of the opposition was its alleged source of funding, white commercial farmers, key protagonists to the ruling nationalist oriented ZANU

PF party. The political opposition was then portrayed as a neo-colonial project by the 'British and the Americans.' This cast the MDC in a bad light, as "sell outs" among ZANU PF constituencies. The governing party reigned in its grand narrative; the struggle for independence and the land issue. The emotional implications of this campaign spilled into the immediate rush to possess white-owned commercial farmland, as part of the Fast Track Land Reform Program (1990). Extant literature has shown that, in Africa, land is a power base and a symbol of authority, hence it is a source of political power (Lund, 2006; Sikor & Lund, 2009). In its desperate struggle to re-establish its constituencies in 2000, ZANU PF rediscovered the important role of traditional chiefs in Zimbabwean political life, twenty years after independence. Traditional leaders exist at the village level; the basic organising unit of rural life in Zimbabwe outside commercial farming areas. Chieftaincy in traditional Shona/Karanga/Ndebele areas has been restricted to lineage and inheritance which is highly coercive within the village. Traditional leaders wield influence in rural Zimbabwe, most notably through mediums such as tribe, clan, totem, custom and tradition. These leaders are an effective communication tool, given their hierarchical nature (chief, headmen, and village heads) and their spread (Linington, 2001). Information dissemination within the hierarchy in rural Zimbabwe is regulated by traditional leaders. It is through village meetings, funerals, traditional ceremonies, songs and dance that information is disseminated. This provides a strong grassroots network for the party and facilitates the continuation of the authoritarian and bifurcated state (Mamdani, 1996). The governing party decided to harness this component of customary governance by incentivising chiefs with cars. In 2016, there were 271 chiefs and 400 headmen and 24 000 village heads in the country. Unlike rural villages, urban neighbourhoods lack distinct social cohesion due to population diversity and more individualised socio-economic structures.

2.7.3 Zanu-PF as the governing party: 1980 to 2000

Within ZANU (PF), the Politburo is the supreme decision-making board of the party, the Central Committee oversees party programmes, and the national consultative assembly is an advisory board, while the provincial executive council, district executive council, branch executive and cell group constitute the grassroots. In 1980, ZANU-PF won the elections under the leadership of Robert Mugabe and received another five-year mandate in the 2013 elections. Literature indicates that the fundamental and unifying core of the party is the leader and leader image because the leader delivers and personifies the service and serves as the basis for identity (Parker, 2012;

Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy 2007). On coming to power, ZANU (PF) abandoned its pre-independence revolutionary promises of fundamental structural change (Moore, Kriger & Raftopoulos, 2013). While the party maintained its socialist rhetoric, there was a change in policy direction towards a pragmatic accommodation of the capitalist sector. The governing party pursued a welfarist model of development that emphasised infrastructural subsidies while enhancing the peasant economy (Dawson & Kelsall, 2011). The aim of the government then was to create a developmental state inspired by the successes of the East Asian Tigers. ZANU (PF) has managed to use rallies and the state media effectively to promote its image as the sole contributor to the liberation struggle. These rallies continue to be filled with psychological aggression through war songs, symbols and party slogans and repetitive behaviours as were witnessed at the first Heroes' Days celebrations in 1980 (Kriger, 2006). After the 2000 election, ZANU PF faced a challenge of fostering the party as an attractive brand. Having realised that proliferation of new products is a barrier to loyalty; nationalist intellectuals promulgated a liberation and patriotic history to re-brand the party.

2.7.4 Re-branding ZANU-PF using patriotic history

The interpretation and presentation of history has been critical to the survival of ZANU-PF. Patriotic history was reconstructed so that it resonates with the strong feelings about colonialism and perceptions of Western hypocrisy while evoking emotional identity (Tendi, 2010). State sponsored radio and television provided access to nationalist intellectuals to elaborate and present this history through liberation war documentaries and panel discussions. State media aired catchy jingles and reworked liberation war songs. The strategic creation of the heroes' acre was a critical part of the reconstruction of an emotional identity (Kriger, 2006). This narrative presents ZANU PF as the custodian of the liberation struggle. In order to retain existing supporters as well as convert new supporters, the liberation and patriotic history narrative was broadcast on local television discussion shows, prime time news, in the press, at national events and funerals. However, themes and events which did not serve the governing party agenda were downplayed or misrepresented and those believed to generate support for the opposition conscripted (Tendi, 2010). In the rural areas, ZBC and ZTV became the principal source of information and news. On the contrary, public intellectuals critical of the nationalist narrative published articles in the independent daily and weekly newspapers but, according to some analysts, failed to speak to the

liberation history and instead compared democracy to the Western Democracy (ibid). Coverage of the opposition was done by international media such as the BBC and CNN and through opposition political rallies. This resulted in the enactment of Access to Information Act (2002) and Public Order and Security Act (2006) to control the independent media.

2.7.5 ZANU-PF 2000- 2016

After the 2000 elections, ZANU-PF maintained its campaign mode, intensifying youth mobilisation in preparation for the subsequent elections, providing post-purchase reassurance, and maintaining their winning coalition of voters until the next opportunity for a sale (Needham, 2005), just as the Chinese proverb that says "*if you do not plan for the future, you will get the one that shows up"*. Competition between ZANU PF and the opposition parties in the inclusive government assisted in the formation of informal networks within the governing party with the principal task of marketing the party, either by coercion or violence, running as parallel government to the unity government (Kriger, 2012). The logic of political survival suggests that the end (power) justifies the means. The ruling elite resorted to violence as a standard operating procedure. ZANU (PF) recognises that political activist`s output is a part of the value chain and the organisation`s success also depends on the capacity and capabilities of the party members, hence, it distributes patronage goods to different sections of the electorate. The rural electorates receive mostly agricultural inputs channeled as a Presidential agricultural input scheme. In urban areas, patronage is processed through parceling out of land in the peri-urban areas. Parallels can be drawn between prisons and party behaviour on patronage. In a prison if you please the warden, you have better status (Klein, 2009). A web of patronage and privileged access emerged, signifying a fusion of the state and the party. This operated both among senior officials of the governing party, and at grassroots levels, in the form of access to state benefit systems.

2.7.6 MDC as the main opposition party

The entry of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999, originating from the labour movement (Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions) and civic and constitutional movement (LeBas, 2011), into the political market entirely transformed the nature of political competition in Zimbabwe. It threatened the ZANU-PF hegemony and the political context changed. The ability to challenge the government, the enthusiasm and optimism became endangered as ZANU (PF)

activists and the state security agencies sought to destroy the MDC (Rutherford, 2013). However, its policies reflected leftist oriented rhetoric resonating with urban workers and multilateral donors (Chung, 2010). Literature conceives that African political parties are characterised by weak organisation, low levels of institutionalisation, and fragile links to the society they are believed to represent (Van de Walle & Butler, 2000). Fundamentally, the structure of each of the major two parties can be described as a hierarchical pyramid with individual members at the bottom and the most influential decision-making bodies at the top as facilitators of electoral campaigns. The organisational structure of the MDC has the National Council as the apex, provincial council, district assemblies, ward assemblies and branch executive representing the grassroots. In 2008, the MDC and the governing party (ZANU PF) signed a 'Global Political Agreement' (GPA) that committed them to power-sharing. However, the MDC failed to convert their electoral success into more substantial state power (Raftopoulos, 2010). Obey Manayiti was quoted in the local newspaper as indicating that former MDC-T ministers were in government to make up numbers (NewsDay15thMarch, 2014).

2.7.7 Other Political Parties

The susceptibility of political parties, public distrust in the performance of the main institutions of the political system (parties and representatives of government and opposition) and the character of the media in Zimbabwean politics, highlights the importance of building experiential, quantitative approaches to the dynamics of voting behaviour within the framework of the election campaign involving media, citizens and various spaces of political mediation like family, social networks, and community organisations. Just as consumer brands, political brands not only identify and differentiate; they also create and reinforce emotional perceptions. These perceptions influence consumer behaviour towards purchasing decisions that maximise their sense of value, while also providing the supplier, or manufacturer with financial value, in the form of returns (Keller, 2008; Smith & French, 2009). Political branding seeks a psychological contract with voters by attaching "emotional values" (White & de Chernatony, 2002; Burkitt, 2002) and providing political parties with electoral payoffs (Smith & French, 2009).

2.8 An overview of political communication in the Zimbabwe context

In any context, a campaign seeks to win the hearts and minds of the consumer. During Zimbabwe's struggle for liberation, both contestants used different forms of communication including

propaganda in their efforts to win the hearts of the masses. Propaganda involves the promotion of information designed and spread within the society to influence change, attitudes, opinions, beliefs and behaviours (Iorgulescu, 2014).

2.8.1 Media as a political communication tool in election campaigns in Zimbabwe

Political communications is an interactive process that concerns the transmission of information among three major population sectors; politicians, the media and the public (Gschwend & Zittel, 2015). Ordinarily, this interactive process cascades variously; downwards from top governing institutions towards citizens, horizontally in linkages among political actors, and also upwards from public opinion towards authorities (Norris, 2004). Political communication evokes images of candidates and campaigns, debates and issues, propaganda and persuasion (Powell & Cowart, 2015). It is within the framework of their political activities that parties present corresponding manifestos and agendas to the electorate through acceptable means. However, some researchers have established that whether a campaign is a consumer campaign or a political campaign, its main purpose is to reinforce or reactivate the respondents' predisposition and therefore augment awareness of a particular environment (Hart, 2000; Burton, Miller & Shea, 2015). While the media can be used by both politicians and the public to communicate an agenda, it also shapes the media agenda (Neuman, Guggenheim, Jang & Bae, 2014). Literature has shown that political candidates look to the traditional media for legitimacy, while social media users are then assumed to look to digital media for information on unobtrusive issues (Bethany, Conway & Kenski, 2015; Hill, Capella & Cho, 2015). Media provides an enabling environment in communication by facilitating the flow of knowledge, providing forums for discussion of issues, teaching ideas and skills that are essential for the creation of a better life (Abubakar, Ango & Buhari 2009; Obidike 2011; Choudhury 2011, 1; Kapoor 2011). Through the different stages of the evolution of Zimbabwe politics, the media has become an open forum of public debate and discussion (Bowler, 2015; Darnolf, 2000). Open forums of public debate and discussion provide individuals with a platform to engage in critical, rational and informed debate on issues that affect their social space (Williams, McMurray, Kurz & Lambert, 2015). In Zimbabwe, an election campaign has been conducted on two frontiers, that is, rallies and the print and electronic media. However, there has been global advancement in types of media which have a direct effect on electoral campaigns and awareness.

2.8.1.1 Political Communication in Zimbabwe 1980 to 1990

Post-independence Zimbabwe encompasses two distinct political phases; 1980 to 1990 and the post-1990 era. Over 1980 to 1990 Zimbabwe was a de facto one party state. The average Zimbabwean had little knowledge about party politics but was full of strong feelings towards independence and the governing party. However, these feelings appeared to wane over the decade, 1980 to 1990. ZANU (PF) capitalised on these strong feelings to adopt the slogan, "Forward with ZANU, down with sell-outs" to convey information to people. These were translated into Shona, Ndebele and English and were found in newspapers. Post-colonial Zimbabwe adopted a system of signs as communication (Booysen, 2003; Kriger, 2005; Mano, 2005). Zanu used a clenched fist and a cockerel; a hand symbolising the economy, the economy is land epitomising transfer of land to indigenous people (Masango, 2005). Radio and television were the political medium of the time.

2.8.1.2 Political Communication in Zimbabwe 1990-2013

The post-1990 period represented the first entry of opposition political parties onto the political era since independence, led by ZANU PF insiders, Edgar Tekere and Enoch Dumbutshena. This development signified growing dissatisfaction or dissent within ZANU PF and also within the population about the party ideology and the policy direction of the party. Nevertheless, the party adjusted to the challenges of a multiparty political environment. The ZANU (PF) leadership quickly understood the fundamental principles of marketing which state that a market driven organisation must strive to stay close to the customer, and well ahead of competition (Kotler, Burton, Deans, Brown & Armstrong, 2015). The party leadership engaged with the masses through rallies offering promises that resonated with the expectations of the masses. Political grassroots structures provided local electioneering support, canvassing and leafleting during political campaigns (Wring 2000a). The psychology of emotions evolved to become the centerpiece of ZANU PFs political communication. As part of a revival of cultural nationalism, state-led, national day celebrations intensified through the introduction of popular music events alongside the traditional ceremonies (Willems, 2013). Dayan and Katz (1992) posit that integrative media events integrate society in a collective heartbeat and evoke a renaissance of loyalty to the society and its legitimate authority. The deification of war heroes such as Herbert Chitepo and Josiah Tongogara resonated with the masses. The use of religious symbolism in conveying political messages worked to the advantage of ZANU PF as it broadened and deepened the party's political support

countrywide. As an intrinsic part of indigenous or ethnic cultures, religion evokes feelings of unquestionable loyalty to governing subjects (Ahluwalia, 2001; Hayes, 2016).

The grand narrative of ZANU PF over time has remained the liberation struggle, at the same time capitalising on the religious and spiritual aspects of Zimbabwean society. The psychology of emotions imparted to ZANU PF a character that the party is beyond reproach, is invincible, and that it qualifies for the loyalty of its members (Richard, 2004). ZANU PF complements its communication strategies with conventional campaigning methods; posters, billboards, pamphlets, public appearances by the candidate, street level campaigns, door-to-door canvassing (which is part of personal selling of the political product), wall plastering with posters, displays of party logo, political posters on private cars and buses, campaign music and dances. Networks of social groups, 'warehouse structures' and housing cooperatives are also an integral part of ZANU PFs campaign machinery. At the rural local level, villagers utilise their already established traditional hierarchy as channels of communication.

On the other hand, from inception in 1999, the main opposition MDC applies regime change as their grand narrative. This only serves to evoke fears of re-colonisation within sections of the population, and does not resonate particularly with people in the rural areas. With its major campaign tool being rallies, the MDC use campaign techniques similar to the Indonesian "pawai". Prior to holding a rally, a carnival of trucks and cars covered with party posters roar endlessly around the area as a precursor to the rally. In the same spirit as the pawai, the festive atmosphere is achieved with free entertainment, gifts of branded T-shirts, songs and dances, and more songs.

The period 1980 to 1990, Zimbabwe's communication infrastructure was not well pronounced. Telephonic communication was limited to urban areas. Politicians therefore had no option besides travelling around the rural communities to meet the electorate. However, in 1994 Zimbabwe received its first satellite. This infrastructure development complemented the introduction of mobile phones in Zimbabwe, enabling people to communicate through SMS, MMS. From independence, Zimbabwe had one television station. After 1994, a second private television station, Joy TV, was introduced. Thus, over the period 1990 to 2000, there was reliance on television, analogue radios and newspapers to disseminate information to the public. Post 2000,

pirate radio stations re-emerged as a direct response to the state monopoly in broadcasting as well as increased political control of programming on the state broadcasting services (Moyo, 2010).

2.9 Use of rallies as a political communication tool in Zimbabwe

A rally in the Zimbabwe context is a gathering where politicians and the electorate meet to affirm and display the values of the political party through ceremonies, rituals and symbols (Mbigi, 2009). The subject of political rallies in the Zimbabwean context, dates back to the liberation struggle (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Willems, 2009). During the liberation struggle, rallies, which were mostly night vigils, were used as instrument of politicisation and mobilisation in the rural areas (Dzimbanhete, 2013). It was a face-to-face platform where the guerrillas solicited the support of villagers (Chirozva, 2006). The manipulation of the emotion of fear was extensively used in these politicisation and mobilisation campaigns (Wald & Leege, 2010). This concept of mobilisation has been used in several political contests in Zimbabwe today. The then Minister, Moven Mahachi, once said that an election cannot be won primarily by printing manifestos, talking on radio, advertising and writing in newspaper without meeting the people (Herald 02/27/1995). As a central feature of ritualistic social ceremonies, the Mbare Chimurenga choir has become a mundane feature at ZANU (PF) rallies; singing songs of praise to the leadership, performing ritualistic dances that resonate with cultures of Zimbabwean indigenous communities, but it is also on the same platform that parties use slogans to denigrate other political parties. These ritual situations are socially defined occasions that trigger interrelated and structured behaviours with a symbolic meaning (Gainer, 1995). Reports on rallies are communicated on radio and television, and in newspapers, for the benefit of those who do not physically attend.

2.10 Use of tradition as a channel of communication

Tradition plays a crucial role in Zimbabwean politics. Traditional leaders wield substantial influence in rural Zimbabwe. Ethnic cues are used in decision-making, implying that ground rules on ethnicity in African politics exist (Manyuke, Financial Gazette, 2003). Totems and ethnicity are key factors in reinforcing the cultural legitimacy of party politics and representation. A culture of regalia, T-shirts, branded cloth featuring party symbols and colours is prevalent within the Zimbabwean political parties as a way to assist in conferring identity, affiliation and communicate party values.

2.11 The Emerging Battlefield: Use of violence

As the contestation terrain evolves towards the 2018 elections, emerging signs of violence as a communication tool are evident. Increasingly, the signals are in the direction of violent restoration of lost constituencies, display of force and use of threatening vindictive language. Although the one 'million men march' was communicated as a show of support, and endorsement of a preferred candidate, however it was also intended to relay threatening messages to the opposition about the likelihood of violence in the pre-2018 election period.

Experience has shown that when a political party in Zimbabwe senses that their possibility of winning an election is high, they are more likely to use peaceful, conventional media to communicate with the electorate, but when the future is uncertain, and the possibilities of defeat or loss are high, there is a swing towards violent behaviour (Masunungure, 2014). This behaviour is peculiar to poor nations possibly due to rampant unemployment and poverty in these countries. These factors affect political party perceptions of benefits/risks of winning or losing an election when the political party is perceived to be more than just a vehicle for leadership transformation, but a cash cow within the community supplying the basic financial and material needs of the community.

2.12 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the research context and provided the historical background of Zimbabwe`s political environment as well as the overview of the evolution of the communication mediums used by different political parties within the Zimbabwe political market. While the internet has not been a significant medium in Zimbabwe politics, it is like to play a significant part in future elections, probably keeping pace with the diffusion of the internet within the population. Building direct connections with voters has inherently been the most important appeal in Zimbabwe which digital media is comparatively well-suited. The future of hybrid online political marketing, where digital media is fully integrated into the components of political communication and campaigning is likely to have an impact. The following chapter elaborates on the theoretical literature that provides the foundation for the conceptual model.

3 CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW-THEORETICAL

3.1 Introduction

Chapter three reviews the theoretical literature and reviews the theories upon which this thesis is grounded. The Theory of Planned Behaviour forms the basis of three other theories; Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology; Agenda Setting Theory and Structural Realist Model of voter behaviour used in this thesis. Therefore, this section of the thesis commences with discussing the Theory of Planned Behaviour, and then builds on to the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology; the Agenda Setting Theory and eventually, the Structural Realist Model of voter behaviour.

3.2 Understanding choice behaviour in political marketing

Explaining voters' political choices, appreciating the decision-making mechanisms behind and predicting these choices is arguably one of the most important subjects of both business and political worlds. An attempt to cover this literature suggests that voting behaviour is fashioned by several variables among which sociological environment (Berelson, Lazarsfeld & McPhee, 1954); party identification (Campbell, Converse, Miller & Stokes, 1960); social class (Verba, Nie & Kim, 1978); socialisation (Torney-Purta, 2000); political efficacy (Campbell, Gurin & Miller, 1954); and rational expectations (Downs, 1957; Key, 1966; Florina, 1981) are the most significant.

3.3 Theoretical review

Several theories borrowed from other societal disciplines, such as psychology and sociology have been used in consumer marketing research. Of these theories, one of the most widely used theories in consumer marketing literature is the theory of planned behaviour. Following its development, several other theories have been developed from it, such as integrative model of behavioural prediction model (Fishbein, 2008), reasoned action approach (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010), technology acceptance model, unified theory of acceptance and use of technology. In this thesis, the theory of planned behaviour provides the theoretical ground for three other theories, namely, the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology, Agenda setting theory and structural realist model of voter behaviour that are chosen and used because of their strengths and relevance to the current study. Generally, the TPB has established its applicability to various studies and in diverse contexts (Holst & Iversen, 2011). Much of the attention on the theoretical grounding is given to theory of planned behaviour because of the aforementioned reasons.

3.4 The Theory of Planned Behaviour

This section of the chapter commences by tracing the origins of the theory of planned behaviour, its development, its current state and then finally, its linkage with the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology theory and the agenda setting theory. The TPB is grounded in self-interest and rational choice based thought, reflecting largely on attitudes and perceived possibilities necessary to carry out behaviour (Teo & Van Schaik, 2012). The theory serves a major function in explaining behavioural intention and is commonly used as a foundation for consumer marketing and consumer behaviour. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Ajzen, 2012; Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), is a social psychological theory that attempts to predict and understand why an individual may perform certain behaviours (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2008). Behavioural intention is a product of distal constructs attitude, subjective norms (SN), and perceived behavioural control (PBC); (Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen, 2002; Blue, 1995; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) PBC and behavioural intention is assumed to directly impact the targeted behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen, 2002). Attitudes can be viewed as the positive or negative evaluations of the behaviour and its outcomes (Ajzen, 2002). A fundamental assumption of the theory of planned behaviour is that individuals are generally rational and make systematic use of the information available to them (Ajzen, 2006). The underlying principle of the theory of planned behaviour demonstrates that behaviours are determined by behavioural intentions which are largely influenced by intra-individual factors as well as extra-individual factors: belief measures consisting of behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs and control beliefs; direct measures consisting of perceived behavioural control or self-efficacy, perceived normative pressure, attitude towards behaviour (Ajzen, 2012; McLaughlin & Vitak, 2012). Beliefs measures are formed under the influence of background factors, such as demographic factors, and perceived norms are guided by two components: injunctive norms and descriptive norms. Injunctive norms are beliefs about what specific referents think one should do in relation to the behaviour; while descriptive norms are the beliefs about the extent significant others are actually performing the targetted behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Perceived behavioural control is directly related to the notion of perceived self-efficacy (Ajzen, 2002), which refers to an individual's beliefs regarding the ability to execute the behaviour when faced with specific barriers to doing so (Bandura, 1991). To this extent, the theory of planned behaviour is found befitting the current study context.

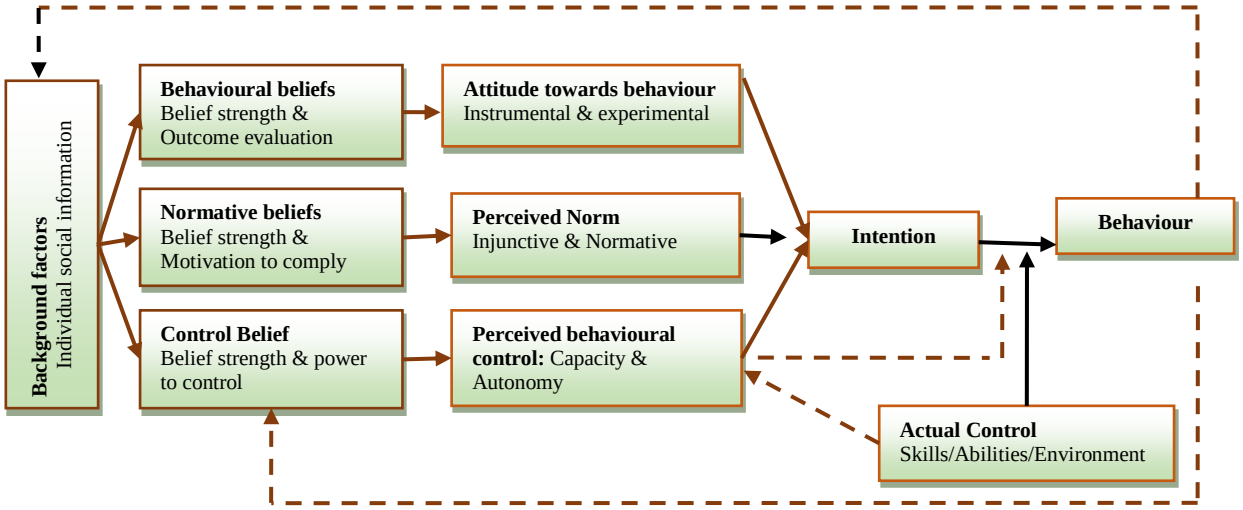
Accordingly, this study also uses the TPB model to explain how digital media exposure, the perceived image of the presidential candidates, as well as the perceived image of the political party influence voters' attitude towards participating in elections, which in turn, has a positive impact on their voting intention in presidential elections. Perceived behavioural control is embedded in the digital media exposure construct depicting the influence of digital media on prospective voters as well as the ease of use of the same. Attitude in the TPB is represented by voters' attitude towards the action of voting, while behavioural intention stands for their voting intentions during presidential elections.

3.4.1 The development of the Theory of Planned Behaviour

A cross examination of the existing literature specifies that Theory of Planned Behaviour originated in the 1990's and has developed through the collective contributions of sociologists and psychologists .It is a derivative of the Prescriptive Cognitive Models developed in the 1960s when marketing researchers mainly focused on beliefs and attitudes as determinants of consumer buying behaviour (Ahtola, 1975). The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) can be regarded ''as a social psychological variant of the general rational choice approach" (Bamberg, 2012). The representative scholars developing the schools of the theory include Rosenberg's (1956) affective-cognitive consistency; Tolman's (1948) purposive behaviourism; Watson's (1913) behaviourism; Edwards's (1954) behavioural decision-making and Fishbein's (1963) 'expectancy value'. They have contributed significantly to the development of the theory by developing the conception in their efforts to present explanatory frameworks that encompass human behaviour and choice decisions.

The TPB originated as an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) to account for behaviours over which individuals have incomplete volitional control (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The addition of the Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) construct to reasoned action, injunctive norms and descriptive norms, contributed to the development of the theory of planned behaviour in an effort to increase its descriptive power, contributing to the conceptualisation of TPB (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010) as shown in figure 3.1:

Figure 3.1: An illustration of the theory of planned behaviour



Source: Ajzen (2005)

3.4.2 Reasoned action approach

TPB deals with the complexities of human social behaviour where there is no complete volitional control over behaviour performance (Lee, Cerreto & Lee, 2010; Ajzen, 2012a; Ajzen, 2012b; Fraser et al., 2010; Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Volitional control means a person must have the resources, opportunity and support available to perform a specific behaviour (Ajzen, 2010). Therefore, the formulation of the Theory of Planned Behaviour within the framework of the reasoned action approach used in this thesis assumes that intention is the most immediate antecedent of behaviour and intentions are influenced by attitude, normative pressure, and perceived behavioural control or self-efficacy (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Within the TPB model, Ajzen (1991) argued that the subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, and attitude affect intention, which affects real behaviour. Moreover, as defined by Ajzen (1991:188), attitude toward the behaviour refers to 'the extent to which a person has a positive or adverse evaluation or appraisal of the behaviour in question'; subjective norm means 'the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behaviour'; and the perceived behavioural control entail 'the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour.' Several recent studies have adopted the TPB model to explore consumers' behavioural intentions (Casidy et al., 2016; Chen, 2016; Chin et al., 2016; Paul et al., 2016, 2015). Notwithstanding its expediency and parsimony, the key issue of the 'intention–behaviour gap' in the TPB still remains: good intentions are not always translated

into behaviour. This explains the several developments of the TPB proposed in literature, involving either re-conceptualisation or the addition of antecedents to augment the description of behaviour. Conner and Sparks (2005); Shaw, Shiu et al. (2000) added ethical obligation; Shaw, Shiu et al. (2000); Sparks and Guthrie (1998): self identity; Norman and Cooper (2011): habit; Norman and Cooper (2011): uncertainty avoidance motive; Wolff et al. (2011): self-concept; Hassandra et al. (2011): perceived autonomy support; Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2010): cognitive involvement and Kor and Mullan (2011): past behaviour. However, evidence on the prognostic influence of past behaviour on future behaviour has shown past behaviour as also a predictor of prospective behaviour (Wong & Mullan, 2009; Ajzen, 2002b; Rhodes & Courneya, 2003); frequency of past behaviour signifying a habit strength (Ouellette & Wood, 1998). Some scholars suggest that although there is a relationship between past and present behaviour they are not mutually exclusive (Ajzen, 2002b). When the factors that determine past behaviour remain constant, they are likely to exert their effect on the present (Ajzen, 2002b; Rhodes & Courneya, 2003). However, the relationship between past and later actions in the long run simply demonstrates a stable behaviour and also with repetition, behaviour becomes routine and is performed without much conscious consideration (Ajzen, 2000b; Ajzen & Dasgupta, 2015).

3.4.3 Theory of planned behaviour constructs: *Direct Measures*

According to TPB, the proximal determinants of behavioural intentions are the 'direct measures' consisting of attitudes, perceived normative pressure, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 2012; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010 ; Han & Kim, 2010; Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006). These direct measures of TPB can be broken into three theoretically independent predictors leading to behavioural intention (BI): Attitude towards the behaviour (ATB), perceived behavioural control (PBC) and perceived norms towards the behaviour of interest (SN) (Ajzen, 2010). In line with the Theory of Planned Behaviour framework, the behaviour of interest is defined in terms of target, action, context and time (Ajzen, 2006). The principle of compatibility requires all constructs (attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, and intention) be defined in similar terms (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977).

3.4.3.1 Voting intention

Behavioural intention, such as purchase intention, is a significant concept in marketing (Morrison, 1979). Generally, marketers are concerned about the prediction of customers' or buyers' purchase behaviour in order to plan for market forecasts, strategic decisions for both existing products and new products (Tirtiroglu & Elbeck, 2008). Purchase intentions signify what the consumers think they will buy (Park, 2002). Similarly, voting intention is defined as what the voter-customers think, whether voting or not voting. However, for Daneshvary and Schower (2000), purchase intention has a relationship with demographic factors such as gender, age, education and profession. Similarly, research has found a relationship between voting and demographic factors, such as age, gender, residential location, educational level and employment status. Behavioural intention in this theory is defined in general terms as the obligation undertaken in respect of a given behaviour and the motivation of an individual's conscious plan to exert effort to perform the behaviour (Ajzen, 2005). Ajzen (2002) defines behavioural intention as human actions guided by three kinds of considerations; beliefs about the likely outcomes of the behaviour and evaluation of the outcomes (behavioural beliefs), beliefs about the normative expectations of others and motivation to comply with these expectations (normative beliefs), and beliefs about the presence of factors that may facilitate or impede performance of the behaviour and the perceived power of these factors (control beliefs). As a universal rule, the more favourable the attitude, subjective norm, and the greater the perceived control, the stronger should be the person's intention to perform the behaviour in question. With reference to consumer marketing, Kotler and Armstrong (2001) argue that in the evaluation stage, the consumer ranks brands and forms the purchase decision. Similarly in political marketing, it is expected that the voter-consumer goes through the evaluation process ranking the political brands and forming a voting decision. Given that the research is framed in the area of voting in presidential elections, we equate behaviour intention to the voting intention variable. According to TPB (Fishbein &Ajzen 2010), intention is the sole proximal determinant of behaviour while perceived behaviour control acts as a second determinant of human behaviour. However, other researchers are doubtful about the idea that intention influences behaviour, proposing that most human behaviour is governed by automatic processes rather than by intentions (Wegner & Wheatley, 1999; Sheeran, 2002). There is evidence in several studies that past behaviour frequently predicts future behaviour directly (Wong & Mullan, 2009; Holst & Iversen, 2011). Several researchers integrated past behaviour and self-identity into the reasoned action

model, confirming the predictive relevance of past behaviour on intention and as a moderator between self-identity and intention (Smith et al., 2007; Chatzisarantis et al., 2007; Conner et al. 2007). However, according to Norman and Connor (2006), the addition of past behaviour in their model reduced the influence of attitudes on student's intention to binge drink. Other researchers have shown that the predictive power of intention on actual behaviour is high where habit is nonexistent (Orbell & Verplanken, 2015; Neal, Wood, Labrecque & Lally, 2012). However, behaviour can be categorised as habitual behaviour, intentional behaviour and semi-automatic response pattern behaviour (Ajzen, 2002). Habitual behaviour is triggered by environmental events and its performance requires minimal attention and deliberate control (Meiseberg & Dant, 2015). Intentional behaviour is guided by conscious deliberation (Cheung, Zheng & Lee, 2015). Semi-automatic response pattern behaviour involves controlled and autonomous phases (Ajzen, 2002). Although past behaviour and habit are related, not every behaviour frequently performed is habituated (Ajzen, 2002). A review of several studies provided empirical evidence in support of TPB as an effective predictor of intention and behaviour (Armitage & Conner (2001) and furthermore appropriate in ICT contexts (Chatterjee, 2008; Ifinedo, 2012; Leonard, Cronan & Kreie, 2004; Namlu & Odabasi, 2007). Conversely, a range of internal and external stimuli can significantly alter the conditional intention over time, rendering behavioural intention invalid, unbalanced and less predictive of behaviour, particularly in the face of new information (Venkatesh et al., 2008). Intention, as a variable within the TPB model, is a fundamental construct, for the reason that it pulls together all the antecedent determinants (Ajzen, 2010). However, several researchers identify self-prediction, behavioural intention and desire as measures of intention (Passafaro et al., 2014; Schafer, 2013; Bagozzi, 1992; Warshaw & Davis, 1985).

- Desire and intention share related characteristics and yet they are in reality different mental actions (Schafer, 2013). Desire can lead to intention when self-efficacy is present. Self-efficacy is the belief in a person's ability to continue with intention (Bandura, 2008). Desires are not always acted upon as a result of perceived or real limitations. Bagozzi (1992) posits that the measure of desire reflects that it lacks practicality. This implies that desire on its own is fragile in directly predicting behaviour, but can be amplified by self-prediction and behavioural intention (Staub, 2013).
- **Self-Prediction and Behavioural Intention -** converse to the lack of realism reflected by the measure of desire, self-prediction and behavioural intention illustrate actual ability in

trying to proceed with one's intention. Nonetheless, 'trying' does not always result in actual behaviour (Peiris, Dana, Akoorie & Fernando, 2015).

Consequently, it is argued that a synergistic effect is created when desire, self-prediction and behavioural intention work in tandem (Poon, Koehler & Buehler, 2014).

Miller (2005) identifies behavioural intention as a function of both attitude towards behaviour and subjective norms towards a behaviour which has been found to predict actual behaviour. In this study, therefore, voting intention is conceptualised as a person's plan to engage in some voting action within a specified period of time and the probability that he or she will vote. In the academic research, purchase intention may be measured in terms of "desire", "plan" and "will try" with the probability estimates such as "unlikely" and "likely", which have been widely applied in social science (Armitage & Conner, 2001).

3.4.3.2 Perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of digital media

Extant literature suggests that the TPB framework can be deepened and broadened by adding new constructs or altering the path of the variables in various domains to improve the predictive power of the framework (Read, Brown, Thorsteinsson, Morgan & Price, 2013; Yazdanpanah & Forouzani, 2015). PBC explains behaviours in which the actor does not have full volitional control (Fen & Shabruddin, 2008). Perceived behavioural control is narrowly associated with perceived self-efficacy (Ajzen, 1991, 2002; Bandura, 1991). Perceived ease of use reflected by perceived behavioural control (PBC) refers to an individual's perceptions of whether or not they can perform a specific behaviour and how easy it is to perform. Perceived behavioural control is assumed to reflect past experience as well as likely barriers and obstruction (Ajzen, 2012; Rivis & Sheeran, 2003). PBC is determined by the overall set of available control factors that may possibly support or impede behaviour performance. People with more favourable attitudes and subjective norms and greater perceived control regarding behaviour should have stronger intentions to perform the behaviour (Ajzen, 2006). Actual behavioural control is thus expected to moderate the effect of intention on behaviour. However, in many applications of the TPB, it would be difficult or impossible to identify all the factors that influence actual control over performance of the behaviour, hence perceived behavioural control is then used as a proxy for actual control under the assumption that perceptions of control reflect actual control reasonably well (Ajzen, 2011). It is assumed that perceived norms are determined by the total set of accessible normative beliefs concerning the expectations of significant referents (Ajzen, 2010). These normative beliefs consist

of a person's motivation to comply with social referents' expectations (Lino, Marshak, Herring, Belliard, Hilliard, Campbell & Montgomery, 2014). On the contrary, research on energy savings behaviours disputed the effect of behavioural control on intention to engage in environmentally conscious behaviours, implying that behavioural intention was caused by other factors such as moral obligation, other than behavioural control elements (Fang & Chen, 2016). Nonetheless, a study of university students' intention to recycle showed that all TPB constructs significantly influence students' intention to recycle (Wan, Cheung, Qiping & Shen, 2012). Ajzen (2001) found that perceived behavioural control may not be realistic when an individual has relatively little information about the behaviour, hence digital media exposure influencing the behavioural control.

3.4.3.3 Perceived norms

Perceived norms refer to what individuals believe other key people in their lives think about whether or not the individual should perform the behaviour. The perceived opinions of these key people help determine whether a person will actually perform the behaviour. Perceived norms explain the degree to which an individual perceives others close to him and society in general values the behaviour and how much the individual is willing to comply with such normative beliefs (Kim, Ham, Yang & Choi, 2013). Ajzen (2002) proposes the use of both injunctive and descriptive norms when explaining and measuring perceived norms. Injunctive norms refer to people's beliefs about what others think "ought to be done" and is dependent on the subjective opinion of significant others with regards to desirable and undesirable behaviours (Ajzen, 2005). Descriptive norms illustrate what may be popular in the social environment, and are based on perceptions of what is done by most members of one's social group. However, prior studies illustrate that perceived norms have a weak function in analysing online behaviours (George, 2002).

3.4.3.4 Attitude towards behaviour

Attitude towards behaviour is another antecedent of behavioural intention. Attitude toward the behaviour (ATB) is the degree to which performance of the behaviour is positively or negatively valued by an individual. The TPB specifies that attitude is a fundamental predictor of behavioural intention and this has been established in several studies (Ajzen, 2010). Consequently, a stronger attitude to a particular behaviour results in a greater intention to execute that activity (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2008). Consumer attitude influences intentions held by end-users and the more

favourable the attitude, the bigger the plan to perform a particular behaviour (Tarkiainen & Sundqvist, 2005). According to the expectancy-value theory (Ajzen, 2001; Ajzen & Fishbein, 2008), attitudes are a result of the strength of beliefs within an individual's evaluation of an action. However, given that consumer attitudes are internal dispositions, it can be difficult to effectively predict them. Johnson (2002) opined that consumer attitude is one of the most misinterpreted characteristics of our nature. Despite the fact that behavioural studies highlight a positive correlation between consumer attitude and intentions (for instance, Chen, 2007; Magnusson et al., 2001; Werner & Alvensleben, 2011; Padel & Foster, 2005; Tarkiainen & Sundqvist, 2005), empirical evidence for this association remains inconclusive. Padel and Foster (2005) confirmed that consumer attitude has a slight effect on intentions whereas Tarkiainen and Sundqvist (2005) found that consumer attitude has a significant effect on consumer purchase intentions. Accordingly, this conclusion challenges the widely held proposition that having a positive consumer attitude results in desirable intentions. Thus, the current study sought to test this perception that voter consumer attitudes influence intentions.

3.4.3.5 Theory of planned behaviour: belief constructs

Behavioural beliefs connect the behaviour of interest to expected outcomes (Ajzen, 2006). A behavioural belief is the subjective possibility that the behaviour will generate a predetermined outcome (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2008). These are significant beliefs which are easily accessible in memory and are based on personal experience; information sources and inferences. The immediate determinants of direct measures within TPB are sets of underlying beliefs: *behavioural beliefs, injunctive norm beliefs, descriptive norm beliefs* and *self efficacy beliefs.* Behavioural beliefs influence attitude towards behaviour; normative beliefs influence perceived norms and control beliefs influence perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 2010). However, TPB assumes that there are feedback loops from behaviour to beliefs. Once a behaviour is performed, it provides information about consequences, reactions of significant others, ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour. This information is likely to change some of the person's behavioural, normative, and control beliefs, consequently influencing intentions and future behaviour. TPB reflects the individual's future motivation to modify his or her attitudes and norms in response to circumstances perceived to have individual pay-off. Control beliefs are the predictors of perceived behaviour control. These have to do with the perceived existence of factors that may facilitate or impede the performance of behaviour (Ajzen, 2006).

3.4.3.6 Theory of planned behaviour: Background factors

Background factors are expected to influence intentions and behaviour only indirectly by their effects on behavioural, normative, and control beliefs. However, literature on TPB presents an assumption of 'theoretical sufficiency' where it is assumed that background variables have direct effects on underlying beliefs though it remains empirically inconclusive (Ajzen & Albarracı´n, 2007).

3.4.4 Political efficacy as an extension of self-efficacy

Much has been written to date on self-efficacy, but the origins of this school of thought can be traced back to Bandura (1977). The propositions made by Bandura (2008) about perceived self-efficacy suggest that expectations of personal efficacy are derived from performance accomplishments, experience, verbal persuasion and physiological states. Political efficacy proposes that the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change (Campbell, Gurin & Miller, 1954). Empirical research has consistently linked political efficacy with propensity to vote (Miller & Rahn, 2002; Kenski & Jomini, 2004; Print, Saha & Edwards, 2004; 2005). Efficacy theory comprises internal efficacy; to beliefs about one's own competence to understand and to participate effectively in politics and external efficacy: perceptions about politicians and elections as responsive to citizen demands (Kenski & Jomini, 2001; Catt, 2005).

3.4.5 Affective-cognitive consistency

A lot has been written to date on affective-cognitive consistency, but the origins of this school of thought can be traced back to Rosenberg (1956). Affective-cognitive consistency theory examines the relationship between attitudes and beliefs (Aquino, Haddock, Maio, Wolf & Alparone, 2016; Schleicher, Smith, Casper, Watt & Greguras, 2015). Prior research conceptualised attitudes as having affective and cognitive components which subsequently drive behaviour. The fundamental assumption underlying the attitude concept is the notion that attitudes guide, influence, direct, shape, or predict actual behaviour (Cooke & Sheeran, 2004). The strength of an attitude is therefore influenced by the consistency between the affective and cognitive components of the attitude. Consistency between the affective and cognitive components of the attitude is typically considered to be indicative of stable attitudes that tend to be better predictors of behaviour (Dalege, Borsboom,

van Harreveld, van den Berg, Conner & van der Maas, 2016). Generally, an attitude is defined as a general evaluation of a product created over time (Solomon, 2008). However consumer attitude, as defined by Lars Perner (2010), is a combination of a consumer's beliefs, feelings and behavioural intentions. A growing body of literature suggests that attitudes are a hypothetical construct, which cannot be observed directly apart from being inferred from the individual's self-reports and behaviour. Applying the principle of compatibility, the applicable attitudes, particularly in consumer research, are those toward performance of the behaviour, which are measured explicitly at a similar level to that used in the evaluation of behaviour (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Persuasive communications attempt to change the affective component of an attitude system by changing the cognitive component of attitude (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2015; Petty & Briñol, 2015). Providing an individual with new information that transforms the reasoning element of attitude tends to cause that individual to change general attitudes toward an object.

3.4.6 Value expectancy

In contrast with Rosenberg's (1956) affective-cognitive consistency thrust, Fishbein focuses on self-orientation, influenced by expectations and evaluations of behavioural outcome. In his view, behaviour, behavioural intentions and attitudes are a function of perceived behavioural consequence and the degree of affect, positive or negative, toward behavioural outcome (Palmgreen, 1984). If expectations are persistently not met and the constituents perceive most promises to be empty, conversely, a general frustration can ensue. This naturally has a built-in balancing mechanism: dissatisfaction causes behaviour change, and behaviour change means that certain beneficial activities, such as votes, are withheld or shifted to other players (Henneberg, 2004).

3.4.7 Assumptions of theory of planned behaviour

The oasis of the theory of planned behaviour is the theory of reasoned action. The fundamental principle of the theory of reasoned action is that behavioural decisions are a result of a reasoned process in which the behaviour is influenced by attitudes and norms through the impact on behavioural intention (Smith et al., 2007). The basic assumption of TPB is that people's intentions and behaviours follow rationally and consistently from their beliefs no matter how these beliefs were formed, consequently behaviour is said to be reasoned or planned and makes systematic use

of information available to people. Behaviour is also assumed to be determined by context specific environmental conditions and individual specific skills and abilities (Yzer, 2007). People consider the implications of their actions before they decide to engage or not engage in certain behaviours. Furthermore, people are not assumed to go through a careful assessment of beliefs every instant they execute behaviour. With repetition, behaviour becomes routine and is performed devoid of much conscious consideration (Ajzen & Dasgupta, 2015). This assumption is challenged by 'affect-referral' philosophers who posit that overall affective evaluation and hedonistic impulses influence behaviour (Bagozzi, Gurhan-Canli & Priester, 2002; Hale, Householder & Greene, 2002; Solomon et al., 2006). Nevertheless, numerous empirical studies appear to confirm the theory's descriptive power (Ajzen, 2001; Ajzen & Fishbein, 2010; Conner & Sparks, 2005) and claim that it continues to be the dominant theoretical model in the intention-behaviour literature.

3.4.8 Reasoned approach as an extension of rational choice

The purpose of human action is to seek pleasure and avoid pain (Bentham, 1987). Edgeworth proposed a 'hedonimeter' measuring units of pleasure or pain and this constituted the metaphysical foundation of utilitarian economics (Edgeworth, 1961). Early research regarded man as entirely rational *homo economicus (*Persky, 1995) and self-interested, making decisions based upon the ability to maximise utility whilst using the minimum effort (Richarme, 2007; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014; Heywood, 2002). The goal of behaviour then is to seek the maximum utility. In order to behave rationally in the economic sense, a consumer would have to be aware of all the available consumption options, be capable of correctly rating each alternative and be available to select the optimum course of action (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014). According to the socio-economic paradigm, class differences impact voting behaviour, though this is dependent on perceived political reality (Tsai, 2016; Gibson & Cantijoch, 2013; Robison & Ritchie, 2016; Almond & Verba, 2015). Educated voter-customers are more likely to be endowed with the necessary skills, knowledge, interest and sense of civic duty to cast a vote. Where voting is costly, individuals will consider both how much they care about the outcome and the likelihood that their vote will influence the outcome. Nevertheless, individuals vote if their expected utility from voting is higher than their expected utility from not voting (Downs, 1957; Hansen, Olsen & Bech, 2015). On the contrary, other researchers dispute the decision-making process as consumers are often affected by less rational influences, such as social relationships and values (Ladhari & Tchetgna, 2015;

Simonson, 2015) and as such, voters can also be influenced by these social relationships and values which then can affect their perception of the political players.

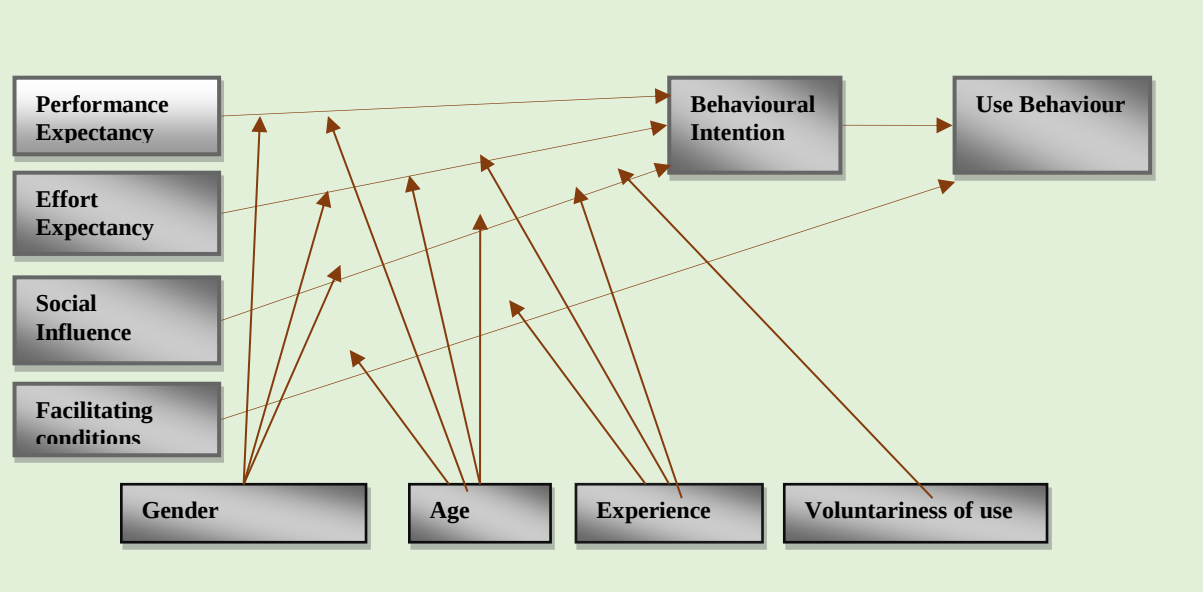
3.5 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Universal Technology Adoption and Use Theory (UTAUT) are originally drawn from computer science explicitly to deal with technology adoption (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis & Davis, 2003). Technological adoption does not only entail the choice to accept an innovation, but also the extent to which an innovation is integrated into the relevant context. According to Venkatesh, Morris, Davis and Davis (2003), the Unified Theory Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) seeks to explain users' intention to use an information system and their subsequent usage behaviour. The basic assumption of acceptance models is that users who perceive a new technology as useful and as easy to use will be likely to accept and use the new technology (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis & Davis, 2003). The UTAUT is an extension of the Technological Acceptance Model (TAM) which is a extensively used theoretical model to explain potential users' behavioural intentions to access a technology or a new system (King & He, 2006). Over time, several authors have developed a number of diverse user acceptance models, such as TAM by Davis (1989). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is generally the most used model in technological adoption studies (Lee, Kozar & Larsen, 2003). The model was adapted from the Theory of Reasoned Action by Ajzen and Fishbein (1977). TAM correlates *perceived usefulness* and *perceived ease of use* to users accepting the technology, whose main target is to predict the probability that a particular user will accept a certain technology. Technology acceptance suggests that individual differences, including personality traits, generalised beliefs, and predispositions about technology, as well as demographics, may affect the adoption of technology based services (Im, Hong & Kang, 2011; Meuter, Bitner, Ostrom & Brown, 2005; Parasuraman, 2000; Venkatesh, Morris, Davis & Davis, 2003; Brown & Venkatesh, 2005). Basically, studies investigating predictors of technology usage in services have generally focused on ease of use, usefulness, and other technology design features (Meuter, Bitner, Ostrom & Brown, 2005; Zhu, Nakata, Sivakumar & Grewal, 2007), as well as consumer demographics and traits (Bruner & Kumar 2007; Weijters, Rangarajan, Falk & Schillewaert, 2007). However, some research suggests that perceived usefulness may be linked to the individual's innovativeness

level in their context, hence different groups within a population may also differ in their beliefs about perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness (Brown, 2001).

Venkatesh, Davis and Davis (2003) formulated and validated the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) from the integration of elements of eight prominent models related to the topic after empirical comparisons between them. UTAUT has condensed the critical factors and contingencies related to the prediction of behavioural intention to use a technology (Venkatesh, Thong & Xu, 2012). The UTAUT was conceived after the review and integration of eight leading theories and models, that is: the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Motivational Model, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), a combined TBP/TAM, the Model of PC Utilisation, Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT), and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). These contributing theories and models have been extensively and effectively utilised in extant literature on technology or innovation adoption and diffusion within a range of disciplines including information systems, marketing, social psychology, and management. The UTAUT uses four core determinants of usage and intention, namely, performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions and four situational variable (gender, age, experience and voluntariness) (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis & Davis, 2003) shown in Figure 3.2

Figure 3.2: Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology:



Source: Venkatesh, Morris, and Davis, and Davis (2003)

3.5.1 Determinants of usage and intention

The UTAUT hypothesises that four core constructs act as determinants of behavioural intention and usage behaviour, with four moderators of the key relationships (Venkatesh et al., 2003). *Performance expectancy* is the extent to which using a technology-based service will provide benefits to consumers in performing certain activities; *effort expectancy* is the level of ease associated with consumers' use of technology-based services; *social influence* is closely related to perceived norms in TPB, and *facilitating conditions* are equivalent to behavioural control (Venkatesh, Thong & Xu, 2012, De Wit, Heerwegh & Verhoeven, 2011). However, Shirky (2000) argues that the Internet undermines the existence of the consumer in that the Internet age does not present a passive consumer any longer, since everyone is a media outlet.

Research works associated with UTAUT concur on the predicting power of performance expectancy, effort expectation and social influence on behavioural intention (Oshlyansky, Cairnsa & Thimbleby, 2007; Šumak, Polančič &Heričko, 2010; Cheng, Liu, Song & Qian, 2008). Conversely, other studies found social influence displaying lower prediction power that the other three variables (Biemans, Swaak, Hettinga & Schuurman, 2005).

The UTAUT provides a solid base to explain why users accept or reject technology in a specific perspective. Zhou, Lu and Wang (2010) integrated UTAUT perspectives and privacy risk, intended use of that particular service was associated with the performance expectation, enabling conditions and the risk of loss of privacy perceived by the consumer. Research has shown that consumer satisfaction is a relevant driver of continuity of use, and trust is the most important factor in determining the intention of continued use by the users (Chong, 2013). It is also evident that for relatively innovative services, consumers prefer security and privacy.

With the advancement of technology, the previously geographically bounded brand communities are now transcending geography (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Extant literature attributes membership to social media and brand communities to psychological needs, feelings of connectedness and a sense of belonging (Gangadharbhatla, 2008). Social media has become a powerful means of influencing customer perceptions and behaviour (Williams & Cothrell, 2000), and of bringing together different and likeminded people online. However, people join social media based brand communities to fulfil their need to be identified with groups or symbols with which they wish to associate, or that are desirable to them (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Schembri,

Merrilees & Kristiansen, 2010). Despite the numerous definitions that have been put forward about social media, most scholars seem to agree that social media is concerned with Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and permit the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The implication of this definition is that the content is produced, shared and consumed by users actively generating content on platforms such as social networking, text messaging, photo sharing, wikis, weblogs, and discussion forums strengthening the informational, expressive, and networking utilities of digital media (Harris, 2009).

The rise of social media has strengthened the networking and expressive utilities of digital media at large (Macafee & de Simone, 2012). However, it should be noted that the boundary between social media and other parts of the broader digital media landscape is not clear cut, as most major websites have their own social media presence or at least allow people to share their content and materials via social media sites. In other words, social media have ‘‘infiltrated’’ into different parts of the broader digital media landscape and hence have strengthened the networking and expressive utilities of digital media at large. Though online discussions are often non-deliberative and occur largely amongst people with similar views (Wojcieszak, 2010; Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009), concordant discussions are essentially more capable of reinforcing pre-existing views and generating behaviour (Mutz, 2006). Digital media allows people to develop both bonding and bridging social capital, which in turn, promote political participation and commitment, particularly, direct connections through social networks with political actors (de Zuniga, 2012; Hampton, 2011; Zhong, 2014; Tang & Lee, 2013). Therefore, drawing from UTAUT theory, the current thesis submits that digital media exposure mediated by the normative values and beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of voter-customers are likely to influence voting intentions. The fundamental premise is that the voting “audience” now has a voice and participates in the conversation through the use of interactive media, and that can contribute towards the voting dynamics in Zimbabwean presidential elections. Use of digital media, including social media, by politicians is likely to influence the youths to either participate or not participate in elections. This interaction can subsequently change their behaviour and attitude towards voting.

3.6 Agenda setting theory

In the digital domain, several publics often query just how considerably the media profile society's perception of the world. Are human rights issues as important in a run up to election as the economy? Should one be as concerned about the president's health as about political disturbances in Libya? These are the types of questions that frame the theory of agenda setting. Agenda-setting theory refers to how the media's news coverage determines which issue becomes the focus of public attention (McCombs & Shaw, 1977). The agenda setting theory is as important in public communications as in other related social science studies such as political communication (Brant & Miron, 2004). The representative scholars developing the schools of the theory include Lippmann (1922); Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948); Lazarsfeld and Merton (1964); Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954); Cohen (1963); McCombs and Shaw (1972); Funkhouser (1973); and Cobb and Elder (1983).

Agenda setting, as defined by Wolfe, Jones and Baumgartner (2013), is any causal relationship between the media coverage and the salience of topics in the minds of individuals. However, agenda setting theory is associated with the rational paradigm of human nature and the myth of an unprejudiced public concern, neglecting human communication that is a-rational, ritualistic and symbolic. The agenda-setting effects of the media have considerable implications beyond the picture created in people's minds. The salience of public issues within the traditional domain of agenda-setting present evidence that the shifting salience of issues on the media agenda often is the basis for public opinion about the overall performance, even of a public leader in office. Issue refers to whatever is controversial among the relevant public such as a political party and its platform, a personality such as the presidential candidate, or even the state of economy. The fundamental assumption of democracy is that the society has sufficient astuteness to determine the course of their nation, the state, and their local communities (Dahl & Shapiro, 2015). Therefore, the media set agenda only when citizens perceive the media output as relevant. In a research in Navarra, Spain during the 1996 election, images of the three major party leaders as presented by the voters closely reflected the media's presentation of these individuals (McCombes, Lopez-Escobar & Llamas, 2011).

3.6.1 Assumption of agenda setting theory

The agenda setting theory was propounded by McCombs and Shaw (1972). The foundation of the agenda setting theory is the Political Agenda theory by Lippmann (1922). Political agenda theory is based on the premise that the mass media are the principal connection between events in the world and the images in the minds of the public. Agenda setting theory assumes that the media filters and shapes reality instead of simply reflecting it and that the more attention the media gives to certain issues, the more likely the public will perceive those issues as critical (Baran & Davis, 2012). The more regularly and significantly an issue is covered in the media, the more instances of that issue becoming accessible in the audience's memories (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). When respondents are requested to outline the most essential problem facing a country, their answer normally reflects the most accessible news issue in memory, which in general, is the key issue focused on in the media. Therefore, the agenda-setting effect is the result of the aggregate impact of messages and content (Rogers & Dearing, 1988). Agenda setting effects are based on the intensity or how recently an individual has been exposed to certain issues (Protess & McCombs, 2016). Research has developed the agenda setting theory in different contexts, countries and mediums: McCombs and Llamas (1997) on candidate image in Spanish elections; King (2014) on citizen's initiatives in Europe; Rashi and McCombs (2015) on media activities of a religious movement and Edler and James (2015) on security.

However, agenda setting operates at two distinct levels (ibid). The first level is the transfer of salience of an attitude object in the mass media's pictures of the world to a prominent place among "the pictures in our head" (Griffin, 2012). The second level of agenda setting is the transfer of salience of a dominant set of attributes that the media associate with an attitude object to the specific features of the image projected on "the walls of our minds" (Griffin, 2012; Kiousis, Popescu & Mitrook, 2007). These different levels provide insight and thorough interpretation of the theory as it relates to the media in society. However, several researchers observed that the appearance of agenda-setting effects requires the existence of realistically free and open media and political systems (McCombs, 2013; Chan & Lee, 2014). What this means in the context of this study is that during a political campaign, people learn important issues from the media. McCombs's analysis of the 1996 U.S presidential election found that candidate imagery in the media corresponded with the voters' candidate imagery. Contrary to this assertion is the mayoral election in Taipei; Pu-tsung King (1997) found no correspondence between the voters' imagery of

candidates and the media attributes. The media imagery failed to convince the critical mass because the voters were aware the media was under direct domination of the ruling party, KMT, and the government, hence the media effects were manipulated. Therefore, the focus of attention in an election campaign has moved from persuasion towards issue salience regarding the political landscape (Protess & McCombs, 2016).

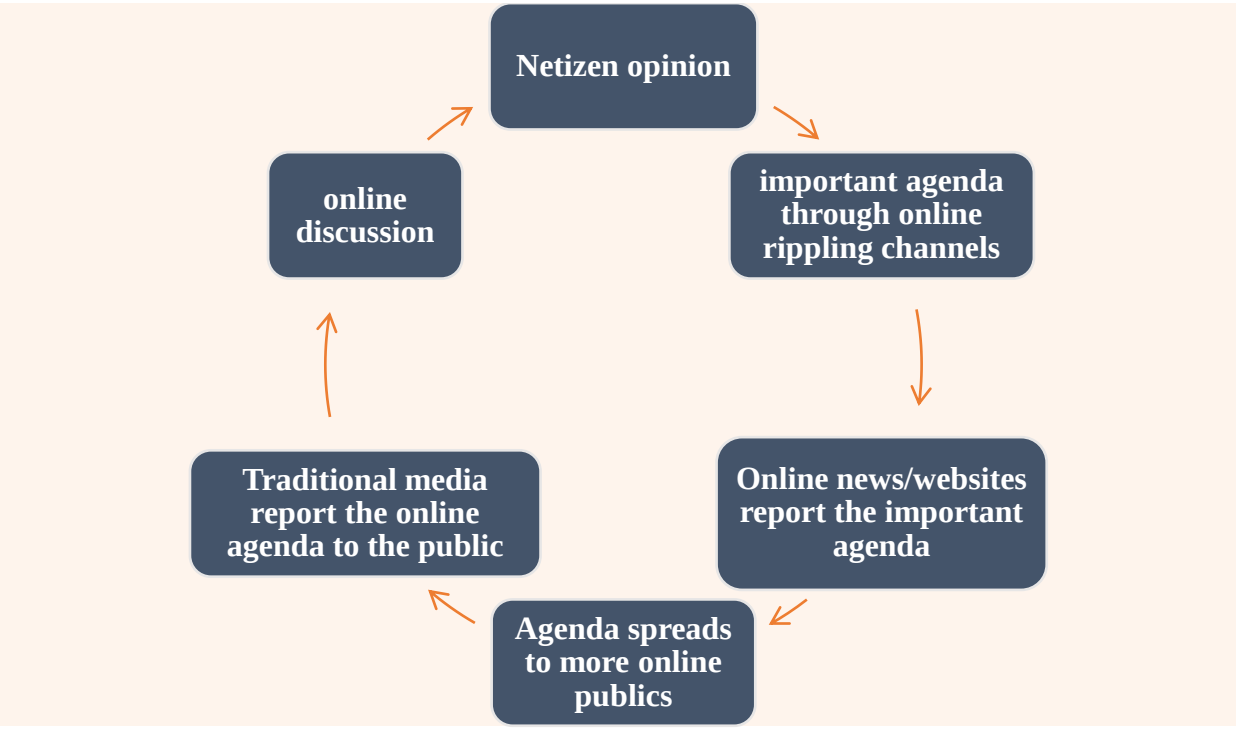
3.6.2 Agenda building as an extension of Agenda setting

Extant literature presents a dichotomy between agenda setting and agenda building. Agenda setting refers to the consequence of the media agenda on society while agenda building includes some degree of reciprocity between the media and society in an effort to influence societal decisions (Carroll & McCombs, 2003). The agenda-building perspective attributes significance not only to mass media, but also to social process, to mutually dependent relations between the concerns generated in the social environment and the vitality of governmental processes. The agenda-building framework assists in explaining how public relations efforts build media agenda (ibid). Digital media has made mass participation more prominent and has resulted in everyone becoming a pamphleteer (Benkler, 2006). Public opinion can be formed as a result of information on Internet bulletin boards posted by Netizens (Lee, Lancendorfer & Lee, 2005). However, a study on Internet-mediated agenda setting suggested a reversed agenda setting effect which means that the public concerns sets the media agenda (Kim & Lee, 2006; McCombs, 2004). Trammell, Golan, and Wanta (2008), in their study of the agenda setting effect on blogs in the 2004 presidential campaign, found evidence of a reciprocal inter-media agenda-setting effect between blogs and broadcast news. In their study, Euro/RSCG Magnet and Columbia University (2005) found that 51% of journalists reported using blogs regularly, 28% reported using blogs for daily reporting, 53% reported using blogs as a source of story ideas, 43% reported using blogs as fact-checking source, and 33% reported using blogs to get information about developing scandals and breaking news, further confirming the inter-media theory.

Internet agenda building occurs when an Internet-mediated agenda ripples through online channels such as blogs, personal homepages and Internet bulletin boards. The agenda is then diffused through the channel resulting in Internet–mediated reversed agenda setting (Kim & Lee, 2006). What this means is that a news item can be a creation of an individual netizen through a blog,

online news spreads the agenda to more online publics and subsequently, the traditional media report the online agenda to the public, so that the agenda spreads to both offline and online publics as depicted in figure 3.3:

Figure 3.3: Internet agenda building



Source: Adapted from Kim and Lee (2006)

However, scholars concluded that the Internet-mediated agenda-setting or agenda-building processes do not always occur in sequential order. Numerous real-world examples present evidence that the Internet-community, particularly bloggers, can drive their own agenda into the focus of public attention, subsequently into the media agenda, and, ultimately, into policy agenda (Benkler, 2006). Perhaps more significantly, several studies have concluded that blogs can and often serve as framers of news and issues (Adamic & Glance, 2005; Baker & Irani, 2014; Drezner & Farrell, 2004).

3.6.3 Reverse flow of agenda

McCombs (2004) posits that there is a correlation between online and offline agendas. Evidence from extant literature reveals a positive contribution of weblogs to the agenda setting of traditional

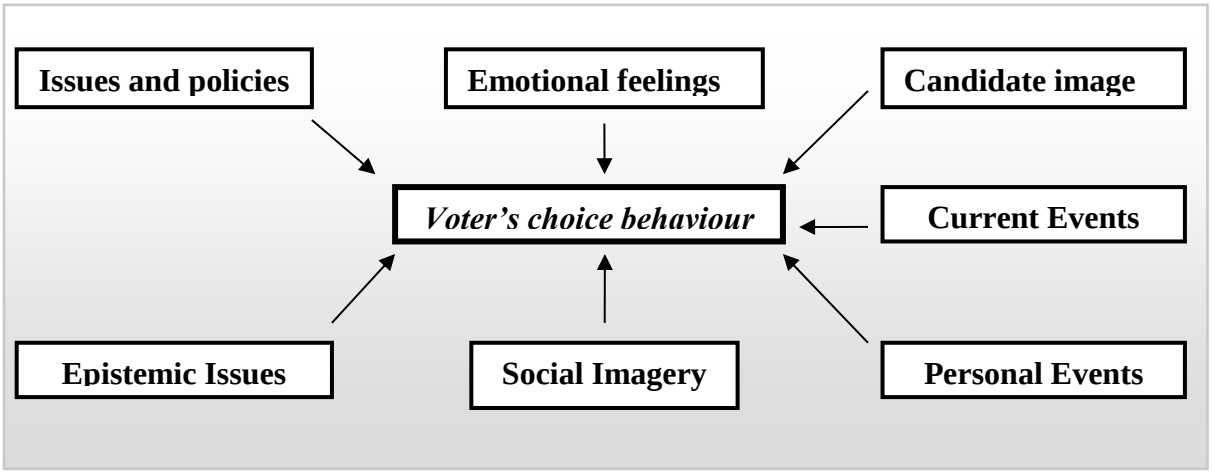
media (Meraz, 2011; Boczkowski & de Santos, 2007; Groshek, 2008). Wu, Atkin, Mou, Lin and Lau (2013) observed that alternative online media provide discussion forums for issues that conventional media downplay or ignore. Messner and Distato (2008) observed a news cycle source between traditional media and social media. However, Chadwick (2013) posits that political processes are defined by the party organisations and individuals who are involved in a hybrid media system, which blends conventional and online media. Politicians using online media, apart from expanding issues from the public opinion and media agenda onto the political agenda through platforms, such as Twitter, can create subsidies for journalists in traditional media (Permelee, 2014). However, Metzgar and Maruggi (2009) found little evidence that any of social media venues, such as Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook, actually drove discussion, participation, or outcomes of the 2008 American presidential election.

3.7 Structural Realist Model of voter behaviour

There is much extant literature on the cognitive and affective domains and their influence on voting behaviour, but the origins of this school of thought can be traced back to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. The proposition made by Bandura (1986) about cognition is that human behaviour is caused by personal, behavioural, and environmental influences. What people think, believe and feel affects how they behave. This was developed further by Cwalina and Falkowski (2003), who proposed the constructivist approach and the realist approach to cognition. What differentiates the constructivist and the realist is the structure of causal relationships connecting the affect with cognition (Cwalina, Falkowski & Newman 2008, 2010).

The Structural Realist Model of voter behaviour developed from the voter's choice behaviour model which assumes that voting behaviour can be driven by one or more of seven distinct cognitive domains as shown in figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4: Voter's choice behaviour model



Source: Newman and Sheth (1985)

Influencing voters' emotional relation to a candidate or political party is connected with creating images of particular participants in the electoral competition (ibid). An image is a picture of an exceptional brand created for a particular aim that, by inducing certain associations, grants the object additional values and in this way, contributes to an emotional perception of an individual (Aaker, 2003). The task of the image is to secure a more emotional reception of the advertised object without defacing its fundamental nature (Cwalina, Falkowski & Kaid, 2005). Several studies confirm voters' perceived image of the candidate can be adapted by advertising and this leads to a reconstruction of the characteristics that make up that image (Kaid & Holtz-Bacha 1995). The relations between the created image, one's emotional attitude toward the candidate, and the voting intention represent the political advertising effects. However, these aspects of the political advertising effect provide little understanding for voters' overall behaviour if examined individually.

This reinterpretation of the model of voter's choice behaviour requires describing the causal structure between the cognitive domains and affect components, which then allows analysis of vote behaviours within the constructivist and realist approaches (Cwalina, Falkowski & Newman 2008, 2010). However, this study supports the realist approach to cognition.

3.7.1 Constructivist approach

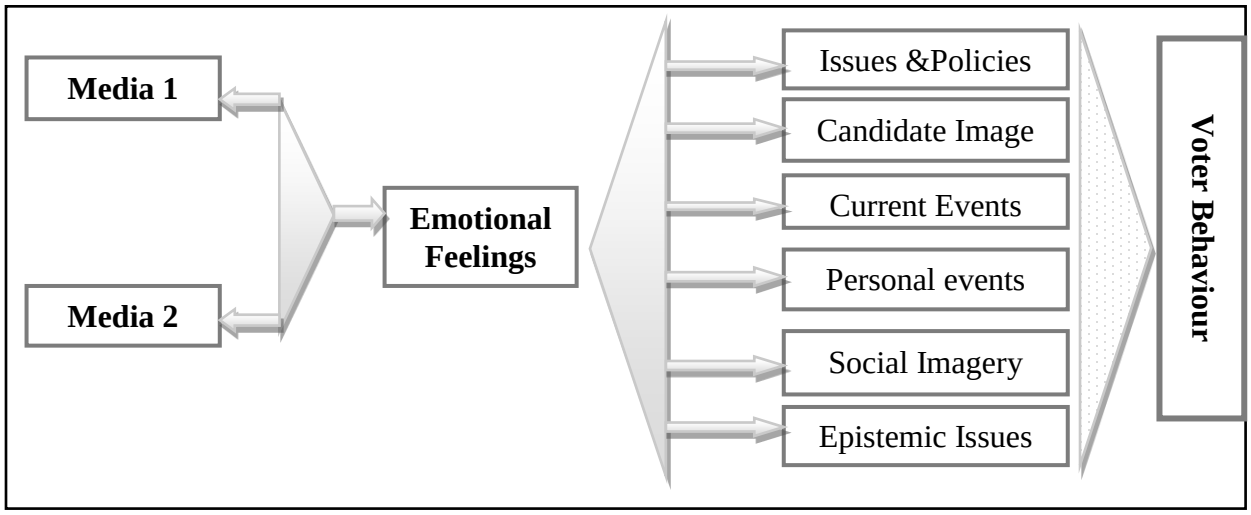
Cwalina, Falkowski and Kaid (2005) assume that emotions directly influence voter intention. According to constructivists, emotional feelings predict voting intentions, which means that a voter

prefers a candidate who is friendly and evokes positive emotions. This is a similar relationship to political advertising influence, where the image of a politician influences the affect toward him or her (Bar-Ilan, Bronstein & Aharony, 2015). According to the constructivist approach, humans surpass perceived stimuli, creating their own thoughts, as mental images of reality within their own environment (Williams & Newman, 2014). Consequently, this affects results from motivation process within the cognitive structures (Fiske & Taylor, 2013). Before one can like a political candidate, they must be aware of the existence of this particular candidate and have assessed some significant characteristics. Although the constructivist approach is the most dominant research paradigm for human cognition, some researchers argue to the contrary. Alternatively, the realist approach presupposes that perception is an assemblage of the person's environment and how the individual interacts with the environment (Stafford & Grimes, 2012; Zajonc, 2014).

3.7.2 Realist Approach

The realist approach points to the application of affects in the formation of the image. According to the realist approach, the affect is the consequence of direct perception and is independent of information processing (Kobylińska & Karwowska, 2014). According to the realist approach, affective feeling toward the candidate influences his or her image. This approach is supported by Zajonc's (1980) cognitive theory of affects, which confirmed, on the basis of a number of empirical studies, that an effective response induced by the initial appearance of the perceived object is only followed by cognitive elements. The realist approach assumes that cognitive domains are formed in the voters' mentality on the basis of affect toward the candidate, which formed in response to the media and this approach explains human behaviour in the social environment (Cwalina et al, 2010; Lerman, McCabe, & Sadin, 2015) as shown in figure 3.5.

Figure 3.5: Structural realist model of voter behaviour



Source: Cwalina, Falkowski and Newman (2010)

Therefore, from the marketing point of view, the most important undertaking is to evoke a positive affective attitude toward the particular candidate, and subsequently, recommend to the critical mass that these are associated with the candidate's particular characteristics. Based on realist approach, the basis of voter behaviour is perceived as rational rather than emotional. The structural realist model of voter behaviour assumes a mutual interface between media and cognitive domains, which is moderated by emotional feelings (Cwalina, Falkowski & Newman, 2010). Therefore, the fundamental aspect influencing voting behaviour is evoking positive emotions toward the candidate and then providing voters with a justification for such affect (Cwalina, Falkowski & Newman, 2013). Although, in general, most of the voters know nothing about particular politicians or candidates, they still have strong feelings toward them (Harris, Lock & Cwalina, 2010). It is possible for some of the cognitive domains directly influencing voter behaviour to be distorted by prior emotional feelings. Voters in established democracies like the United States of America, United Kingdom and France, are more resistant to the unconscious power of influence than are voters in developing economies, such as Zimbabwe (Cwalina, Falkowski & Newman, 2010; Falkowski & Cwalina, 2012). These have learned to analyse messages from presidential campaigns cognitively (ibid).

Therefore, drawing from this structural realist voter behaviour model, the current thesis submits that there is a mutual causal relationship between the media function, affect towards a political

candidate and a political party of choice and voting intentions. The fundamental premise is that humans perceive political events in a causal relationship. The voters' feelings and affect towards a particular party or candidate, evoked by the media in political campaigns, influence their perception of the political party and presidential candidate. Consequently, determining the causal relationship between the image and the feelings toward a political candidate and political party allows the development of a marketing tool that one can use to determine the voting intentions in Zimbabwe.

Following the aforementioned analysis, this research submits that digital media exposure is capable of influencing attitudes towards voting. The intention to vote is influenced by the perceived images of the candidate and the political parties, as set by the media. The influence of digital media on voting intentions is a joint function of the background factors, beliefs, and attitude towards voting; self-efficacy and perception towards the political players in the competition. Accordingly, the political contestants maximise their effort to create affective feelings amongst the voters, using the media imagery, so as to influence perceptions about the candidate or the political party as responsive to citizen demands, subsequently influencing the critical mass' decision-making.

3.8 Developing a unified theory for political marketing

Building upon the reasoned action approach (RAA) that is rooted in Ahtola's (1975) behaviour determinants perspective and agenda setting theory, this study develops a model to explain the relationships between voter-customers, political organisations and voter decision-making. This model attempts to develop a 'reasoned action agenda building model' for voter-customer- political players triad in Zimbabwe, premised on digital media exposure as the predictor and voting intention as the outcome variable, with perceived image of the political party, perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting as the mediating variables. Expressed in the reasoned action approach theoretical framework, this thesis describes how political conversations, behavioural dynamics and the resultant attitudes and perceptions can foster political participation amongst voter-customers during presidential elections in Zimbabwe. Accordingly, from the RAA, the attitude–behaviour perspective revolves around beliefs, and attitude towards behaviour. Accordingly from the theory of planned behaviour, the attitudebehaviour perspective revolves around beliefs, attitude towards target behaviour and considered norms as a benchmark through which people determine what behaviours are acceptable to perform and which ones are less or

undesirable (McLaughlin & Vitak, 2012). In this case, the theory of planned behaviour attempts to explicate measures of voter intention and to allow marketing strategists to understand the voter motive and preference so as to position and reposition political candidates to generate a better competitive position and better voter response. Reasoned action or planned behaviour, in this context, expounds that "higher-order" constructs (such as, attitudes, norms, intentions) are assumed to follow reasonably from one's beliefs about the world in which one lives. Nevertheless the beliefs one holds need not be authentic; they may be inaccurate, biased, or even irrational. According to Walker et al. (1999), consumers perceive competitive offerings as either simple physically-based attributes, complex physically-based attributes, or abstract attributes. However, these perceptual attributes are influenced by physical characteristics, hence they are subjective and are considered the basis for most positioning strategy. For example, in the United States of America political reality, the concept of "electability" is a collective impression of the physical and behavioural characteristics of a candidate. Thus, whether one is interested in predicting or understanding why some people present a positive attitude towards voting while others have a negative attitude towards voting, a consideration of the five variables, digital media exposure; perceived image of the presidential candidate; perceived image of the political party; attitude towards voting and voting intention, should not only account for much of the variance in voting behaviours, but should also provide insight into how to intervene to increase the likelihood that people will arrive at informed decisions during presidential elections.

3.9 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the theoretical groundings that underpin the current study. Three basic theories underpin this study name: Theory of planned behavior; Unified theory of acceptance and use; agenda-setting theory and the structural realist theory. However, the intention-behavior gap in the Theory of planned behavior continues to be evident as positive intentions are not always translated into behavior. Therefore in an effort to develop the theory of planned behavior further this research re-conceptualize the theory by suggesting that perceived image of the presidential candidate and the perceived image of the political influence the intention bridge the gap between background factors and behavioral intention. The next chapter elaborates on the empirical literature.

4 CHAPTER FOUR: EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Introduction

The foundation of the consumer decision-making models emanate from the developed world and presume that consumers engage with certain decision-making models. Baena and Cervino (2015) argue that emerging market economies and developed market economies possess diverse characteristics, hence existing theories on consumer behaviour might be challenged in the context of the developing world. It is, however, essential to redefine conventional knowledge in view of emerging markets, as the findings of studies conducted in developed markets cannot inevitably be generalised to an African emerging context. With regards to voters' mind set, beliefs, perceptions, attitudes and intentions in emerging markets, there is still much to explore in terms of how political marketers can influence the voter mind set. The aim of the current study is to identify those factors that influence voting decision-making in an emerging market by providing a conceptual framework that political actors can work with in their effort to influence voting decisions. In this section of the thesis, a review of the empirical findings on the research constructs is provided. Five research constructs make up this thesis. The five research constructs include: digital media exposure, perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude toward voting, perceived image of the political party and voting intention.

4.2 Significance of digital media exposure

Despite general consensus about the critical significance of digital media, the numerous definitions presented have been somewhat elusive. Extant literature has suggested that new media technologies should include both new forms of media technology as well as new applications of existing media technology (Dimitrova, 2008). Significant attention has been given to the use of different types of technology (Davis, Owen, Taras & Ward, 2008), the way in which candidates and parties represent themselves online (Margolis & Resnick, 2000) and the impact of new channels on normative democratic principles (Small, 2008a). Blogging, podcasting, political web sites with mechanisms for online feedback and participation, social networking, and online video sharing are critical online tools in the political communication process (Kaid & Holtz-Bacha, 2008). However, the electoral impact of technologies has also elicited a lot of interest. In order to evaluate the impact of digital technologies on behaviours, we need to consider an overview of a growing chain of effects.

From a political communication perspective, media effects can be classified into a schematic hierarchy ranging from motivating more online visits to motivating political action (Bimber & Davis, 2003). However, digital media not only make exclusionary political systems more accessible, but play a significantly empowering role for the common citizen through direct interaction with candidates, making the public feel more engaged in the political process although at times, the interactivity is perceived and not truly realised (Bucy & Gregson, 2001). Mossberger, Tolbert and McNeal (2008), in an analysis of 2004 Pew Internet and American Life data, found that reading online news, email mobilisation and online political discussions were positively related to the probability of voting. Research has generally confirmed that there are significant positive relationships between the use of digital media and political participation and knowledge, during election campaigns (Boulianne, 2009; Dalrymple & Scheufele, 2007; Tolbert & McNeal, 2003). Conway (1985) conceptualises political participation by grouping different acts according to their nature: active participation (e.g. voting and media use) versus passive participation (attending supportive activities or simply being aware of a campaign); "conventional versus unconventional" and "symbolic versus instrumental" participation. Broadly defined, participation includes any attempts to influence society. Studies on exposure and attention to online news indicated a positive relationship between digital media use and information acquisition (Groshek & Dimitrova, 2011; Xenos & Moy, 2007; Drew & Weaver, 2006). In a study of the U.S.A 2000 presidential election, Internet access and online exposure to campaign information, were identified as predictors of political knowledge (Kenski & Stroud, 2006). Bimber and Davis (2003) found that the knowledge levels on political issues were higher in those who visited candidate websites that those who did not. Gibson and Ward (2000); Oates (2008); Quintelier and Vissers (2008) posit that digital media has differential effects on voters-customers. Different forms of digital media such as blogging, checking out political news web sites, connecting with a politician on social networking sites, may have different effects on voter-customers due to their interactivity and degree of involvement that the user is allowed on the site (Strandberg, 2009). This study defines prospective voters as voter-customers who are able to provide a vote basing the exchange on their beliefs, values and expectations.

A meta-analysis of research on the effects of digital media technologies on political and public participation determined that most academic studies have found positive effects (Boulianne, 2009). Shah, Kwak, and Holbert (2001) point out that Internet use for information seeking was positively

related to public participation and trust. Tolbert and McNeal (2003) opined that both Internet access and online news used for political purposes had a positive effect on the likelihood of voting in the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections. In a study of the 2000 election, Kenski and Stroud (2006) observed that Internet access and exposure to information about the presidential campaign online correlated with political participation. In a similar vein, reading online news and online political discussions had a positive effect on vote intention in the 2004 election (Mossberger, Tolbert & McNeal, 2008). A study of college students, a month prior to the 2008 presidential election showed that political activity on Facebook and exposure to subjective others' political activity on Facebook, were positive predictors of political participation (Vitak et al., 2011). A similar study of the 2010 Swedish election confirmed that both social media use and visits to political party websites, significantly influenced political participation among voters (Dimitrova, Shehata, Strömbäck, & Nord, 2011). Several researchers observed a positive relationship between offline participation and different forms of online activity. Internet news use, online services, participation in online clubs and organisations, and use of online forums proved to be positive predictors of political participation among a national sample of 16- to 24-year-olds in the Netherlands (Bakker & de Vreese, 2011). This was supported by the research conducted among Belgian teenagers where consumption of digital media activities correlated with political participation (Quintelier & Vissers, 2008). A study conducted in Germany suggests a positive association between access to broadband Internet and voter participation (Czernich, 2012).

On the contrary, Groshek and Dimitrova (2011) found no significant impact of social media on vote intention in the 2008 US presidential elections. Similarly, Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer, and Bichard (2010) found that reliance on social networking sites had no effect on political participation, but rather on civic participation. Foot and Schneider (2006) present a framework distinguishing the functions of web campaigning as informing voter-customers, involving supporters, connecting online users with political actors and mobilising the electorate. This current study theorises that digital media exposure, in general, has an effect on voting intentions. However, this is mediated by political party perceptions, candidate leader image and attitude towards voting. One of the goals of this study is to investigate the effect of different forms of digital media, namely, online news sites, political party websites and social media (blogs, online video sites, and social networks) on key variable of interest-voting intentions.

4.2.1 Digital media marketing

Digital marketing and its related terms, such as Internet/online marketing, are commonly used to describe the use of technologies in marketing efforts. However, there is no agreement on what is encapsulated in each term (Farrah, 2010; Melewar & Smith, 2003). Wymbs (2011) notes that digital marketing is much more than merely communication through the Internet, it includes a wide range of digital channels such as the Internet, mobile, and wireless communications, as well as digital television (Li, Li, He, Ward & Davies, 2011).

4.2.2 Defining digital media exposure

Several researchers agree that media have played a major role in the widespread dissemination of marketing information (Trainor, Andzulis, Rapp & Agnihotri, 2014; Rowley, 2016) environmental concerns (Mitchell, 1990). Mazis and Raymond argue that advertisers use a variety of media, usually co-ordinated into a single integrated communication campaign, to communicate product benefits to a target audience. Schulz and Lauterborul (1993) define media exposure as any opportunity for a reader, viewer, and listener to see or hear an advertising message in a particular media vehicle. Literature reveals that it is difficult to draw a clear line between digital and social media, as the social elements are increasingly integrated into the established interactive digital media environment (Sharma, 2002). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a group of Internet based applications that builds on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Digital media is defined as digital communications technologies that enable entities to engage in mediated communication that include the Internet and broadband networks, advanced telecommunications networks and digital broadcasting, whose aim is to facilitate interactions, collaborations and the sharing of content (Richter & Koch, 2007; Goggin & Newell, 2003; Varadarajan, Srinivasan, Vadakkepatt, Yadav, Pavlou, Krishnamurthy & Krause, 2010). Manovich (2001) defines digital media as online social networks, interactive media products based on computer technologies (including websites, e-books, videogames, and virtual worlds) attracted, precisely, by the on-demand access to digital representations, where they can situate themselves, and the creative co-creation being provided. Drawing on these established notions, the current study defines digital media as consumer controlled electronic interactions and cross- platform usage of digital marketing tools that facilitate social interaction between political networks. Accordingly, digital marketing is defined as the use

of all kinds of digital and social media tools that allow political parties and politicians to foster interactions with the electorate (Wymbs, 2011; Al Kailani & Kumar, 2011). Social media involve affecting and influencing perceptions, attitudes and end behaviour while bringing together different like-minded people (Williams & Cothrell, 2000; Laroche, 2012). According to consumer socialisation theory, communication among consumers affects their cognitive, affective, and behavioural attitudes (Ward, 1974). Consumers' purchase decision is affected by the comments of their acquaintance on social media and friends' attitude can influence consumer selection of a service or good (Hacıefendioğlu, 2011; Forbes & Vespoli, 2013).

However, a significant element in digital technologies is convergence, where information is stored and transmitted digitally, and can be shared across previously separate devices (Goggin & Newell, 2003). To a certain extent, politicians' offline social relations are reflected in their online social networks (Hsu & Park, 2012). The differentiating features of digital media is interactivity (Oates, 2008) and the degree of involvement that the user is allowed on the site (Strandberg, 2009). Hoffman and Novak (2011) argue that the fundamental interactivity of digital media allows for four higher-order goals: connect, create, consume and control. Interactivity has been conceptualised as the degree to which participants in a communication process have control over the exchange and can switch roles in their mutual discourse (Hoffman & Novak, 2011), direct communication among individuals, regardless of distance and time (Blattberg & Deighton, 1991). The 2008 Obama campaign utilised networking and micro-blogging effectively to mobilise and organise supporters (Hendrick & Denton, 2010). During the Arab Spring, digital media assisted in turning individualised, localised and community-specific dissent into structured movements with a collective consciousness about both shared grievances and opportunities for action (Howard & Hussain, 2011). Contrary to Hindman's (2009) assertion, Panagopoulos (2009) claims positive effects for digital media technology campaigning. Interactive communications are conceptualised as communication that offers synchronicity, control, rapidity and speed, participation, a variety of choices, directionality, hyper-textuality, connectedness, experience, and responsiveness (Rafaeli & Ariel, 2007; Song & Zinkhan, 2008). Tedesco (2007) established that exposure to highly interactive features resulted in significant increases in political information efficacy, which, according to Kaid et al. (2007), focuses exclusively on the voter-customer's confidence in his or her own political knowledge and its sufficiency to engage in the voting process, nevertheless, Sundar, Kalyanaraman, and Brown (2003) found that 'too much interactivity' interfered with

users' recall of policy issues. However, interactive and social stimuli influence users' online experiences with social network sites and, in turn, influence their responses (intention to vote) (Huang, 2011).

Extant literature posits that exposure to diverse forms of campaign messages increases political information efficacy among young adults (Kaid et al., 2007; Tedesco, 2011). This study conceptualises and operationalises digital media exposure as the extent to which audience members have encountered explicit media content and the extent to which the audience members have access to, recall or recognise the involvement (Slater, 2004).

4.2.3 Antecedents and outcomes of digital media exposure

Digital media involve an intricate adaptive system with technologies constantly changing. A review of studies conducted by Gibson and Ward (2009) reveal that literature is dominated by the supply side of campaigns and less attention has been paid to the demand side of online campaigning, with few studies exploring the impact that exposure to these sites has on political participation and voting decisions. A number of large-scale quantitative surveys of the public, by and large in western, liberal democracies, which have investigated the use of the Internet to gain and exchange electoral information during campaigns, suggests that only modest proportions of the electorate visit campaign sites and are used more frequently by young, well-educated males with an existing interest in politics. Studies, mainly conducted in the US exploring relationships between Internet use during elections and citizens' levels of political efficacy or engagement, or of their likelihood of voting, produced mixed results. Al-Kandari and Hasanen (2012) and Moy and Gastil, (2006) found that the use of the Internet to obtain political information is likely to predict political efficacy, engagement and knowledge. Related studies include the examination of Internet use during disasters where the results revealed that media use is vital for staying informed and informing others in emergency situations (Starbird & Palen, 2010; Hughes & Palen,2 009). Drew and Weaver, (2006) and Kenski and Stroud (2006) found a correlation between Internet use and political knowledge and interest. However, digital media affects the electorate at various levels within the political communication context. According to Bimber and Davis (2003), these media effects follow a schematic hierarchy ranging from motivating prospective voter-customers to revisit the digital media sites, change in people's knowledge and attitude and finally, motivating political action.

Even if using digital media does not result in direct behavioural changes, these media contribute to the political communication process from the democratic participation perspective. According to media participation approaches, digital media do not only make exclusionary political systems more accessible, but they also play a symbolically empowering role for the average citizen through a bi-directional process to interact with the candidates directly (Bucy & Gregson, 2001). Although in actual sense this interactivity is perceived, the feeling of engagement in the political process may contribute to higher internal and external self-efficacy amongst the public. In the U.S. context, several studies observed that both Internet access and online exposure to campaign information were identified as significant antecedents of political knowledge levels during the 2000 presidential election (Kenski & Stroud, 2006).

4.2.4 Performance expectancy, effort expectancy and social influence

In a study of e-government services adoption, trust, compatibility and ease of use were found to be significant variables (Carter & Belanger, 2005). Conversely, Schaupp and Carter (2005) confirmed the same in their study on e-voting adoption. This was further substantiated by Venkatesh, Morris, Davis and Davis (2003). Empirical research indicates that performance expectancy (perceived usefulness, relative advantage), effort expectancy (the degree of ease associated with the system use), and social influence (the degree to which an individual values the importance of others' persistence that he or she should use the media) have a significant, direct relationship with behavioural intent, hence performance expectancy, effort expectancy and social influence predict digital media use (Chong, 2013; Barbosa & Zilber, 2013). Generally, performance expectancy is the strongest predictor of attitude toward use, and behavioural intentions. Extant literature indicates that while effort expectancy has an impact on intention, there is no significant difference for performance expectancy on the basis of age and gender. Thus, ease of use has a greater influence on the intentions to use online media for seniors as compared to young voter-customers. Accordingly, the impact of social influence on online media use does not appear to be impacted by an age or gender interaction (Powell, Williams, Bock, Doellman & Allen, 2012).

4.2.5 Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and compatibility

Extant literature on innovation diffusion studies has identified the link between perceived usefulness (relative advantage in innovation diffusion theory) and compatibility (Rogers, 2003). Compatibility refers to the degree to which an innovation fits together with the adopter's current habits and practices and is a significant determinant of perceived usefulness of digital media (Plouffe, Hulland & Vanderbosch, 2002). The argument is that if the individual perceives an innovation to be inconsistent with his existing practice, he is likely to be more uncertain about the expected benefits of the innovation. Digital media requires senior citizens to make use of computers to access the Internet and the particular application. To the extent that this behaviour is compatible with the citizens' existing practices and habits, they are liable to consider the facility as useful. Phang, Sutanto, Li and Kankanhall (2005), whose findings are consistent with (TAM) by Venkatesh, Morris, Davis and Davis (2003), found that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are the two significant predictors of use intention, while perceived ease of use is a significant predictor of perceived usefulness. Research has also confirmed perceived usefulness as the most significant determinant of use intention, suggesting that citizens' intention to use digital media is closely tied to the instrumentality of the facility. Conversely, Morris and Venkatesh (2000) found that perceived ease of use was more significant than perceived usefulness in explaining use intention, particularly for older people. When citizens perceive the Internet as being unsafe, exposing them to unique threats to data privacy and security information, their perception of the usefulness of digital media is adversely affected.

4.2.6 Internet safety perception and perceived media importance

Trust in the Internet represents the extent to which individuals perceive the Internet as a safe and reliable environment to engage. Powell, Williams, Bock, Doellman and Allen (2012) opined that if individuals have a high degree of trust in the Internet, intentions to use the Internet increases. Consequently, younger people are more open to and trusting of the Internet and its various capabilities. However, senior citizens are likely to have lower confidence in the Internet and are thus less likely to engage in online activities. Perceived media importance refers to the extent to which voters see the media source as essential to political information seeking. Involved voters are active and are more frequently looking for information from the media (Pinkleton & Austine, 2001). Frequency of exposure is a rough measurement of media use.

4.2.7 Political cognition and attitudes

According to the elaboration likelihood model, need cognition assumes rational beings that are prone to scrutinise the environment in order to make sense out of it (Fiske & Taylor, 2013). Involved individuals are active information seekers and are high in need for cognition (Schroeder, 2005). Research indicates that voters who report high need for cognition also exhibit higher voter intentions than voters low in need cognition (Cacioppo, Petty, Kao & Rodriguez, 1986).

4.2.8 Participants' prior political activity and use of computers as antecedent of DME

In a study of voter-customers' online behaviour during the Scottish Parliamentary election campaign, Baxter, Marcella, Chapman and Frase (2013) found that all the participants in the sample had previous experience of using a computer. 20.3% of the participants regarded themselves as politically active by corresponding regularly with elected representatives and campaigning on behalf of a political party. Only 17.2% of the participants had previously looked for information to aid their voting decision. The main source of election information for the majority (62.5%) were print and broadcast media, including door-to-door literature. However, 69% looked for party related information.

4.2.9 Individual –level factors

Evidence from Pakistan (Rahman & Azhar, 2011), Lithuania (Urbonavicius & Pikturniene, 2010) and China (Chu & Choi, 2011) suggests that differences in disposable income are associated with corresponding differences in Generation Y's social media use. Individual-level factors such as socio-economic status, personal values and preferences and age and lifecycle stage play a significant role in determining Generation Y's social media use; low education may lead to low skill levels and usage that emphasises entertainment rather than information (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008). Based on a meta-analysis of studies about communication, Keller and Lehmann (2008) pointed out that younger audiences prefer messages about social consequences over multiple exposures, whereas older audiences are more influenced by physical consequences, regardless of the number of exposures. Porter and Donthu (2006) found that with younger age comes a greater likelihood of technology adoption and use of the Internet. Young adults are more likely to have grown up with technology and use the Internet on a regular basis. However, several studies have

found a gender difference in computer usage and anxiety with females being more computer-anxious and less likely to use computers than males (Cooper, 2006).

Although online and off–line participants share some resemblance, they are not entirely related (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006). Research found online participants more partisan and less trusting in traditional media than off–line participants (Kaufhold, et al., 2010). Most studies found effects of gender on political participation, both online and offline: men actively participate more than women (Calenda & Meijer, 2009; Albrecht, 2006; di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006) moderated by political interest (Gibson, et al., 2005; Wang, 2007). Age is found to be a predictor of online as well as off-line participation, although most of the studies have been focusing on young people (Bridges, et al., 2012; Burwell, 2010; Dahlgren, 2011; Jugert, et al., 2013; Kissau & Hunger, 2008; Macafee & De Simone, 2012; Theocharis, 2011; Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Bennett, et al., 2011; Kaun & Guyard, 2011; Lariscy, et al., 2011; Spaiser, 2012). In view of the fact that age tends to impact political participation positively (Wang, 2007; Gibson, et al., 2005), but negatively impacts Internet use, the general effect of age on online political participation is equivocal. Younger voter-customers rely more heavily on online than off–line participation (2006), among politically active voter-customers, those using the Internet for participation are younger (Oser, et al., 2012). Even among youth, male, high status and better educated voter-customers are more politically engaged online than their female, lower status and less educated counterparts (Livingstone, et al., 2005). Education and income positively impacts offline and online political participation (Gibson, et al., 2005; Kwak, et al., 2006; Wang, 2007). The digital divide literature identifies social status as an important predictor of Internet use (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008; Hargittai, 2002; van Dijk, 2006). Experience and self–efficacy enhance diversity of Internet use including political information search (di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006). Best and Krueger (2005) found that online political participation is best predicted by Internet proficiency and online mobilisation, while offline participation, such as voting, do not foster online participation. Collin (2008) concluded that institutional barriers to political participation, such as voting age, developmental correlates and political interest may explain why young people's political participation is strongly driven by digital platforms and their affordances.

Prior studies found that persons with diverse levels of expertise tended to use different information-processing courses to process persuasive information (Simpson, Siguaw & Cadogan, 2008; Sussman & Siegal, 2003). Generally, well-informed consumers (with high expertise) are

less susceptible to interpersonal consumer influence and tend to depend on their own experiences for purchase decisions (Bearden, Hardesty & Rose, 2001). In the context of online social communication, Park and Kim (2008) found that consumer expertise played an important moderating role in determining the impact of E-word-of-mouth content on consumer purchase decisions. Similarly, in this study, we believe that voter-customers with high levels of expertise have more confidence in their own voting decisions and behaviour. As such, they tend to rely on their own knowledge to make voting decisions and will be less likely to use heuristic cues for information processing. Consequently, for knowledgeable voter-customers, the impact of online social information on voting decision will be undermined.

Cheung, Xiao and Liu (2014) point out that consumer with a higher level of expertise in a particular brand are less likely to be influenced by others' opinions or actions. A brand has been conceptualised as a communication device which embody the values, nature and personality of an organisation, a product or a political party (de Chernatony & MacDonald, 2002; Peng & Hackley, 2009). This corroborates Kim, King and Kim's (2016) findings that consumers who did not have much experience and knowledge about a brand are less motivated to process additional information and that they are inclined to simplify decision heuristics by following others' behaviour and opinions in their decision-making. Conversely, consumer engagement is found to have a positive moderating effect, suggesting that the more engaged consumers are in an online social community, the more likely it is for them to be influenced by peer consumers' opinions and actions. A possible explanation of the unexpected positive moderating effect of consumer engagement is that highly involved members have a tendency to spend a large amount of time sharing product-related experience in an online social community. Such engagement facilitates the internalisation of an identity as a member of the online social community. According to social identity theory, individuals who classify themselves as members of a group and perceive that the group is important to them are more likely to internalise group attributes and behave in line with group norms (Chiu, Huang, Cheng & Sun, 2015). Through regular social interaction with other members in an online social community, highly involved members have greater exposure to shared social comparative information from other fellow members. They also have more opportunities to learn about the group and appropriate ways of behaviour. This exposure can cultivate a sense of psychological belonging, motivating the members to adopt the norms of the community as relevant standards for their own behaviour.

4.2.10 Attitude towards the use of digital media

Attitude is an important determinant of an individual's predisposition to respond and has a positive relationship to behaviours of interest. According to the Reasoned Action Approach, attitude is the extent to which an individual makes a positive or negative evaluation about performing behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Extant studies suggest that attitude is an important predictor of purchase intention (Hernández, Jimenez & Martin, 2010) or adoption of e-commerce in SMEs (Grandón et al., 2010); between attitude and online visitations (Bruner & Kumar, 2005; Wang et al., 2009).

Several researches on persuasion emphasise the central role of source credibility in the communication process (Druckman & Lupia 2000). Several researches on persuasion share the view that when the persuader has attributes that signal trustworthiness; persuasion is much more likely to occur. The receive-accept-sample persuasion model (McGuire, 1969) posits that source credibility is more relevant at the acceptance stage of persuasion. The elaboration-likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and the heuristic-systematic model (Chaiken 1980; Eagly & Chaiken 1993) regard source credibility as a heuristic individuals use to decide whether to accept an argument when they lack the desire or ability to analyse the content of the message. Miller and Krosnick (2000), in a laboratory experiment, found that newspaper priming does not occur among those who distrust the media, whilst Druckman (2001), in another laboratory experiment, found that only trustworthy newspapers produce framing effects. Similarly, the credibility of digital media platforms will have an influence on the attitude towards the use of a particular media, consequently affecting the media influence on voting intention. Based on the above, it is expected that an individual's attitude towards digital media can be a predictor of that individual's use of digital media. It is the attitude towards the media that prompts an individual to use a particular media. The media is consequential because voter-customers need information about candidates in order to make a choice that corresponds to their preferences. Those with positive attitudes toward the news media rely less on partisan predispositions and appear more willing to accept new information (McDonald & Ladd, 2006; Kaid, McKinney & Tedesco, 2007). On the contrary, voter-customers who have less or no confidence in the media tend to induce partisan voting, increasing polarisation in the electorate (Fiorina 2002; McCarty, Poole & Rosenthal 2006).

4.2.11 Consumer influence and empowerment

For centuries, power has fascinated scientists from various disciplines, particularly sociology and psychology (Labrecque, vor dem Esche, Mathwick, Novak & Hofacker, 2013). Researchers consent that power is a major human concern that constantly influences behaviour and constitutes a basic element of social systems and hierarchies (Rucker, Galinsky & Dubois 2011; Schwartz et al., 2012). The implementation of and exposure to power are endemic to human nature (Abelson, 2015), so the universal effects of power shape human behaviour in virtually all circumstances (Guzman, 2013). However, the concept of power is seldom discussed in consumer behaviour contexts (Rucker, Galinsky & Dubois 2011). Power shapes consumers' everyday activities in multiple ways, particularly online; search algorithms control what information consumers can access, bloggers and other opinion leaders constantly influence consumption decisions through recommendations distributed through social media. In the context of this study, power is defined as the inconsistent capability to control people in online social relations (Rucker, Dubois & Galinsky, 2011). This prompts questions about the benefit of access to nearly unlimited options. Some evidence suggests that too much choice can reduce satisfaction and create poorer decision quality as a result of information overload (Botti & Iyengar, 2006). Amount of content can hinder interpersonal communication (Lanier, 2010). Lin, Lu, and Wu (2012) found that consumers prefer product reviews which incorporate visual elements over those without visual stimuli. Similarly, political organisations' website and social network sites' presentation would influence viewing propensities. The power of media messages to shape the people's views of the political world seems more 'massive' than 'minimal' (Druckman & Parkin 2005; Gabel & Scheve 2005; Gerber, Karlan & Bergan 2006; Graber, 2007). The media is consequential as voter-customers need information about candidates in order to make choices that correspond to their preferences.

4.2.12 Digital media and online engagement

Numerous definitions and conceptualisations of the engagement concept have been published in scholarly literature; however there seems to be no consensus (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric & Ilic, 2011). Meskauskas (2006) defines engagement as a prospective user's interaction or perceived interaction with a marketing communication in a way that can be proven to be predictive of outcome effects. However, this study defines engagement as the level of the customer's cognitive, emotional and behavioural investment in specific brand interactions (Hollebeek, 2011). One needs

to be familiar with an organisation's online activities, and start to follow them, from which subsequent expressions of online engagement behaviour towards the entity grow. One of the principal mechanisms for constraining the adverse effect of cost transparency online is the brand website, or company sponsored website (Sinha, 2000). These websites are designed to generate and underpin positive brand and product messages, and have become a major source of information for consumers, whether they purchase online or offline (Karson & Fisher, 2005). However, Zinkhan (2008) argues that there is no relationship between the provision of interactive features embedded in a website and consumers' appreciation of interactivity. Conversely, Liu and Shrum (2005) found that interactivity has a negative effect on consumer attitudes to websites. Some consumers are resistant to levels of interactivity that make extremely strenuous demands on cognitive processing. Exploring the impact of interactivity and product involvement on respondents' attitudes towards brands on Facebook and their intention-to-purchase, Persuad (2013) found no significant impact. However, the study revealed that high levels of interactivity on Facebook were positively correlated to intention-to-purchase and favourable attitudes towards the brand.

There is a body of empirical findings highlighting the centrality of flow to the online experience (Novak et al., 2000) and advocating a causal relationship between flow and consumer attitudes to the website, the brand and purchase intention (Huang, 2006; Mathwick & Rigdon, 2004; Richard & Chandra, 2005). Flow, as defined by Csikszentmihalyi (1988), is the holistic feeling that people experience when they act with total involvement. Several studies have argued on the dimensions of flow (*intense concentration and enjoyment*) and how it influences consumer behaviour. Of the four components of flow, enjoyment, concentration, telepresence, and time distortion, only telepresence, time distortion and enjoyment significantly influence behaviours (Lee & Chen, 2010; Hoffman & Novak, 2009). Since flow is an absorbing, highly enjoyable experience, it is only natural for people to develop positive emotions when in a state of flow (Hoffman & Novak, 1996; Huang, 2003; Guo & Barnes, 2009). Prior studies have supported flow as being positively related to purchase intentions and return intentions in Web usage (Koufaris, 2002; Moon & Kim, 2001). Huang (2011) found affective involvement and cognitive involvement significantly affecting flow and purchase intention, and also flow having a significant effect on purchase intention. Therefore,

flow has an effect on voting intentions influenced by the voters's attitude towards the media, the political party or candidate as a brand.

A broad spectrum of disciplines including marketing, communication sciences and behavioural sciences, acknowledge that the feeling of telepresence (Steuer, 1992) which is also termed virtual presence (Sheridan, 1992) and spatial presence (Schubert, 2009) is a central concept in the study of digital media usage experiences (Jung, 2011; Weisberg, Te'eni & Arman, 2011). Several authors define telepresence as a user's perception of actual stimuli that come from the technology (Lee, 2004a; Sanchez-Vives & Slater, 2005; Slater, 2002; Waterworth & Waterworth, 2003).

4.2.13 Information acquisition and political knowledge

Bimber and Davis (2003) found that those who visited candidate web sites were more knowledgeable about political issues than those who did not. Similarly, Xenos and Moy (2007) observed direct and positive effects of Internet use on information acquisition during election campaigns. Groshek and Dimitrova (2011) opined that increased exposure and attention to online news was positively related to political knowledge; Tolbert and McNeal (2003) showed that Internet access and online news use for political purposes had a positive influence. On the contrary, some studies have failed to demonstrate a concrete impact of digital media on participation.

Several studies have found that the use of the Internet to obtain political information is likely to predict political efficacy, involvement and knowledge (Al-Kandari & Hasanen, 2012; Moy & Gastil, 2006). Social media have been used increasingly as communication channels for electoral information, political developments and discussion (Jungherr et al., 2012; Conover et al., 2011; Gayo-Avello, Metaxas & Mustafaraj, 2011; Harfoush, 2009; Towner, 2012; Stromer-Galley, 2014). Various experimental research has documented that exposure to various forms of campaign messages (televised advertisements, candidates' debates, commenting on social media) increases political information efficacy among young adults in laboratory settings (Kaid et al., 2007; Tedesco, 2011). Prior research has also shown that young voter-customers are able to acquire political knowledge through social network sites (Teresi, 2009). In the current study, it is anticipated that in uncertain political climates or conflict situations, reliance on one's inner-circle, or close social ties tend to increase, since individuals tend to trust those closer to them.

4.2.14 Digital media and political participation

Groshek and Dimitrova (2011) found no significant impact of social media use on vote intention in the 2008 U.S. presidential election. Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer, and Bichard (2010) found that dependence of social networking sites had no effect on political participation although it was significantly related to civic participation. However, as indicated in a meta-analysis of studies focusing on Internet effects on civic and political engagement, scholarly research generally supports the proposition that online media have a positive impact on engagement, as the number of studies that found positive effects significantly exceeded those with negative effects (Boulianne, 2009). This study adapts the conceptualisation of political participation from Putman (2000) as the relationship between voter-customers and the political institutions.

Extant literature has shown that although media preferences, in some instances, might reflect user needs, moods, attitudes, or tastes, their actions are rational in the sense that the preferred media serve psychological predispositions. Selective exposure could produce highly focused audiences characterised as 'enclaves' (Sunstein, 2009); 'gated communities' (Turow, 1997) and 'sphericules' (Gitlin, 1998). While social scientists expect media users to be aware of the environment in which they operate, the rational choice philosophy argues that the sheer abundance of the digital marketplace makes perfect awareness impossible and media products are 'experience goods' characterised by 'infinite variety' (Caves, 2005). Media consumers cannot be certain that even familiar channels or brands will deliver the desired gratifications until they have consumed the offering. There have been numerous large-scale quantitative surveys, generally in western democracies, investigating the use of the Internet to obtain and exchange electoral information during campaigns (Lusoli, 2005). In studies focusing on Internet use for electoral information, using factor analysis, Lusoli (2005) found that Internet use for political information (online political habits) is associated with citizen centred campaigns (offline attitudes and behaviour) such as election discussions with friends, attending rallies and public meetings. These studies suggest that while online campaign sites were generally regarded as serving a useful purpose, there is little evidence to indicate that they had any significant impact on voting behaviour (Baxter, Marcella, Chapman & Fraser, 2013), and only a modest proportion of the electorate visit campaign sites; mostly young, well-educated males with an existing interest in politics visit the sites more frequently. Several other studies, predominately conducted in the US, have used multiple

regression techniques to explore relationships between Internet use during elections and citizens' levels of political efficacy or engagement, or of their likelihood of voting. The results of these studies have been mixed. Drew and Weaver (2006) found a positive correlation between Internet use and political knowledge and interest; Kenski and Stroud (2006) observed Internet access and online exposure to information about the presidential campaign significantly associated with political efficacy, knowledge, and participation; Chen (2005) in a study of large multi-member electorates in the New Zealand and Australian senate, found negative correlation in the use of digital media and electorate sizes. A number of more experimental, laboratory-based investigations in the US, where participants have been exposed to candidates' websites and their attitudes towards political issues and the candidates' characters have then been measured using Likert-type scales in a post-test questionnaire (Hansen & Benoit, 2005; Towner & Dulio, 2011). However, due to the differing approaches and objectives of these studies, no clear patterns have emerged from the results. While some researchers claim that overall Internet use by itself does not inevitably lead to political participation, there has been considerable evidence showing a positive impact of Internet use for political purposes on participation (Boulianne, 2009).

Although various studies have examined the political use of the Internet in American (Adamic & Glance, 2005; Golbeck, Grimes & Rodgers, 2009) and European politics (Kackson, 2007; Marcella, Baxter & Cheah, 2008), not many have focused on African politics. Previous studies of the Internet and contemporary political entities which in general, exhibit political traditions that differ distinctly from those in the U.S. have suggested that the Internet has considerable influence not only on new political parties, but also on major parties; introduces additional communication channels; promotes cross-party competition; and fosters democratisation trends (Kimseng, 2004; Newell, 2001; Semetko & Krasnoboka, 2003). In a meta-analysis of Internet activism, Norris (2003) found that the Internet (websites) is likely to strengthen existing network ties; reflecting top-down as well as bottom-up information dissemination; and providing opportunities for the politically active public to communicate through party websites. However, the extent to which the Internet contributes to party or political communication and its impact on party politics depends mainly on the inherent technical capability as well as the political and social context of the country (Römmele, 2003; Tkach-Kawasaki, 2003). Other studies have provided contrasting findings (Conway & Dorner, 2004; Margolis &Resnick, 2000), suggesting that instead of democratising

political power and facilitating grassroots activities, the Internet is likely to empower specific groups (elites) to attain their objectives (Lin & Dutton, 2003; Pickerill, 2004).

4.3 Perceived image of the political party

The political product is conceptualised as a complex package of benefits for the voter (Dann & Hughes, 2008); comprising inseparable components of the candidate, their party and ideology (Butler & Collins, 1999) active promises about the future made to the electorate during the campaign (Dann & Hughes, 2008), including party behaviour (Lees-Marshment, 2011). The fundamental and unifying core of the product is the party leader and his/her image (Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2007), personifying the political party (Harrop, 1990), serving as the principal source of identity (Parker, 2012) marketed to political consumers, including voters (Lees-Marshment 2001), the media and other audiences the party intend to influence (Burkitt, 2002) in exchange for votes (Baines, Brennan & Egan, 2008). Therefore, the political product may be offered using a branded leader in candidate-centred systems such as America's (Hughes 2007), or a leader co-branded with their party in party-centred systems (Hughes, 2007) such as in Zimbabwe. O'Cass (2003) found six key aspects of the political product from a party perspective: the political party, policies, leader, candidate, issues, and services which are inseparable when choosing a political product offering at election time. Researches has examined the structure of people's perception of political candidates (e.g., Kinder et al., 1980; Conover, 1981; Hinckley, 1981; Jacobson, 1981; Kinder & Abelson, 1981; Foti, Fraser & Lord, 1982; Miller, Wattenberg & Malanchuk, 1982; Lau, 1984). Extant literature has revealed that political leadership perceptions play a significant role in voter-customer preference and choice (e.g., Maurer, Maher, Ashe, Mitchell, Hi-in, & Van Hein, 1993; Shamir, 1994). Shamir (1994) found that the level of perceived charismatic leadership and ideological position influenced voting preferences of Israeli voter-customers during the 1992 elections. The ability of an organisation to prosper arises from its competitive advantage over other organisations operating within its market sector (Whiteley, 2000). Porter (2008) and McKinsey (2008) highlight the importance of competitive market forces in organisational performance. The progress, success or failure of a political organisation or nation state is measurable on the basis of the existence of institutions and systems of electoral management (Fukuyama, 2012). Fukuyama (2012) argues that ideas that drive history exist first of all in the realm of human consciousness, that is, on the level of ideas rather than election year

proposals. These ideas provide a world view embedded in beliefs, opinions and assumptions that guide behaviour and influence conduct (ibid). Communities and political parties thereof are formed around large unifying world views in the form of ideologies. Classical liberalism recognises the importance of the bedrock values of competition, democratic freedom, transparency, market opportunity and choice as preconditions for the success or failure of nation states and political organisations (Ake, 2000; Norris, 2015). Political choice is about social and behavioural attributes of people, their leadership preferences, and how these are actualised in establishing sustainable political leadership (Ha, & Lau, 2015, Caprara, Vecchione & Schwartz, 2015). Comprehensive political marketing is applicable to the whole behaviour of a political organisation, the way parties campaign, the way individual candidates organise for success as well as the way parties design their product (the leadership, members of parliament, candidates, membership, staff, symbols, constitution, party activities)(Lees-Marshment, 2015).

In contemporary politics, voter-customers increasingly rely on the media for political information (Johnson & Kaye, 2014), shaping and modifying their perceptions of candidate personal traits (Cwalina & Falkowski, 2016). Media has been confirmed to have an agenda setting function that helps to construct 'pictures in our heads' (Lippmann, 1922). Extant literature confirms that exposure to campaign spots on media influence viewers' evaluations of the candidates (Kaid, 2004; Moy, Xenos & Hess, 2006). Conversely, Dimitrova and Bystrom (2013) found negative impacts of YouTube on candidate image evaluations. This highlights the potential of ordinary citizens to influence political outcomes through the use of digital media by the mere creation of political messages in the online environment. In the current state of political campaigning in Zimbabwe, it is common for highly negative YouTube videos to go "viral" and erode a politician's image. However, it has been confirmed that following a political candidate on Facebook has a positive effect on evaluations of the candidate's intelligence and his leadership ability (Dimitrova & Bystrom, 2013). The notion of perceiving political parties as brands is a natural outcome of the digital media revolution as well as the extensive use of contemporary promotion and communication tools in politics (Abdel, Farrag & Shamma, 2014). It is axiomatic that political parties are organisations in which politicians seek the exchange of ideas and promises for electoral support, hence research has accepted the notion of political parties as brands (Kavanagh, 1995; Kotler & Kotler, 1999; White & de Chernatony, 2002; Needham, 2005). In voting, voter-customer is required to accept all or none of the political party policies and that these policies are mutablem

depending on the political conditions, particularly after election (Cwalina, Wojciech & Falkowski, 2015). It is however necessary to examine the antecedent variables of individual correlates of perceived image of the political party.

4.3.1 Political interest as antecedent variable for image perception

According to extant literature on political interest, a key motivational factor behind media consumption is the building block in the formation of political opinion (Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre & Shehata, 2012; Torcal & Maldonado, 2014). Political involvement has been found to positively correlate with an increase in political interest and subsequently political awareness has a reinforcing effect on voting behaviour (Thomassen, Aarts & Van der Kolk, 2000). Research has found political interest as a predictor of political engagement. If citizens are not interested, they will not want to engage in politics or want to deepen their political knowledge. Thomassen, Aarts & Van der Kolk (2000) define political interest as a sense of curiosity about political issues.

Various studies have shown that political interest is one of the most powerful and constant predictors of political participation, second only to past participation in many cases (Bhatti, Hansen & Wass, 2012). Political interest has also been shown to be important for political knowledge (Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996; Luskin 1990), and opinion consistency (Holt, Shehata, Strömbäck & Ljungberg, 2013). Conversely, voting may be a habitual behaviour, depending less on an instinctive interest in politics (Gerber, Green & Shachar 2003; Plutzer, 2002). Studies found that political interest has a curvilinear relationship with age, with young people generally being the least interested in politics (Bennett 1986; Glenn & Grimes 1968). Finally, research indicates that those with more education have higher levels of political interest. This relationship exists in part because education can increase one's familiarity with political information, enhance one's ability to recognise the personal implication of political events, or enlarge one's confidence to participate effectively in politics (Campbell 1962). Research suggests that political interest correlates with strength of partisanship (Robison, Leeper & Druckman, 2016) and political efficacy (Lee, Kwak & Campbell, 2015; Rudolph, Gangl & Stevens, 2000).

4.3.2 Media influence as antecedent of perceived image of political party

The concern over the media's influence on public participation spans over a century (McCombs, 2013). Often seen as an early reflection on media's social influence, the knowledge gap hypothesis

posits that differences in socio-economic status, particularly educational level, result in a gap in knowledge of public affairs between those high and low in the socio-economic status scale and the gap can be remedied by increasing levels of differentiation in social structure and media exposure (Tichenor, Donohue & Olien, 2015; Eastin, Cicchirillo & Mabry, 2015). Researchers have found that knowledge is closely related to and sometimes serves as the driving force behind attitude formation and change (Hamilton & Mineo, 2009). In that vein, citizens' political attitudes are likely to be different because their knowledge of public issues varies along demographic positions. Hill & Kim (2008) in their study of the knowledge gap within South Korea found a significant difference in usage between classes, with the highly educated using political web sites considerably more often. However, the lower classes may have limited access to a computer or Internet service. It is also likely that they simply have little interest in politics, and thus hardly use the Internet for political information (Bonfadelli, 2002). On the contrary, availability of information does not always lead to greater use or understanding (Nisbet & Scheufele, 2004). Effective digital media use for information seeking requires such skills as purposeful searching, evaluation of source credibility, construction of interpretative frames and a certain level of literacy (Bonfadelli, 2002).

4.3.3 Blogs and political participation

The popularity of blogging, mainly political blogging, has increased sharply in recent years (Herring, Scheidt, Kouper & Wright, 2007; Tremayne, 2007). Extant literature has demonstrated that blogs positively influence citizens' political engagement (Gil de Zúñiga, Puig-i-Abril & Rojas, 2009). Blogs allow for feedback in the form of comments and readers who refrain from commenting still maintain a sense of being part of the conversation by reading the live dialogues of others (Tremayne, 2007). Consequently, the use of blogs has a positive influence on increased online participation (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2009). Society's blogging, reading someone else's blog and creating a blog is positively related to an array of online political activities, such as online discussions, political campaigning and political behaviours, such as signing petitions or donating money. In the same vein it can be assumed that blogs can influence voting decision-making. Research has also found that the volume of blog posts is positively correlated with product sales (Onishi & Manchanda, 2012; Dewan & Ramaprasad, 2014).

4.3.4 Websites and political participation

One could argue that when consumers purchase products through the Internet, they make an explicit choice by favouring one product over another. A business's website plays a major role in influencing consumers' perceptions of a product or service and subsequently, the final product choice (Casalo, Flavian & Guinaliu, 2007). Similarly, consumers could make use of political websites that could influence their perceptions, views and final decisions about specific political figures and parties. Accordingly, it is not surprising that the Internet is playing an increasingly growing role in political marketing when it comes to both promoting individual candidates and political parties, given its ability both to reach individuals directly and also to mobilise groups through social media capabilities. Papagiannidis, Coursaris and Bourlakis (2012) found that as Internet use increases, so does the likelihood of visiting a political party's website. Papagiannidis, Coursaris and Bourlakis (2012), in their study on the effects of websites on voting intention, found that only one in four voter-customers visited the websites of candidates from several parties, indicating either a strong partisanship or underutilisation of the online medium to engage non-supporters. Voter-customers visited significantly more often websites of candidates with whom they were previously familiar. Therefore, the web appeared to be better suited to reinforcing perceptions of candidates, rather than primarily introducing candidates to the electorate and creating candidate perception. Visitors to websites were found to be significantly more sceptical about the information found on political candidates' websites than any other sites on the Internet. Exposure to political candidates' websites was found to positively affect voter perception of preferred candidates (ibid). Consequently, this may suggest that loyalty to a candidate and to a party may have moderating effects on the effectiveness of candidates' websites.

4.3.5 Social networking and political participation

Empirical evidence suggests that adoption of social media can significantly benefit organisations. Several studies analyse political behaviour on social media, such as social network sites or blogs (Conroy, et al., 2012; de Zúñiga, et al., 2012; Macafee & De Simone, 2012). Social media as defined by Richter and Koch (2007) are online applications, platforms and media which aim to facilitate interactions, collaborations and the sharing of content. Scholarly literature indicates that social media can generate higher brand attitudes and purchase intentions than more traditional digital media (Colliander & Dahlen, 2011). Social media and social networking sites, in particular,

have been used extensively as a marketing communications tool, owing to their ability to spread viral messages (Siamagka, Christodoulides, Michaelidou & Valvi, 2015) and generating word-of-mouth (Pfeffer, Zorbach & Carley,2014). Online word-of-mouth communication processes have a significant influence on consumers' buying intentions (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Positive word-of-mouth can provide an organisation with competitive advantage while negative word-of-mouth is capable of destroying a whole organisation. Online word-of-mouth involves an evaluation and recommendation of an organisation or its products by different online consumer groups through the Internet (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gemler, 2004). The more the electorate positively talk about a party candidate or the political party, the more supporters the political organisation generates from these web-based interactions (Phang, Zhang & Sutanto, 2013). However, several researches argue on actual participation and symbolic participation online (Ritzi, et al., 2012). According to other research, clicking a "like" button on Facebook, which is classified as low-threshold form of political participation, constitutes an act of self-staging not actual participation (Morozov, 2011). Conversely, Vitak, et al. (2011) found a relationship between 'liking' political content on Facebook and engaging in a political organisation. Conroy, et al. (2012) found a positive connection between political group membership on the Internet and off–line political engagement. Generally, research on digital media basically confirms a positive effect of digital media use on political participation. Online media have the potential to create capabilities that could translate into useful resources, which in turn, result in competitive advantages and higher performance (Lau, 2011; Leonidou, Palihawadana & Theodosiou, 2011). McKenna, Green and Gleason (2002) found that participants who met each other for the first time through online chat liked each other more based upon that interaction than did participants who met face-to-face for the first time, and a related study by Bargh, McKenna and Fitzsimons (2002) found that individuals interacting through online chat are better able to express their true self than individuals in face-to-face interaction. Similarly, it can be deduced that individuals connected online tend to build trust, share voting information and subsequently, influence behavioural control and decision-making.

Social media provide the voting populace with opportunities of expression, debate, and diverse forms of virtual political actions. Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan (2013) studied the relationship between emotions and information diffusion in Twitter and found that emotionally charged tweets are more

likely to be re-tweeted often and quicker than neutral ones. In the similar vein, political discussions towards elections raise emotions within society, hence tweets related to voting are likely to spread fast. During elections, the significance of information deteriorates rapidly and any delay in sharing or broadcasting undermines the initial effort in acquiring such information. Given the increasing popularity of Twitter, numerous studies have focused on the role of Twitter in politics. Yang and Counts (2010) discovered Twitter's critical role in information diffusion, and Pavel (2009) focused on Twitter as a mobilisation tool; Williamson and Phillips (2009) and Jungherr (2010) investigated the use of Twitter by political parties and conversely, Twitter was used extensively for social networking during the 2009 national election in Germany and reflected the election results (Tumasjan, Sprenger, Sandner & Welpe, 2010). Yardi and Boyd (2010) concluded that although Twitter users were exposed to diverse views presented in Twitter's public timeline, consequential discussions were limited and boundaries between in-group and out-group affiliations remained unambiguous. The number of tweets is not a predictor of performance; instead the content and types of tweet are more important (Rutter, Roper, Lettice, 2016; Rodriguez, Peterson & Krishnan, 2012). Fostering relationships with consumers who endorse the brand is key to the successful use of social media (Hall-Phillips, Park, Chung, Anaza, & Rathod, 2015; Kim & Ko, 2012). Literature suggests that consumers follow brands that they like, which acts as an endorsement. These tweets and retweets further endorse the brand in the eyes of those users who are not directly involved in the interaction, thereby enforcing a multiplier effect.

Research has found that mutual trust as well as swift trust is positively associated with knowledge exchanging behaviour in virtual communities (Wu, Lin & Lin, 2006; Chen & Hung, 2010; Askay & Spivack, 2010). Rutter, Roper and Lettice (2016), in their research on the effect of social media on recruitment, found that the number of tweets from a university does not significantly predict recruitment success, therefore twitter followers are not a proxy for the brand strength or the reputation of the university brand. Social media alone is not necessarily a positive branding activity for the universities, hence a large number of tweets is not a predictor of performance, and instead the content and types of tweet are more significant (Rodrigues, Peterson & Krishman, 2012). Extant literature suggests that consumers follow brands that they like, which acts as an endorsement. Brands can then engage and interact with these consumers to reinforce their endorsement and foster a relationship (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011a).

Similarly, political parties or prospective presidential candidates who interact more with their followers achieve better electoral performance than parties that fail to interact, even when voter-customers prompt them to do so. Prior research has also shown that young voter-customers are able to acquire political knowledge through social network sites (Teresi, 2009).

The importance of the Internet for contemporary African civil society actors can be attributed to two factors: many groups perceived as anti-government are pushed online because the other forms of political communication such as traditional media are inaccessible; television advertising, radio and newspapers are regulated by the state. The Internet allows for content to be hosted on servers beyond the control of state censors and affords anonymity to those who advance political criticism. During times of crisis, when physical spaces for public conversation and debate close down, the Internet provides virtual spaces for political communication. The impact of digital media on voter-customers may differ depending on the type of digital media under examination, that is, different forms of digital media may lead to differential effects on voter-customers (Gibson & Ward, 2000; Oates, 2008; Quintelier & Vissers, 2008). The aim of the present study is to capture the effects of several different forms of digital media, namely, online news sites, political party web sites, and social media (including blogs, online video sites, YouTube and social networks, Twitter and Facebook), on three key variables: perception, attitude and intention to vote.

4.3.6 Impact of attitude on image perception

Researchers have correlated consumers' attitude to behavioural intention. According to the theory of reasoned action, an individual's attitude has a positive impact on his behavioural intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Attitude is derived from beliefs that one holds about the object and evaluations of the consequences of the beliefs. Beliefs are based on what an individual perceives to be true (Eagley & Chaiken, 1993). Research revealed that consumer attitude towards a brand or product affects the intention to purchase (Jin & Suh, 2005; Leonidou et al., 2010; Limbu et al., 2012). Cheah and Phau (2011) found that consumers with a positive attitude towards environmental friendly products have a higher willingness to purchase environmental friendly products. Chan et al. (2013), Fleck et al. (2012), Luijten and Reijnders (2009), Tantiseneepong et al. (2012), and Thwaites et al. (2012) found that a consumer who has a positive perception of the brand, will be inclined to develop a greater willingness to purchase the product and subsequently

actively seek out the product in a store. Undeniably, attitudes positively affect customers' intention to spread positive word-of-mouth recommendation and willingly pay more for the products (Choi et al., 2009; Han et al., 2009, 2011; Han & Kim, 2010). An intention to buy a brand is based on a consumer's attitude towards the brand image as well as the influence of social norms and other people's expectations (Jamil & Wong, 2010). Product brand image impacts consumers' perceptions of product attributes (Selnes, 2013; Kwon & Lennon, 2009); that is, the evaluation of a product's attributes can be influenced by the consumer's impression of the brand's image (Freling & Forbes, 2013; Johnson & Zinkhan, 2015). As a result, a strong and favourable brand image can positively bias consumers' impression of product attributes (Aghekyan-Simonian, Forsythe, Kwon & Chattaraman, 2012). Online store image may have a similar effect, also biasing consumers' perceptions of product attributes. Other studies found a significant positive relationship between online store image and consumer purchase intention (Kwon & Lennon, 2009; Verhagen & van Dolen, 2009).
Consequently, party websites can have similar effects, biasing voter-consumers' perceptions of the political party attributes, eventually influencing the voting intention.

Attitude towards the brand is defined as consumers' general evaluative judgement of a brand based on his or her brand beliefs (Agarwal & Malhotra, 2005). Extant research confirmed that brand trust directly and positively affects attitudes towards the brand (Okazaki et al., 2007). In a comparative study, Joji (2011) found positive brand trust leads to positive brand attitude. Trust leads to confidence in the brand and results in the formation of a strong positive belief towards the brand (Joji, 2011). The positive effect of trust on consumer attitude was also observed by other researchers (Donthu, 2001; Elliott & Speck, 2005; Limbu et al., 2012). The favourability of brand associations produces relevant attitudes that transfer to the product. Thus, the more favourable the brand image, the more positive the attitude toward the branded product and consequently, a favourable product brand image has a positive effect on purchase intention (Del Rioetal., 2001; Keller, 2008), and consumers are more likely to shop online for products with well-established brand names (Lee & Tan, 2003). Extant studies indicate that contributions from consumers' relevant past experiences strongly influence current brand images (Braun-La Tour et al., 2007; Rindell, 2007, 2013; Wiedmann et al., 2011); the context in which the consumer experiences or recalls a brand also seems to exert a significant influence on brand images (Meyvis et al., 2012;

Rindell, 2007; 2013). In the current study context, it is anticipated that voting intention and voting behaviour is influenced by the attitude towards the political players and positive attitude towards the party influencing voter-customers to visit their favourite political party website.

4.3.7 Political trust as antecedent of perceived image of a political party brand

Trust, as a fundamental element and an inevitable dimension of social interaction (Ke & Wei, 2008), has received a lot of attention from scholars in disciplines of social psychology, sociology (Lewis & Weigert, 1985), economics (Williamson, 1991), management (Gulati, 1995), marketing (Anderson & Weitz, 1989; Dwyer & Oh, 1987; Moorman et al., 1992), and information systems (Hart & Saunders, 1998; Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999; Jarvenpaa et al., 2004). In spite of the exceptional insights offered by these disciplines, the understanding is that trust is one of the major factor in an exchange relationship (Indartono & Chen, 2011) and is a major contributor towards the consumer attitude formation process (Okazaki et al., 2007). Trust exists when the voter-customer has confidence in the political party of choice thereby influencing voter-consumer behaviour. Since trust creates exchange relationships that are highly valued (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), political brand trust definitely contributes to the formation of positive attitudes towards the political party as a brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001), its reliability and integrity (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Trust has been conceptualised as a belief in another's reliability, integrity, credibility, honesty, truthful benevolence (Geyskens, Steenkamp, Scheer & Kumar, 1996; Kumar, Scheer & Steenkamp, 1995; Morgan & Hunt, 1994), faith that the other will meet obligations (Gundlach & Murphy, 1993) and the expectation that another will act in accordance with one's beliefs (Sirdeshmukh, Singh & Sabol, 2002). Fundamentally, trust is confidence in the political party's goodwill and integrity, as well as the belief in its ability and credibility, and is associated with such qualities as being honest, faithful and truthful (Lohtia, Bello & Porter, 2009). However, trust is subjective, as it is based on consumers' beliefs rather than on hard facts (Yannopoulou, Koronis & Elliott, 2011). Trust is defined as a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence (Moorman, Zaltman & Deshpande, 1992). An important aspect of this definition is the concept of trust as a belief, feeling or expectation about an exchange partner which can be judged from the voter-customer's expertise, reliability and intentions. Credibility reflects a voter-

customer's belief that the political party or the presidential candidate has sufficient expertise to perform the job effectively and reliably. Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002) define trust as the expectations held by the consumer that the service provider or firm or brand is dependable and can be relied on to deliver its promises. Drawing from these established notions, political trust is thus defined as the willingness and expectations held by the electorate to rely on a political party based on its promises, concern and commitment towards fulfilling the expectations of the electorate in exchange for a vote. Trust underpins dyadic relationships where a certain degree of vulnerability or discretionary effort is encountered (Whitener, 1997). Blau (1994) further indicates that large-scale exchange is not likely to occur unless social bonds rooted in trust have been established. The rationale for brand images in extant branding literature suggests that strong brand images create trust, stability, and differentiation (Grace & O'Cass, 2005). As Internet use increases, so does the likelihood of visiting a political party's website (Papagiannidis, Coursaris & Bourlakis, 2012).

Globally, trust plays a significant part in politics where the voter's perception of fair and trustworthy elections is critical towards the outcomes (Rosas, 2010). Trust is strongly related to social capital. Social capital is related to, but different from, political participation in that political participation refers to our relations with political institutions while social capital relates to our relations with one another through social life networks, information channels, social norms, identity, obligations and expectations, moral infrastructure and trust (Putnam, 2016). Political participation develops social capital in the form of shared feelings and understandings that members of a group have in common. The fundamental feature of interpersonal trust functions as an activator towards political opinion and voting behaviour (Boeckman & Tyler, 2002). Several studies apply trust as an independent variable to explain political actions (Anderson, 2010) and demonstrate a strong correlation between trust and political behaviour (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Anderson, 2010).

4.3.8 Impact of interpersonal influence on brand perception

The assurance of significant others plays a significant role as a point of reference, especially when consumers have little knowledge of the product category in question (Kozinets et al., 2010). If peers or the reference group were to have expert knowledge on the differences between online political websites or platforms, it will consequently have an effect on the electorate's attitude towards online information sources. Correspondingly, it is likely that the number of people who

have already used online information sources can impact on voter-customer's susceptibility towards digital media as a form of "social validation" (Cialdini, 2007). An electorate with clear and shared perceptions of the party space has repeatedly been identified as one vital prerequisite for successful political representation (Schmitt & Thomassen, 1999; van der Brug, 1997). According to Anthony Downs there are three different factors that influence a voter-customer's evaluation of a party's or a candidate's policy position: (1) the position that emerges from the election manifesto, speeches or other kinds of performances; (2) policy positions that were continued or introduced in earlier elections; and (3) expected future performance based on past and current evidence (Budge et al., 1987; Downs, 1957).

4.3.9 Impact of image on perceived brand value

Perceived value of the brand acts as a signal and helps consumers in building attitude towards the brand (Kardes et al., 2004). When consumers perceive a brand to be, say, environmental friendly, it creates a perceived environmental friendly brand value in the consumer's mind. Chen and Chang (2012) reported that the higher perceived value of an eco-friendly brand leads to favourable behavioural intention towards the green brand. Researchers also emphasised that higher brand value leads to favourable brand attitude (Aurier & de Lanauze, 2011; Lai-man & Wai-yee, 2009). Several studies concur that brand value is a significant determinant of the consumer's brand attitude and brand attitude leads to purchase intention (Jin & Suh, 2005; Kim, 2011; Leonidou et al., 2010; Limbu et al., 2012). Nielsen & Larsen (2014) found a strong and significant effect of political brand value on voting behaviour. The results of the research showed a correlation between brand and behaviour, highlighting the fact that voters who exhibit a high political brand value for a particular party also have a high propensity to vote for that party. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) found that as trust in a brand increases, the value a consumer perceive from a product also increases. In the same vein, Simsek and Noyan (2009) opined that customer satisfaction, trust and perceived product quality have an effect on loyalty; trust and perceived value have an effect on customer satisfaction; brand image, perceived quality and product expectations have an effect on perceived value; brand image and perceived quality have an effect on trust. Some researches opine that satisfaction is not synonymous with loyalty (Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998). On the contrary, other research posits that brand relationship quality can mediate between brand perception and brand loyalty (Valta, 2013) and brand experience and brand loyalty (Francisco-Maffezzolli et al.,

2014). When consumers purchase products via the Internet, they make an explicit choice by favouring one product over another. An organisation's website plays a key role in influencing consumers' perceptions of a product or services and subsequently, the final product choice (Casalo, Flavian, & Guinaliu, 2007). In a similar vein, consumers could make use of political websites that could influence their perceptions, views and final decisions about specific political figures and parties. On the contrary, O'Cass (2003) revealed that the strategic aspect of political marketing provided little evidence on how politicians build their brand equity and retain loyal voters in the light of their political parties.

4.3.10 Political party as a brand and voting behaviour

A brand is regarded as the most valuable asset for any organisation and assists consumer decision-making process (Aaker, 1991; Chung et al., 2013; Emari et al., 2012; Huang & Sarigollu, 2011; Kremer & Viot, 2012). Although the significance of brands was originally established in marketing research, its logic has diffused to various areas of society (Marsh & Fawcett, 2011); political parties (Harrop, 1990; Schneider, 2004; French & Smith, 2010), party leaders (Lock & Harris, 2001; Needham, 2005) and party campaigns (Kavanagh, 1995). The customer-based brand equity model assumes that the power of a brand lies in what customers have learned, felt, seen, and heard about the brand as a result of their experiences over time (Keller, 2008). The sequential dimension is reinforced in his definition of brand images as "consumer perceptions of a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in the consumer's memory" (Keller, 2008:86), which could be any association linked to the brand that the consumer consciously remembers (Aaker, 1996b). Branding creates an identity around political entity that makes it easier for people to remember who they are (Cristea, 2015; Scammell, 2015; Peters & Watermayer, 2012), hence Pich, Dean, & Punjaisri (2014) and Patti, Luck, and Chapman, (2012) argue that political campaigning is intrinsically linked to the development of brand identity and brand image. A political brand is directly associated with its capacity to influence the voter-customers' belief in the electoral system of the country and consequently in that particular political party or leader (Aaker, 1991). Moving public opinion in a desired direction during campaigning continues to be the ultimate marketing challenge for a candidate and political parties (O'Shaughnessy, O'Cass & Ormrod, 2012; Newman, 2010; Inglehart, 2015). To change someone's mind, there has to be a shift in that person's "mental representations" and the way that individual perceives codes, retains and accesses information

(Gardner, 2006). On the contrary, Wring (1997) and Dunleavy (2014) observed that parties are capable of shaping voter preferences by influencing deliberations in their market. Ballantyne and Aitken (2007) and Merz et al. (2009) support the adoption of a process view of image formation. A dynamic and relational view of image construction is further supported by Solms and Turnbull (2002), who explain perception as an automatic reconstruction of reality in which past and present are intertwined and stored in our memories. Extant literature on presidential elections suggests that candidate evaluations are influenced by voter-customers' partisan affiliations (Campbell, Gurin & Miller, 1954; Campbell et al., 1960) and by their issue positions (Weisberg & Rusk, 1970; Rabinowitz, 1978). The leader's image, as part of the overall brand has been identified as a heuristic device for voter-customer assessment of overall party competence, responsiveness and attractiveness (Clark et al., 2004). However, according to Scammell (1999); Lillekar and Negrine (2003); Needham (2005), a normative approach to political branding is likely to produce adverse effect such as narrowing the political agenda, increasing conflict and demanding conformity of behaviour or message.

4.3.11 Political brand image as a consequence of voter-customer's perception

The word brand is sometimes used in the field of voting behaviour to illustrate long-standing political science concepts. Party identification has been illustrated in terms of brand loyalty (Hopkin & Paolucci, 1999) and issue ownership as a strategic positioning of the party image in the electoral market (Geys, 2012). Brand image is an essential building block in consumer-based brand equity (Keller, 2008) and it is expected that this holds true for political brands (Mishra & Mishra, 2014). The customer-based brand equity model assumes that the power of a brand lies in what customers have learned, felt, seen, and heard about the brand as a result of their experiences over time (Keller, 2008). Brand image includes symbolic meanings that correlate with the specific attributes of the brand, and it can be defined as a consumer's mental picture of a brand in his mind that is linked to an offering (Cretu & Brodie, 2007). The political brand is conceptualised in this study as voter-consumer's mental picture and collective impression of a political party or leader candidate as a result of the influence of a voter-consumer's reasoned or emotional perceptions. On Election Day, the image of the political party or the presidential candidate plays a crucial role in decision-making, selecting among alternative contestants available, where a negative or a positive brand image could make a difference (Peng & Hackley, 2009; Guzmán & Sierra, 2009). Brand

image is formed as an amalgamated effect of brand association (Keller, 2003; Yoo et al., 2000). The brand image and the brand reputation can be used as a basis of brand evaluation (Swoboda et al., 2012; Puzakova et al., 2013a, 2013b). The literature uses the terms brand image and brand reputation variably (Stern et al., 2001). It is recognised that reputation is the aggregate perception of outsiders on the salient characteristics of companies or brands (Fombrun & Rindova, 2000), while image is the associations and evaluations developed regarding the brand after every interaction, usually from indications produced by marketing communication.

Perceptions as regards the attributes and benefits of a brand are formed based on the marketing communication in respect of the brand, word-of-mouth from other consumers, and direct experiences with the brand. Similarly, political perceptions are formed based on the campaigns, word-of-mouth from within the electorate and direct experiences with the contesting political parties. Consumer attitudes toward particular product brands are formed not only by positive recalls but also negative cues and recalls (Aghekyan-Simonian et al, 2012). Similarly, voter-customer attitudes towards a political party are formed by both positive and negative cues and recall. However, brand image of a political candidate is influenced by the organisation or corporate brand of the political party and the political climate, although as humans they have some element of control over their personal brand image enhanced by their interaction with the constituency (Lilleker, 2004; Butler & Collins, 2001). Alkhawaldeh and Halim (2016); Hermanto et al. *(*2014) revealed that brand image has a positive direct relationship with brand loyalty and affective commitment (Tsang et al., 2011). The result is supported by prior studies (Marshall, 2010; Strandberg et al., 2015) which found a positive relationship between affective commitment and loyalty. Consequently, affective commitment mediates the relationship between brand image and loyalty (Amani, 2015).

While admittedly there is no consensus on the components of brand image, this study adopts Dobni and Zinkhan's (1990) assertion that brand image is a mainly subjective and perceptual phenomenon that is formed through consumer interpretation, whether rational or affective. It is not inherent in the technical, functional concerns of the product, rather it is affected by marketing activities, by context variables and by the characteristics of the perceiver; perception of reality is more essential than the reality itself. According to Keller (2008:86) and Aaker (1996b:71), defined brand image as "consumer perceptions of a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in the consumer memory" which could be any association linked to the brand that the consumer

consciously remembers. Although the notion of brand image has been mainly defined and used in diverse ways, one universal definition is that brand image is a consumer's collective impression of a particular brand as a result of the influence of a consumer's reasoned or emotional perceptions (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Aaker, 1996).

4.3.12 Political brand loyalty as a consequence of image perception

Several researchers have attempted to define and measure loyalty and literature on the construct is quite extensive (El-Manstrly & Harrison, 2013). Brand loyalty is considered as one of the key constructs on most conceptualisations of consumer brand equity (Veloutsou et al., 2013) and has become a critical indicator and bedrock for the success of organisations and their services (Sharma et al., 2013). Extant research conceptualised loyalty as the customers' tendency to continue, over time, to exhibit similar behaviours in situations to those previously encountered (Reynolds et al., 1974). Some researchers see it as one-dimensional, while others see it as multi-dimensional (El-Manstrly & Harrison, 2013). Loyalty is a concept that goes beyond repurchase repetition; it consists of a behavioural dimension and attitudinal dimension where commitment is an essential feature (Beerli et al., 2004; Gounaris & Stathakopoulos, 2004; Bandyopadhyay & Martell, 2007) and is distinguished from habit (Liu-Thompkins & Tam, 2013). Brand loyalty is expressed as a tendency to consistently choose the same brand among several brands in the same product group (Aaker, 2004). Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman (1996) conceptualise loyalty as the combination of repurchase intention and recommendation of an organisation by way of positive word-of-mouth (WOM). Respectively, several researchers define loyalty as a deeply held commitment to repatronise a preferred product or service consistently in the future (Litvin, Crotts & Hefner, 2004; Magnini & Ford, 2004; Mattila & Patterson, 2004a). Voter loyalty is conceptualised in this study as a profoundly held commitment to consistently vote and consistently patronise a preferred political party every time there is an election, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to influence change in allegiance.

The conceptualisation of the consumer–brand relationship is derived from the paradigm of human relationships in social psychology (Hinde, 1981; Falk & Noonan-Warker, 1985; Hinde, 1995, 1997). The literature suggests that communication is an essential aspect of the relationship, as it captures interactivity, a fundamental part of brand engagement (Hollebeek, 2011). To build a relationship with the brand, individuals should have an emotional attachment and want to develop

a two-way communication with them (Veloutsou, 2007; Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013), as this signifies brand engagement (Hollebeek, 2011) or have emotional and functional connections with the brand (Fetscherin & Heinrich, 2014). Several researchers concur that emotions are components of a relationship, including concepts such as immediacy (Aaker et al., 2004), brand attachment (Esch et al., 2006) or brand love (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Batra et al., 2012; Albert et al., 2013). The two-way communication dimension indicates that there is engagement with the brand (Hollebeek, 2011) and commitment to the brand (Suh & Han, 2003). Consumers with high brand commitment would have stronger affective attachment for the brand (Keh et al., 2007).

Several marketing researches attempt to find the antecedents of brand loyalty and amongst the major predictors are customer satisfaction, trust and the view towards the brand (Hes & Story, 2005). In a study of the banking services, Verhoef (2003) observed that affective commitment influence repurchase intention while brand satisfaction, brand equity and perceived brand value though being positive antecedents of affective commitment did not directly affect consumer repurchase behaviours. Similarly affective commitment would influence voting intentions. Affective brand commitment is defined as the emotional connection with the party brand based on identification and shared values with the brand (Pring, 2007). The manner in which the brand is perceived and evaluated, essentially predicts current purchases (Esch et al., 2006). Similarly, the way a political party is perceived is likely to predict voting decision-making.

Recently, both academicians and practitioners are striving to link electoral behaviour and party brand (French & Smith, 2010; Harmer & Wring, 2013). It has been observed that the concept of voter-customer loyalty in politics needs to be addressed (Winchester et al., 2014; Parker, 2012), especially with weakening and decreasing voter-customer's loyalty toward party brand around the world (Hughes & Dann, 2010; Smith, 2014; French & Smith, 2010). Therefore, there is a growing need to focus on voter-customer's needs and wants (Harris & Lock, 2010; Winchester et al., 2014). Thus, due to the complex nature of human behaviour (Kura, 2014; Amani, 2015), particularly voters' behavior (Stadelmann & Torgler, 2013), there are many factors that shape voters' behaviour (Amani, 2015). Literature posits that to understand the voters' behaviour, a plethora of variables are considered though factors that have received little attention is the brand image (perceptions) (Hermanto et al., 2014) and affective commitment (attitudes) (Gullupunar & Gulluoglu, 2013). Schofield and Reeves (2015) pointed out that the loyalty to political brands is still under-researched in the literature of political marketing. Loyalty to a political party implies

support for the party always. Thus, voter-customer loyalty in this research consists of two sections, behavioural and attitudinal (Wang, 2014), defined in this study as a voter's repeat vote for the same political party over three consecutive election periods.

4.4 PERCEIVED IMAGE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

Recent decades have witnessed voters' progressive tendency to cast a vote based on short-term concerns, such as policy preferences, performance judgements, or candidate images (Garzia, 2013; Conroy-Krutz, Moehler & Aguilar, 2016). To cope with these changes in the electoral market, political parties have gone catch-all, seeking to attract a maximum number of voters (Kirchheimer, 1966). In order to extend the electoral base, political institutions tend to focus election profiles on features more engaging to voters such as the leadership factor (Farrell & Webb, 2000). Radically evolving technology has transformed how organisational leadership abilities and behaviours are perceived (Avolio et al., 2014). Conversely, the impact of the digital technology on leadership is still in a nascent stage (DiStaso et al., 2011; Hoch & Kozlowski, 2014). Various studies have shown that the voter's individual personality influences political choice (Caprara, Barbaranelli & Zimbardo, 1999; Caprara et al., 2006, Van Hiel, Kossowska, & Mervielde, 2000) and that the personalities of candidates have become a key influence in elections (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Consiglio, Picconi, & Zimbardo, 2003; Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004).

Due to the effect of media technological innovations, leaders have taken a central prominent position with respect to both political communication (Swanson & Mancini, 1996) and voters' reasoning (Garzia, 2011a). King (2002) opined that leaders' personalities and personal characteristics play a significant role in influencing voting behaviour in democratic elections (King, 2002). Empirical evidence shows that voters develop a mental image of political leaders as persons on the basis of a restricted number of categories: competence; leadership; integrity and empathy (McGraw, 2003).

A growing literature highlights the significance of perceived image of a presidential candidate as a determinant of voting in contemporary democracies. Stephen, Harrison, Husson and Albert (2004) define candidate image as a potentially controllable set of meanings attached by voters to those seeking political office. In this study, candidate image refers to the image of the candidate based on salient personality traits that are perceived to be characteristic of the candidate. The political product is defined as an amalgamation of the elements of policy, party impression and its

received publicly implicit history, unified by perceived image of a presidential candidate (Henneberg et al, 2008). However, the effect of perceived image of a presidential candidate in the citizen's vote intention remains uncertain as a result of the potential reciprocal causation between perceptual evaluation and other vote determinants (Garzia, 2012). Literature has highlighted that power, leadership, competence, intelligence, credibility and morality are the key attributes of a political candidate (Benoit & McHale, 2004; Farrag & Shamma, 2014).This is supported by Frank (2012) and Kniffin (2009) who concluded that the candidate's image remains the most important variable that can really influence voters' behaviour while group membership can significantly influence or filter interpersonal perceptions (e.g., Frank, 2012; Kniffin, 2009). Although political marketing can succeed with repackaging, repositioning the leader candidate (Newman, 2010), there is no clear conceptual understanding of how this affects voters, the media, and other stakeholders (Henneberg, Scammell & O'Shaughnessy, 2009). The perceived image of a presidential candidate component represents the candidate's personality as perceived by the voter (Ben-Ur & Newman, 2002). Therefore, a candidate's image can be conceptualised as how the voter-customers perceive the candidate, perceptions based upon both the subjective evaluations made by the voters and the messages, utterances, attributes, qualities transmitted by the candidate or the political party. However, leadership attributes and their halo-effect on other party offering aspects have possibly a great impact on political marketing management performance (Ormrod, Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2013). The candidate may emphasise her personality traits to assist in reinforcing and manufacturing an image in the voter's mind (Falkowski, Andrzej & Cwalina, 2012; Lilleker, 2014; Ben-Ur & Newman, 2002). However, Lock and Harris (1996) question the use of the party leader as a central theme in political communication while arguing that the voters' perception of the party is the major determinant of the voting behaviour. On the contrary, it is evidenced through Knuckey and Marshment (2005) that, in the American context, George W. Bush gained a nomination in 2000 election by balancing compassionate policies against the traditional Republican tenets. Hellweg (2004); Stephen, Harrison, Husson and Albert (2004) support the assertion that candidate image is a major determinant in voter behaviour and candidate selection. Leadership and culture are inextricably linked and need to be studied together to be relevant (Schein, 2004). Culture is a crucial determinant of the history, identity and destiny of any society dictating what is important; who is important; what it takes to be successful (Prah, 2001). The role of leadership is to affirm values and to create badly needed ceremonies and rituals, giving these

new mythical rituals and structures (Mbigi, 2009). The African view of man is that, "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Lassiter, 2000). There is little space for an individual's self-determination outside of the context of family and community in African society. This sense of belonging provokes a natural submissiveness as a result of years of blind social submission and unquestioning compliance to the mystique of higher authority that reigns in all black African societies (Lassiter, 2000).

Extant political marketing literature concur that candidates' images has a significant positive impact on the voters (Harrop, 1990; Newman, 1994; Bacha, 1995). The image of the candidate party leader is the most important part of the political product (Speed, Butler & Collins, 2015; O'Shaughnessy & Henneberg, 2002; Pich, Dean & Punjaisri, 2014). However, there is a lack of theoretical consensus regarding the nature and constitution of candidate images. Candidate image is operationalised as a human construct imposed upon an array of perceived attributes of the presidential candidate which includes personal characteristics (sincerity; competency; diplomacy; accountability; arrogance; modest); personal traits and perceived characteristics. However, research has paid little attention to personality traits as factors shaping political attitudes or behaviour in voters (Sniderman, 1975; Oesterreich, 2005). Some previous studies dealing with the effects of personality on political behaviour in mass publics did not yield positive results (Campbell, Converse, Miller & Stokes, 1960). As a consequence, traditional models of voting behaviour do not include personality traits as determinants of vote choice. Despite the negative findings of prior research, several arguments suggest that personality traits play a considerable role in shaping partisan attitudes and voting behaviour in general publics (see Schoen & Schumann, 2005). Conversely, in everyday life, when assessing others, human beings compare their own personality to the personality traits they attribute to others (Byrne, 1971, 1997). It can therefore be assumed that voters, as human beings, utilise the same strategy well when they evaluate politicians and political parties. Furthermore, political parties appear to 'own' particular issues which they are perceived to be particularly capable of dealing with (Petrocik, 1996). These reputations appear to affect voters' perceptions of candidates' personality attributes and may serve as an additional basis for evaluating the presidential candidates. As the personality traits voters attribute to a party's presidential candidate may be fairly stable over time, party images in the voter's mind may also contain some personality attributes (Schumann, 2001, 2002; Downs, 1957; Popkin, 1993). Against

this backdrop, it comes as no surprise that this study suggests that the presidential candidate's personality characteristics and traits play a role in shaping electoral decision-making.

4.4.1 Candidate evaluation

Literature posits that political information exposure, such as political advertising, shapes audiences' perceptions of targeted candidates' image; inform them about candidates' issues, and influences general political attitudes about political systems and voting choice (Kaid, 1995). Although there is a mixture of evidence, the disposition of information has an influence on candidate evaluations (Weeks, Ardèvol-Abreu & Gil de Zúñiga, 2015). Research has found a positive correlation between political information and candidate evaluations (Kaid, Benoit, McKinney & Holbert, 2001; Kaid, 2004). Exposure to direct political information through political advertising, television debates and candidate visits increase positive evaluations of political candidates, hence influence the voting decision-making. Nevertheless, there is a need to consider party affiliation as an essential aspect in determining candidate evaluation. Political information about candidates and pre-existing political preferences interact in determining voters' evaluations on candidates (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). However, some empirical inconsistencies exist in literature. Chaffee (1978) found no evidence of political information influence on candidates' image evaluations while other researchers found otherwise (Kaid, 2000; Payne, Golden, Marlier & Ratzan, 1989).

4.4.2 Corporate equity and community equity

A politician's brand can compete with or enhance the corporate political party brand, which implies that political branding must take into account the communication role of the highly involved consumer. According to Phipps, Brace-Govan and Jevons (2008), politicians build community brand equity through their interactions with community groups in their electorates. Highly involved political consumers play a significant role in the development of a politician's community brand equity through brand advocacy and word-of-mouth. However, political brand equity is influenced by two interacting, and at times competing, brand equities: corporate brand equity and community brand equity. The corporate brand equity is the influence that the political party's brand has on the politician's brand image and overall equity. However, a presidential candidate's brand can either compete or enhance the corporate party brand subject to political

branding taking into account the communication role of the highly involved voter-consumers (Phipps, Brace-Govan & Jevons, 2008).

4.4.3 Social competence

Extensive research has shown that competence plays an important role in the process of social perception and judgment for individuals and groups (Fiske et al., 2006). Competence has been used in the evaluation of political leaders (Mandisodza, Goren & Hall, 2005; Olivola & Todorov, 2010) in different cultures (e.g., Lawson, Lenz, Baker & Myers, 2010; Rule et al., 2010), to characterise social and national stereotypes (Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2008). Chen, Jing and Lee (2012) maintain that competence emerges as the strongest predictor of electoral success regardless of the cultural background of the candidates. Chen, Jing and Lee (2012) found that perceived likeability is significantly related to electoral success in communal cultures such as Taiwan, but not in the U.S which has an individualistic culture (Rule et al., 2010; Wojciszke et al., 2009). These results are consistent with the notion that in communal cultures, group goals have priority over personal goals; therefore, having a pleasant personality is critical in the process of striving for the common good (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995).

4.5 ATTITUDE TOWARDS VOTING

In most of the behavioural theories that explain the process of behaviour formation, attitude is recognised as one of the most important influences on behaviour (Ajzen, 2005). Attitude is an immediate determinant of intention to perform behaviour. Behaviour is said to be more or less equal to behavioural intention and is derived from a combination of the consumer's attitude toward behaviour and the subjective norms about the behaviour (Solomon, Bamossy et al., 2006). Although the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) have generated a great deal of research interest, in literature there has never been a consensus with regards to the addition of further constructs to the model, the relationships between the model components, and the overall predictive ability of the model (Shaw, Shiu & Clarke, 2015). In consumer's decision-making process, an attitude towards behaviour has direct impact on the behavioural intention (Zhang & Kim, 2013). Thus, resulting attitudes toward voting is a critical factor to compete and survive in the competitive electoral market.

In addition, numerous empirical findings reveal that attitudes are good predictors of behaviour and information search (Blackwell et al., 2001) patronage (Moye & Kincade, 2003); and behaviour

intention (Ajzen, 2005; Hernández, Jimenez & Martin, 2010; Grandón et al., 2010). However, researchers concur that attitudes play a major role in influencing behavioural intentions (Seock & Norton, 2006; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; Pagalea, Uta, 2012; Bellman et al., 2009). Hasbullah et al., (2016) revealed that attitude towards online shopping has a significant positive relationship with intention to buy online. The finding was consistent with TRA and planned behaviour which indicated a positive linkage between attitude and behaviour and supports earlier research by Xing (2013). Shim et al. (2001) showed that consumers' attitudes toward Internet shopping positively affected their intentions to purchase via the internet. These findings of a direct effect of attitudes toward Internet shopping on intentions to purchase from the Internet are consistent with the reasoned action and planned behaviour theories, which hold that attitude is a determinant of behavioural intentions (Blackwell et al., 2001). However, other researchers recommended that linking person's moral obligation (positive self-enhancing feelings of 'doing the right thing') with attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions of behavioural control, as a predictor of behaviours significantly improved the prediction of intentions (Beck & Ajzen, 1991; Leonard et al., 2004; Thøgersen & O¨ lander, 2006). In a study by Sparks et al. (1995), moral obligation increased only marginally the prediction of intentions while Saba, Rosati and Vassallo (2000) and Saba and Rosati (2002) failed to find any significant increase at all.

In light of voter-customer's use of online media for information search and decision-making, it may also be that voter-customers with favourable attitudes toward voting sometimes use party websites solely to find information about the competing political parties or candidates. Eagly and Chaiken (1993) defined attitude as a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour. Fishbein and Ajzen (2011) defined attitude as the extent to which an individual makes a positive or negative evaluation of behaviour and its outcome. These attitudes are based on behavioural beliefs regarding the perceived consequences of voting and the subjective evaluations of these consequences. Other authors have also made varying contributions to the concept of attitude towards behaviour. Thorhauge, Haustein and Cherchi (2016) defined attitude as the degree to which the performance of the behaviour is positively or negatively valued. Drawing from this literature, the current study defines attitude towards voting as the strength of voter-customer's feeling of favourableness or unfavourableness towards voting. Attitude is generally understood as a psychological state that predisposes an individual to act positively or unfavourably to an event or situation. Extant literature posits that

attitude is multi-dimensional, consisting of interrelated constructs represented by three components: cognitive component (knowledge of specific-issues related to the elections), belief/affective component which includes those variables that measure feelings and beliefs about voting and its consequences; and conative components which is an assumption that attitude has a causal effect on intentions to vote (Maloney & Ward, 1973; Maloney, Ward, & Braucht, 1975; Rosenberg, 1960; Schahn & Holzer, 1990). Attitude is also influenced by judgements of the ethicality of behaviour (Ellis & Griffith, 2000) and is implicit in theory of planned behaviour and reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2010).

4.6 Voting intention

The study of electoral choice has yielded notable progress in providing insight into voter decision-making. The basic assumption of most extant researches on voting decision-making is that voters are incapable of dealing with the intricacies of politics, hence voters rely on heuristics to simplify political decision-making and guide their individual behaviour. Voter-customers are expected to make decisions that have profound and irreversible consequences in inherently uncertain environments. How do people decide whether to vote or not vote? Do they base their decision on an assessment of anticipated costs and benefits? According to heterogeneity assumption, it cannot be assumed that all voters use the same criteria when making voting decisions. The Columbia School attribute voting choice to sociological effects (Berelson et al., 1954), and the Michigan School centred on socio-psychological influences (Campbell et al., 1960; Miller & Shanks, 1996) and the rational choice based on utility maximisation (Downs, 1957; Popkin, 1991).

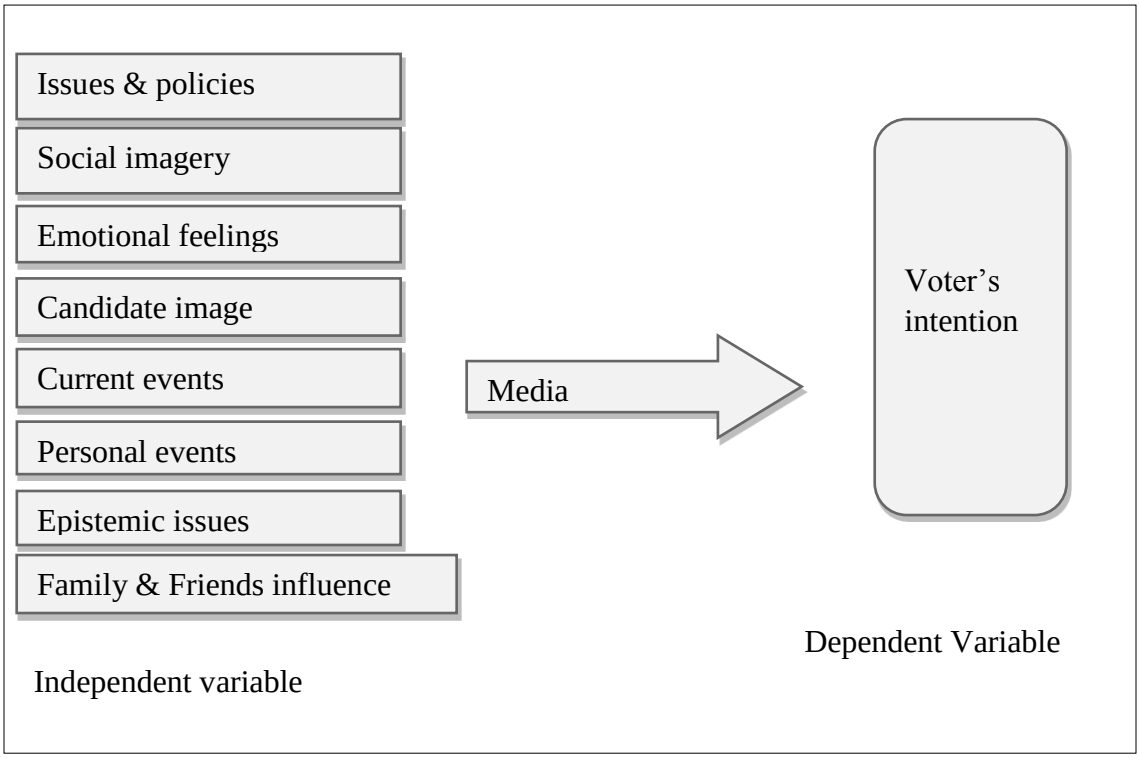
Behavioural intention has been conceptualised as a reflection of an individual's motivation as shown by how much of an effort the person is willing and planning to exert to perform behaviour (Ajzen, 2008; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and what the individual plans to do (He et al.). Essentially, intention is an individual's anticipated or premeditated future behaviour (Lam & Hsu (2006). Drawing on these established notions, this study defines voting intention as the individual voter-customer's willingness or reluctance to participate in the electoral process at some future date.

4.6.1 Factors that influence voting intention

Newman and Sheth (1985) proposed a model with seven distinct and separate cognitive domains that potentially influence voters' choice behaviour: namely issues and policies; social imagery;

emotional feelings; candidate image; current events; personal events; and epistemic issues. Some researchers highlight that there is an interaction between the variables (Cwalina et al., 2000). However this model has received criticism in its exclusion of media campaign, family influence and friends influence on voting intention (Farrag & Shamma, 2014). Several researches have proven media to be a significant mediating factor directly influencing voter-customers' voter behaviour (Newman, 1994; Ansolabehere et al., 1995; Mann & Orren, 1992; Negrine, 1994). While the model is useful as a theoretical framework for predictive analysis of voter behaviour, not all the variables are relevant; the predictive power of each variable is determined on an election by election basis (O'Cass, 2002). As a result, Farrag and Shamma (2014) proposed a revised model adding family influence and friends influence as additional factors that drive voting intention: family and friends influence (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Factors Influencing Voter Intentions



Source: Adapted from Newman & Sheth (1985)

4.6.2 Issues and policies

Fishbein and Coombs (1974), in their study, found that the candidate's stand on the issues affect perceived image of the candidate and likeability.

Social ImageryLiterature suggests political participation is influenced by demographic factors, including socioeconomic status (SES), gender, race and education (Berelson, Lazarsfeld & McPhee, 1954). The assumption is that political behaviour is a result of social identification, associations and membership. Studying the influence of partisan identification on political outcomes, Gerber et al. (2010) found a causal relationship between partisan identification and voting behaviour. In a study on online voting, social influence revealed a significant positive relationship to voters' intentions. However, it further indicated that the social influence is not impacted by age or gender interaction (Powell, Williams, Bock, Doellman & Allen, 2012). Baines et al. (2005) found that party image perceptions are also better predictors of voting intention than demographics for major United Kingdom political parties. Few studies have explored the effect of demographic factors, such as age, within a particular cohort on attitudinal research. Ruane and Wallace (2013) found that Facebook yielded positive behavioural attitudinal responses among millennial women; while Punj (2011) concluded that different demographic characteristics influenced behavioural activities; and Wang and Sun (2010) revealed that ethnic factors had an impact on behavioural responses.

4.6.3 Family and friends influence

Several authors have made varying contributions to the concept of social pressure. While several studies reveal a significant relationship between social pressures and voting intention (Belanger & Eagles, 2007; Glynn et al., 2009), on the contrary, Morar, Venter and Chuchu (2015) found that social pressures do not influence voting intentions. Therefore, by targeting family and friends of the potential voters, is unlikely to yield an increase in voting intention, particularly amongst the youth (Morar, Venter & Chuchu, 2015).

4.6.4 Media

Although most recent studies have found media effects on political participation (and particularly on voting behaviour), there is debate about different outcomes of various media. Bartels 1996 found a significant positive relationship between media use and voting behaviour. Conversely, Bimber (2001) found negative effects of Internet use on voting behaviour. In an experimental study, Kaid (2003) showed that Internet use is significantly related to voting intention (Kaid, 2003). Similarly, in a survey, Tolbert and McNeal (2003) showed that respondents with access to

the Internet and online election news were significantly more likely to report voting in the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections. Weber and Bergman (2001) found that those who engaged in Internet activities were more likely to be engaged in a variety of political activities. Regarding the role of the media, Cwalina et al. (2005) highlighted in their study that political advertising can result in re-assessment of the candidate's image from the voters' perspective though not influencing voters' behaviour. Some research papers have focused on the impact of negative campaign tactics and negative political advertising on voting intentions (Yoon et al., 2005). Some studies found that the impact of negative campaigns on voters' behaviour is mediated by the source credibility (ibid).

4.6.5 Political Information Efficacy

Tan (1980) found that a voter who is well informed about the election would most likely vote. Therefore, if the media disseminate information that provides awareness and relevance to citizen's lives, and they also attend to the public and civic issues at hand, then there will be an improvement in political efficacy (Pinkleton & Austin, 2001). However, in a study conducted by Kaid et al. (2007), a young voter's efficacy is affected by the diverse ways of political knowledge. These researchers found that when young voters are less likely to feel confident about their political knowledge, they are less likely to vote. Political information efficacy refers to the voter's confidence in his political knowledge and its sufficiency to engage in the voting process (Kaid, McKinney & Tedesco, 2007). Extant research found that voters who are more engaged in politics and have stronger partisanship tend to have higher levels of political information efficacy (Kaid, McKinney & Tedesco, 2004; 2007). Political information and the discussion of political issues increases general confidence in the individuals' own political capability that is positively related to active political participations (Lane, 1969; Almond & Verba, 1963; Dahl, 1961; Campbell et al., 1960). Specifically, political campaigning information is positively correlated to political information efficacy, which possibly leads to active voting behaviours (Merolla, Sellers & Fowler, 2013).

4.6.6 Political Cynicism

Research has amply demonstrated the effects news frames have on political attitudes (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2012), issue interpretations (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2012), policy proposals (e.g.,

Slothuus & De Vreese, 2010), or evaluations (Andrews, Clawson, Gramig & Raymond, 2016). Political cynicism is conceptualised as disbelief in politics and mistrust of political actors (Fu, Mou, Miller & Jalette, 2011; Pingree & McLeod, 2013). Political cynicism has been found to impact negatively on voting and information seeking about political issues and candidates (Kaid, McKinney & Tedesco, 2000; Miron & Bryant, 2007). According to Pinkleton and Austin (2004), the more politically cynical a respondent is, the less likely they are to vote. On the contrary, Fu et al. (2011) found that political cynicism may actually increase a respondent's likelihood to vote because cynicism does not lead to apathy, but alternatively to critical thinking about politics. In a study on the effects of the CNN/YouTube 2008 American presidential election, Lariscy, Tinkham, and Sweetser (2011) found that as political information efficacy rises, so does political cynicism. Political audiences who are exposed to negative political information become politically more negative (Kaid, McKinney & Tedesco, 2000). Furthermore, distorted, biased media information about politics turns audiences off from any further attention to political information (Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon & Valentino, 1994). Although agenda-setting and framing scholars argue about the relationship between the media aspects of issue presentation and the public issue salience (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Rogers & Dearing, 1994), these studies disregarded the significance of individuals' political predisposition and the differences of media information availability in the different political environments.

4.6.7 Conceptualisation of voting intention

Purchase intention is a combination of consumers' interest in and possibility of buying a product. In the same vein, voting intention is a combination of voter-customers 'interest in and possibility of voting. As a result of many studies, intention strongly relates to attitude and preference toward a brand (political party/presidential candidate) (Kim, Kim & Johnson, 2010; Kim & Ko, 2010b; Kim & Lee, 2009; Lloyd & Luk, 2010) so that measuring voting intention assumes voters' future behaviour based on their attitudes. Voting intention is an attitudinal variable for measuring voter-customers' future contributions to the political party.

4.7 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FOUR

Chapter four (4) presents a discussion of the empirical literature underlying the theoretical constructs of this study. The empirical literature describes the variables of this research in depth

namely digital media exposure, perceived image of the presidential candidate, perceived image of the political party, attitude towards voting and voting intention. The five constructs discussed in this section are used to conceptualize this thesis conceptual model. The empirical literature has adequately demonstrated relationship between exposure to media and attitude which when not well managed may lead to cynicism. The current research contributes to the empirical literature by presenting perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting and perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting mediating the relationship between media exposure and behavioural intention. In the next chapter presents the conceptual model and hypotheses development.

5 CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

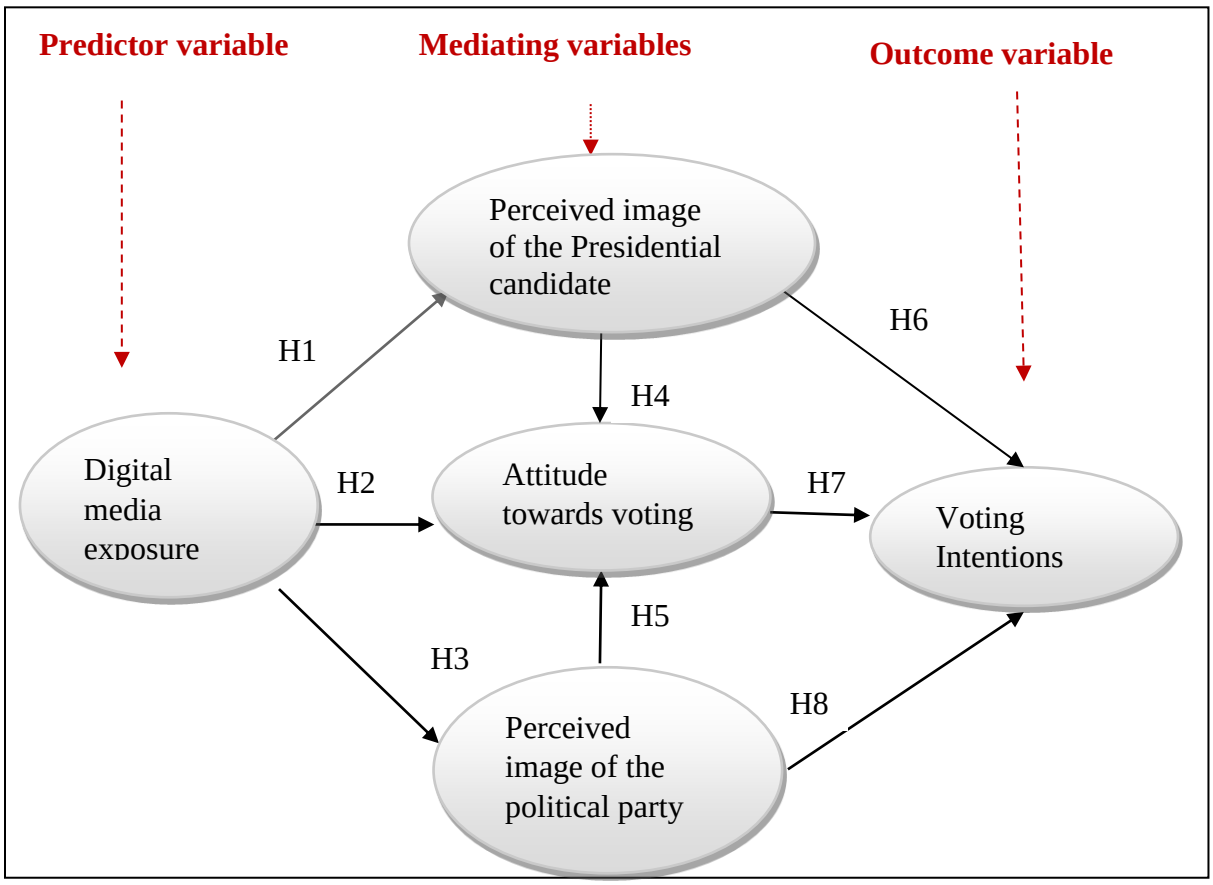
5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to establish a conceptual framework of the influence of digital media exposure on voting intentions in Zimbabwe's presidential elections. Premised on the reviewed behaviourist literature in Chapter Three (3) and Four (4), a conceptual model and a set of critical hypotheses for the study are formulated for further empirical examination. Basically, the influence of digital media on voting intention in Zimbabwe's presidential elections is posited and set for empirical enquiry in subsequent chapters. Figure 5.1 presents the conceptual framework for the study, which contains digital media exposure as the precursor and voting intention as the outcome while perceived image of the presidential candidate; perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting are the mediators in a digital media–voter-consumer dyad. In particular, the study investigates the indirect effect of digital media exposure on voting intention and the mediating influence of perceived image of the presidential candidate; perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting.

5.2 Conceptual model

Premised on the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology, Agenda Setting Theory as well as the theoretical review of the research constructs, the proposed conceptualised voting behaviour reasoned action agenda building model is presented in Figure 5.1 and related research hypotheses are developed thereafter. The model proposes four distinct domains that drive voting intentions. As pointed out earlier on, digital media exposure is regarded as the predictor that influences perceived image of the presidential candidate, perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting which in turn, has a positive influence on voting intention. The three mediating variables are posited to impact on voting intention, which is the single outcome variable of this proposed research model. The key proposition is that voting intention can be driven by a combination of the aforementioned domains in a given election.

Figure 5.1: The Proposed Conceptual model



Source: Developed by Researcher (2016)

5.3 Hypothesis development

By means of a critical analysis of literature, the conceptualisation of the current study is presented and its hypotheses development is discussed in subsequent sections.

5.3.1 Digital media exposure

The use and importance of digital media in election campaigns has grown steadily over time. Digital market can be characterised as an 'attention economy' in which attracting an audience is a prerequisite for realising economic, social or political objectives (Webster, 2010). The evidence regarding the relationship between online media use and political participation indicates a positive relationship although some previous studies have failed to demonstrate a concrete impact of digital media on participation. Groshek and Dimitrova (2011) found no significant impact of social media use on vote intention in the 2008 U.S. presidential election. Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer and Bichard (2010) found that dependence on social networking sites had no effect on political participation,

although it was significantly related to civic participation. Social scientists normally expect media users to know a great deal about the environment in which they operate; yet in reality, the plethora of the digital marketplace makes perfect awareness impossible and media products are 'experience goods' characterised by 'infinite variety' (Caves, 2005). Digital networks offer media consumers more powerful tools for finding content and bring user choices into greater conformity with user preferences. Thus, there is considerable impetus to conduct research on effects of digital media exposure on consumer decision-making. However, a political marketing topic that has received much attention from various researchers is the effect of social media on political engagement.

5.3.1.1 Digital media exposure and perceived image of the presidential candidate

The relationship between digital media exposure and perceived image of the presidential candidate is presented, its significance, as well as the empirical evidence towards the support of the hypothesis in the study.

5.3.1.2 Importance of the hypothesised relationship

In contemporary politics, voters have few chances to meet political candidates in person. Nevertheless, voters increasingly rely on the media for information, forming or modifying their perceptions of candidate personal traits. Use of media for advertising is meant to create awareness of some important characteristics or traits of a product, an individual, organisation or business entity as well as refining and reasserting unique competitive brand positioning, with the ultimate aim of maintaining share of the market and profit levels (Kotler et al., 2005) or improving the chances of winning the election in the case of political parties. Advertising can often be used to reinforce the existing beliefs of the audience and to assure them that they need to maintain loyalty as the values associated with the brand remain steady and true. Advertising, which is part of digital media exposure, is found to have an impact on the brand image, which, in this case, is taken to mean image of the presidential candidate.

Most managers use the media to create awareness because, when there is no awareness, people might have erroneous perceptions or distorted images of an individual or product. Therefore, media is used as a platform or medium to reach out to clients, reach out to voters so as to sensitise them on the quality of the presidential candidate representing a particular political party. If practitioners desire to build an image they have to use media, this is why this relationship is important to investigate.

5.3.1.3 Possible linkages between digital media exposure and perceived image of the presidential candidate

Use of media for advertising is that it assists an organisation establish its identity and increase its brand awareness. Companies want their products to be the primary thing a consumer thinks of when a need arises. Consistent advertising facilitates this by ensuring that the company's name stays in front of potential customers, even when they may not be ready to buy at that point. The idea of branding can be applied to the persona of political candidates as well as the political party. The 'digivisual' presence and characteristics of the candidate has been recognised as a key determinant of the party success and the candidate is managed as a brand in order to build a sense of assurance and promote identification between the candidate and voter-customer. Consequently, political advertising can remind the audience that the brand remains current, relevant and dynamic, to maintain a sense of visibility and presence in the marketplace. The voting audience gets to know the politician through the image portrayed in the advertisements. Political advertising, as in commercial advertising, can often be used to underpin the existing beliefs of audiences and to assure them that it is necessary to maintain loyalty as the values associated with the brand remain stable and proper. Advertisements evoke emotions and perceptions. In the same vein, different forms of media are expected to evoke emotions, attitudes and perceptions about the presidential candidate and by association, with the political party he represents. When an individual is exposed to media advertisement, the person is likely to develop a certain attitude; this attitude is likely to arouse some emotions. Similarly, when a person is exposed to media, this exposure is likely to arouse the viewer's emotional feelings and that can lead to a certain attitude and that attitude can lead to a positive or negative image of the presidential candidate. In some instances when there is an attitude it leads to preference, this preference leads to perception of the presidential candidate. However, voters' political attitudes are primarily formed by family, media usage, peers and education (Powell, 1998). It should be noted that in consumer decisions, cognitive dissonance can be resolved by taking the product back whereas voting decisions in a presidential election must be rationalised as the ultimate act of voting is irretrievable. Voters in an election all make their decisions on the same day and everybody has to live with the decision whether they like it or not (both non-voters and voters). Consequently, there is bound to be some level of emotion and enthusiasm. It is also expected in extant literature that when there is exposure to advertisement, it is likely to lead to attitude which eventually leads to perception. Reflecting from Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) expectancy-value model, a voter-customer's attitude toward a presidential

candidate may derive from how many of the candidate's policy proposals are viewed positively or negatively and the likelihood that the candidate can bring each proposal to fruition. In this study, it is expected that DME will lead to attitudes which will then influence voters' perception of the presidential candidate. It is also expected that emotional feelings will impact the presidential candidate perception.

5.3.1.4 Empirical evidence supporting the hypothesised statement

Prior empirical studies confirm the existence of a positive relationship between media exposure and image of a leader (e.g., Peng & Hackley, 2009; Jones, Young & Claypool, 2011); brand image (e.g., Šerić & Gil-Saura, 2012); brand personality (eg., Pouromid & Iranzadeh, 2012); brand familiarity (e.g., Zhang et al., 2014); purchasing decisions (Norazah, 2013b) and voters' perceptions of candidates (e.g., Papagiannidis, Coursaris & Bourlakis, 2012) in non-African economies such as Greece, Malaysia, the United Kingdom and United States of America. Extant literature confirms that exposure to campaign spots on media influence viewers' evaluations of the candidates (Kaid, 2004; Moy, Xenos & Hess, 2006). The majority of electoral research points out that voters make a reasoned choice when they vote, which means that they consider the consequences of their choice (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998). It is argued and established that media coverage of political candidates or of campaigns in general, affects candidate support. It is through the media that voters hear and see the political candidates, and it can therefore be expected that the media has an effect on a voter's perception of candidates (e.g., Kleinnijenhuis, van Hoof, Oegema & de Ridder, 2007). A meta-analysis by Benoit, Hansen and Verser (2003) specifies that viewing media debates can affect both issue preferences as well as the attitudes respondents hold towards the candidates (Kraus, 2000; McKinney & Carlin, 2004). Reflecting on the Michigan theory, optional exposure and selective information processing generally prevent individuals from receiving information contradicting their views, and consequently, from changing their attitudes (Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1944). Prior researches indicate that exposure to campaign messages affect candidate evaluations (Dinter & Weissenbach, 2015).

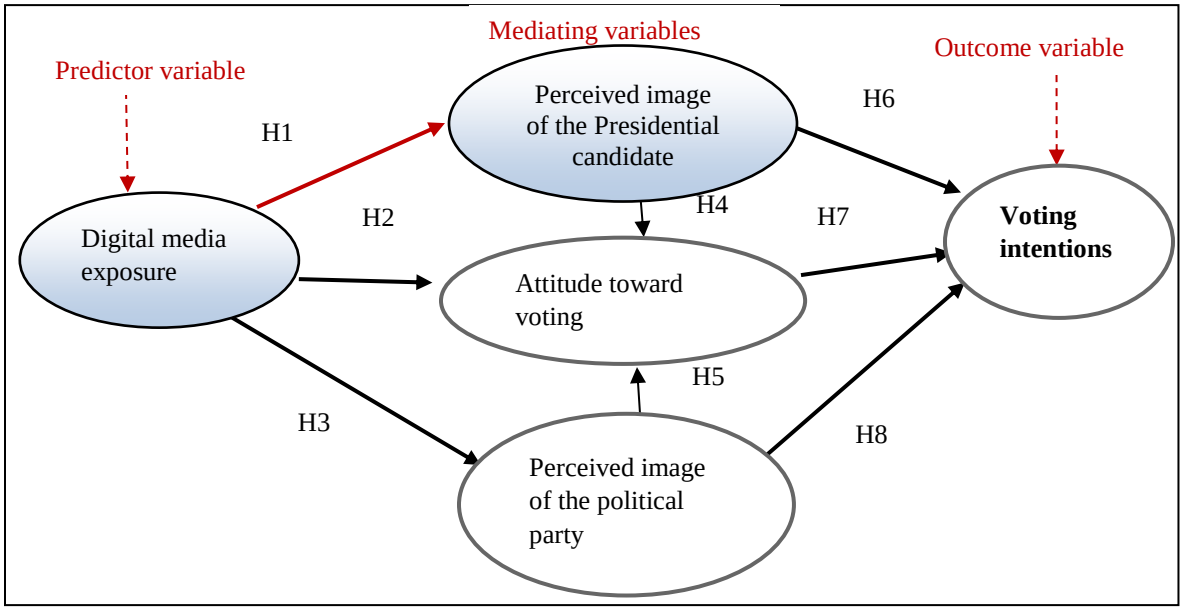
Reflecting from agenda-setting theory, media salience issues affect public salience issues. The same logic extends to political candidates so that the salience in the media can affect the public salience of candidate (Kiousis & McCombs, 2004; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Presidential candidates who are less prominent in the media will have a hard time convincing voters that they and their viewpoint matter. According to the second-level agenda-setting theory, the media do not

only tell us 'who' to think about, but also 'how' to think about them (McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar & Rey, 1997). By making certain characteristic and qualities of presidential candidates more prominent, the media shape candidate image and candidate evaluation (Kiousis, 2005; McCombs, et al., 1997). However, the brand image of a political candidate is influenced by the corporate brand of the political party and the political climate, though, as humans, they have some element of control over their personal brand image enhanced by their interaction with the constituency (Lilleker, 2004; Butler & Collins, 2001).

While several studies have explored the role of candidate image evaluation in political campaigns, there seem to be no consensus on which trait is the most important to voters. This current study adapted scales from Evan and Andersen (2005) and Kaperer (2004) in organising the various traits into leadership ability, and personal qualities. Consistent with the empirical evidence on the linkage between digital media exposure and perceived image of the presidential candidate, the current research proposes that the exposure to digital media will likely have a positive impact on the perceived image of the presidential candidate. The current study therefore posits that:

***H1**: There is a positive relationship between digital media exposure and perceived image of the presidential candidate in Zimbabwe*.

Figure 5.2: DMEX positively influence PPC



5.3.2 Digital media exposure and attitude towards voting

A hypothesised positive relationship between digital media exposure and attitude towards voting is explained in terms of its importance as well as empirical evidence supporting the stated hypothesis.

5.3.2.1 Importance of the hypothesised relationship

Media exposure`s most powerful effect is that it spreads information to a large audience rapidly. The fact that media can alter behaviour of beliefs is undisputed, though most of the effects are small and cumulative, as tiny bits of information adding up (DeFleur, Mevin & Dennis, 1998). Repetition of a message, its ultimate consistency and apparent corroboration can facilitate a shift in public opinion in the long term, thereby assisting in changing attitudes and behaviours in a variety of contexts. Prior research has established that voters' level of political participation is a factor that moderates the impact of new information on political attitudes and behaviour. An increase in the levels of political knowledge will heighten the likelihood of attitudinal changes. However, there is no consensus on the impact of media effects on levels of political participation such as voting. While some studies find that media effects are stronger for voters with low levels of political involvement (Hwang et al., 2007; Matthes & Marquard, 2013), on the contrary, other studies found no effect (e.g., Young, 2004; Schuck, Boomgaarden & de Vreese, 2013).

5.3.2.2 Possible linkages between digital media exposure and attitude towards voting

Attitude towards voting is one of the primary determinants of voting intention apart from the amount of social pressure one feels in relation to voting and feelings of self-efficacy even under difficult circumstances (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Attitudes, perceived norms and self-efficacy are viewed as functions of underlying beliefs about the outcomes of voting and about specific barriers to voting, such as the voting process and voting requirements. Thus, for instance, the more a voter-customer believes that voting in the presidential election in Zimbabwe will lead to a 'good' outcome and prevent 'bad' outcomes, the more favourable one's attitude toward voting. It has been observed that attitudes follow from beliefs; perceptions of social pressure follow behavioural control. The more one believes that significant others are (or are not) voting and the more one believes that significant others think one should (or should not) vote, the more social pressure one will feel (or the stronger the perceived norm) with respect to voting (or not voting). Similarly, the

more one perceives that one can vote, even in the face of specific barriers or obstacles, the stronger will be one's perceived control or self-efficacy with respect to voting. When changing voting intentions, the voter would have to mentally construct a justification for the intended behavioural modification. However, priming effects have been observed in reaction to media exposure (e.g. Druckman, 2004) and interpersonal communication (e.g. Mendelsohn, 1996). What people think about is strongly determined by the media which draws attention to some aspects of politics while disregarding others. It has been observed that consumers tend to increasingly rely on peer consumer opinions available online (Gligorijevic & Luck, 2012).

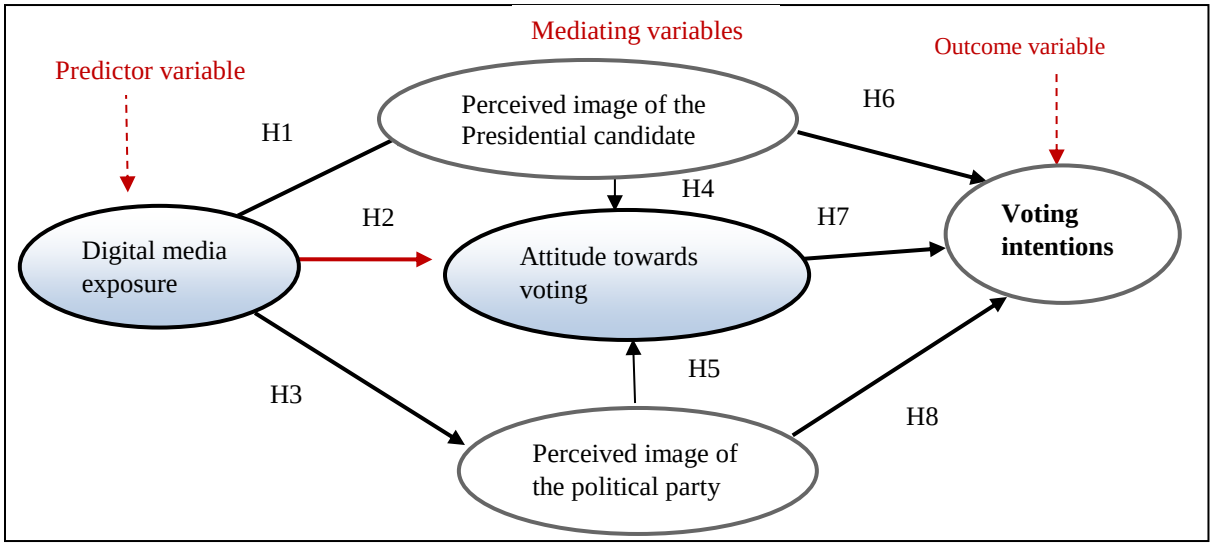
5.3.2.3 Empirical evidence supporting the hypothesised statement

Prior research has shown that the effects of digital media on political knowledge and participation is a function of the technical features of different types of digital media; characteristics of the users, in relation to the technological features and functions of different types of digital media. As suggested by Prior (2007), digital media have increased citizens' opportunities to learn and participate in politics, however the degree of learning and participation depends on the citizens' motivation and the abilities to learn and participate, although the motivations for using different types of digital media may vary, hypothetically leading to different effects on attitude towards voting or offline political participation. Media effects are also likely to vary considerably with individual receptivity, societal circumstances, and the degree of polarisation of the media in a particular context (Bennett & Iyengar, 2010). Reflecting from media-persuasion theories, print media has been found to substantially alter political attitudes and also persuade citizens to vote for one candidate rather than another (Andersen et al., 2005). Classic studies found that newspaper endorsements of a presidential candidate increased the likelihood of their readers voting for that candidate (Chiang & Knight, 2011). Therefore, from the aforementioned empirical studies, it can be inferred that media exposure has an influence on attitude towards behaviour and can also influence change in the attitude. Research has found that in order to act like informed citizens, voters often use heuristics in vote choice, responding to endorsements from the media as well as from people, such as celebrities (Arceneaux & Kolodny, 2009). Voters-consumers who are aware of celebrity endorsements, such as Oprah's endorsement of Obama in the 2008 US elections, are more likely to vote for endorsed candidates than those who are not aware (Nownes, 2012).

Prior studies in countries such as USA, Ghana, Malaysia and Belgium also provide supporting evidence of a relationship between media exposure and attitude towards consumer behaviour in different contexts (Groshek & Dimitrova, 2011; Kaufhold et al., 2010; Prior, 2007; Qader & Zainuddin, 2011). Consistent with the empirical evidence on the linkage between media exposure and attitude towards voting, the current reseach proposes that digital media exposure can influence attitude towards voting. Hence the following hypothesis is formulated:

***H2**: There is a positive relationship between digital media exposure and attitude toward voting*

Figure 5.3: DMEX positively influence ATV



5.3.3 Digital media exposure and perceived image of the political party

The relationship between digital media exposure and perceived image of the political party are presented with the importance of the correlation as well as empirical evidence supporting the hypothesis in the study. Perceive image of the political party (PP) is based on political party personality and reputation.

5.3.3.1 Importance of the hypothesised relationship

It is essential to note the important impact of digital media exposure on political party perception. Advertising representing digital media exposure is found to have an impact on brand image which, in this case, is taken to mean the image of the political party. Research on traditional media has confirmed the influence of media on political perceptions and co-determining voting behaviour (Schmitt-Beck & Mackenrodt, 2010). Media provides an opportunity to the voter-customers to get

political information and to analyse the programmes and manifestos presented and propagated by the different political parties (as brands) and candidates during the election campaign (Ward, 2004). Advertising informs the consumers of the functional capabilities of the brand while concurrently imbuing the brand with symbolic values and meanings relevant to the consumer. Similarly, media is expected to provide voter-customers with information on the functional capabilities of the political parties which the voters will use as heuristics in their voting decision-making. However, digital media, particularly social media, can have a dramatic impact on a brand's reputation (Kim & Ko, 2010a). It is expected that through media exposure people get to know a political product and its attributes. Inferring from these attributes, individuals can then form either a positive or negative perception of the political party. A favourable brand reputation means consumers trust the brand (political party) and feel good about the products. In this current study, perceived image of the political party is based on the party personality and party characteristics.

5.3.3.2 Possible linkages between digital media exposure and perceived image of the political party

Extant literature asserts that media have significant influence on customer attitudes towards brands (Stephen & Galak, 2009). Reflecting from the theory of reasoned action, attitude is a combination of communication about attributes and advantages of brand and assumes that brand attitude is affected by brand awareness and brand image (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012a). If citizens are not interested in politics, they will not engage in politics or want to deepen their political knowledge. When citizens build interest, they form an attitude towards the object. This attitude is highly influenced by trust. Political trust seems inherent to constructing political perception and voting intention (Anderson, 2010). Consumers place high value in the brands they trust. Conversely, distrust in a brand negatively affects the brand equity. Trust plays an important part in politics where voter's perception of a trustworthy and credible political party is crucial in influencing their voting behaviour. Trust is further strongly related to sociological concepts like social capital, in the form of shared feelings and understandings that members of a group have in common. According to Boeckman and Tyler (2002), the underlying factor of interpersonal trust functions as an activator towards political opinion and voting behaviour. However, promotion is critical in the development of a brand and its brand equity. Promotion can be used to develop performance expectations, increase trustworthiness, increase social image, increase commitment and also increase the value of the brand. It is expected from extant literature that when a political party is

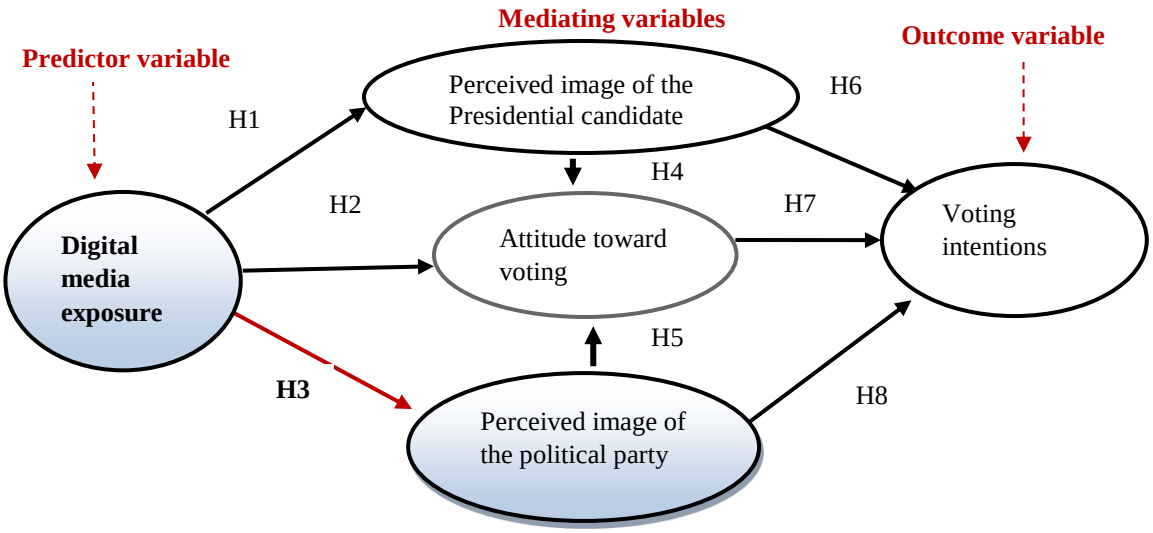
exposed in the media, the electorate becomes aware of the party as a brand and is able to evaluate the character and the image of the party and this will subsequently influence their attitude towards voting and in turn, influence their voting intentions.

5.3.3.3 Empirical evidence supporting the hypothesised statement

As a result of its agenda setting effects, the media can be influential in building political knowledge which is part of the social capital responsible for building trust between the electorate and the political players (Hendricks & Denton, 2010). Prior empirical studies conducted in non-African settings, such as the USA and Belgium, also confirm the existence of a positive relationship between media exposure and learning about politics (Boulianne, 2009; Groshek & Dimitrova, 2011). Dimitrova, Strömbäck and Nord (2011) posit that most cross-sectional studies (e.g., Mossberger, Tolbert & McNeal, 2008; Groshek & Dimitrova, 2011; Kenski & Stroud, 2006) have mainly established correlation rather than causation, hence the chain of causality is yet to be established**.** Nonetheless, media effects besides motivating online revisits, have an influence on political knowledge or attitude change and eventually motivate political action (de Zuniga, Veenstra, Vraga & Shah, 2010). Digital media through its interactivity, even if such interactivity is only perceived and not truly realised, the very perception of opportunities to participate may contribute to higher internal and external self-efficacy. In this sense, digital media use may be highly empowering and psychologically rewarding, making the public feel more engaged in the political process, enabling them to build perceptions of the political players. On the contrary, other authors (Groshek & Dimitrova, 2011; Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer & Bichard, 2010) found no significant impact of social media use on political participation although most of the academic research supports the proposition that online media have a positive impact on political interest (Boulianne, 2009). It is the political interest that is fundamental in constructing political perception and subsequently voting intention (Rosas, 2010). Reflecting the deduced theoretical and empirical evidence on the digital media-political party perception dyad, the current study therefore posits that:

H3: *There is a positive relationship between digital media exposure and perceived image of the political party*

Figure 5.4: DMEX positively influence PI



5.3.4 Perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting

The correlation between perceive image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting is presented in the following section.

5.3.4.1 Importance of the hypothesised relationship

Political brand image provides value to the politicians that lead to increase the loyalty to a party, affording it a competitive advantage, ultimately, loyalty and advantage that leads to increased partisanship among voters when voting. It also improves the information about the party, and increases confidence in the decision to vote (Smith, 2001).

Personal characteristics and personality traits are most commonly presumed to be endogenous characteristics that influence people's feelings, perceptions, and behaviour across myriad types of relationships. Perception of a presidential candidate can be influenced by perceived 'personal bonds' with the leader. Steffens, Haslam, and Reicher (2014) found that partisans reported feeling significant higher levels of 'personal bond' with the candidate belonging to their party or to be a prototypical member or representative of their party. Followers perceive their leaders more favourably than people who belong to rival organisations (e.g., Madera & Hebl, 2012). Several researchers opine that personality traits play a considerable role in shaping partisan attitudes and voting behaviour (e.g., Schoen & Schumann, 2005). When assessing other persons in everyday life, human beings compare their own personality to the personality traits they ascribe to the others (Mischel, 2013). Voter-customers presumably employ the same concept when they evaluate

presidential candidates and politicians in general. Furthermore, political parties appear to "own" particular issues which they are perceived to be particularly skilful at dealing with (Prior, 2013; Bélanger & Meguid, 2008,). These programmatic reputations appear to affect voters' perceptions of candidates' personality attributes (see Schumann, 2001, 2002). Irrespective of the political objects voters evaluate, voters rely on personality traits as heuristic in political decision-making (e.g., Downs, 1957). Extant literature found a correlation between the candidate's image and voters' behaviour as group membership filter interpersonal perceptions (e.g., Frank, 2012; Kniffin, 2009).

5.3.4.2 Possible linkages between perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting

Extant branding literature indicates that strong brand images create trust, stability, and differentiation (Grace & O'Cass, 2005; Kay, 2006). Kaid (2004); Moy, Xenos and Hess (2006) posit that exposure to media influence viewers' evaluations of the candidates. For example, some may perceive the image of a presidential candidate positively as a result of the imagery portrayed in the media which consequently influence their attitude towards voting. Reflecting from the theory of planned behaviour, the perception that important others think that one should or should not vote influence one's attitude towards voting. If one believes that voting for the particular candidate will lead to a certain outcome, this belief is likely to influence the individual's attitude towards the expected behaviour outcome such as voting. Attitude toward voting is assumed to be a function of one's beliefs that performing the behaviour in question will lead to various outcomes and the evaluative aspects of those beliefs (Ajzen, 2010). Most practitioners use the media to build awareness and create an image that can influence perceptions and attitudes. Brand image representing perceived image of the presidential candidate is found to have an impact on attitude towards voting (Peng & Hackley, 2009; Guzmán & Sierra, 2009). In this study, it is expected that perceived image of the presidential candidate will lead to either negative or positive attitudes towards voting in the presidential elections. Several studies posit that brand image is influenced by beliefs about brand attributes, emotional responses (e.g. elaboration likelihood model - 1982) and social influences (e.g. extended Fishbein model). Consumers who identify with a brand tend to commit more strongly to the brand and generate positive word-of-mouth which reflects the consumer's attitude towards the brand (Tuskej, Golob & Podner, 2013). A voter-customer who perceives the image of a presidential candidate positively is likely to build a positive attitude

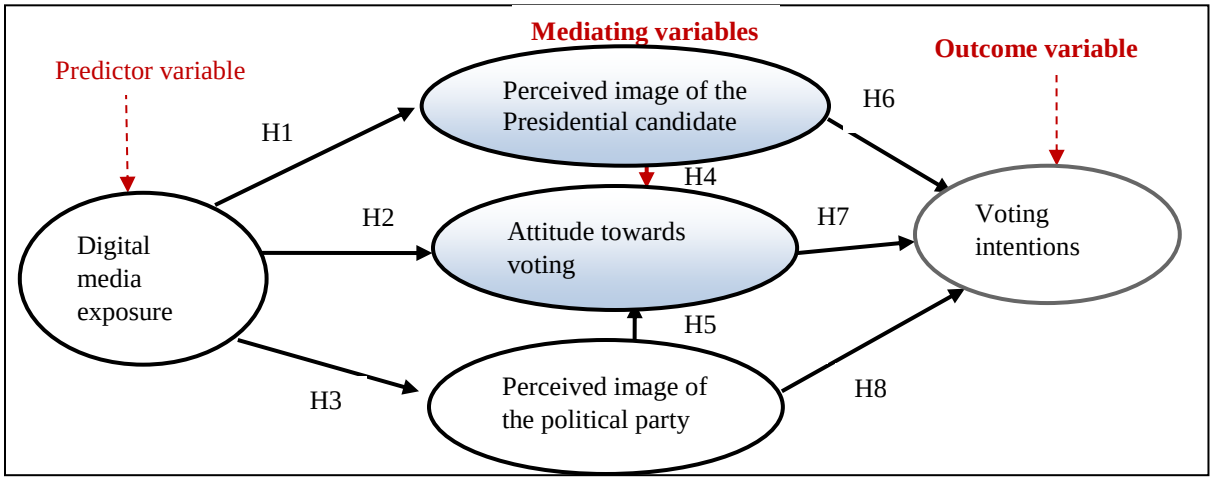
towards voting in an effort to reward the favourable candidate. Similarly, a negative perception of the candidate is likely to influence attitude towards voting. For example, it is likely that negative perceptions of a candidate can motivate voter-customers to want to vote in elections to punish the unfavourable candidate. When consumers have a good attitude towards a product or service, they tend to have a positive interest to behave so as to strengthen the customer relationship with the company (Chiu, Lee & Chen, 2014; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). Similarly, when voter-customers have a good attitude towards a leader candidate, they are likely to have a positive interest in voting so as to strengthen the customer relationship with the preferred political party. Reflecting from the agenda setting theory, online information is capable of creating either a negative or positive candidate image that diffuses through different media sources. Negative candidate image is likely to affect attitude towards voting negatively, while a positive image created is likely to create a positive attitude towards voting (Smith, 2001). It is however expected, deducing from extant literature, that candidate leader perception guided by the personality traits is likely to evoke some feelings and emotions which impact on attitudes towards voting. Voters who perceive the candidate leader favourably are likely to be eager to vote in support of their choice. Accordingly, a positive linkage between the perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting can safely be deduced.

5.3.4.3 Empirical evidence supporting the hypothesised statement

Extant literature (e.g., Andrews & Bianchi, 2013; Petty, & Krosnick, 2014; Giampietri, Finco & Del Giudice, 2015) posit that attitude is a latent but extremely pertinent marketing variable in brand building, since it remains within a consumer's mind and is inclined to impact consumer decision-making. Thus, there may be elements of the political environment that can inherently affect voters' attitude towards voting. Thus, being able to identify the necessary elements within specific contexts is therefore critical to shaping voter-consumers' attitude towards voting such that they participate in elections. Prior empirical studies have confirmed the relationship between political brand image and perceptions, attitudes and voter behaviours (Parker, 2012; Winther & Viaes, 2014; Lewandowski, 2013), loyalty (Smith & Spotswood, 2013) affective commitment (Tsang, Lee & Li, 2011). Reflecting the deduced theoretical and empirical evidence on brand image and attitudes, the current study therefore posits that:

H4: *There is a positive relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting*

Figure 5.5: PPC positively influence ATV



5.3.5 Perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting

A hypothesised positive relationship between perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting is explained in terms of its significance as well as empirical evidence supporting the stated hypothesis.

5.3.5.1 Importance of the hypothesised relationship

Most practitioners make an effort to build a united brand image (i.e. political party and candidate) to their constituents in order to create, build and maintain good relationships with the electorate (Hermanto, Supriyono & Mardiyono, 2014). The image of the political party can have an influence on the image of the presidential candidate or alternatively, since they are central and unifying core of the political product (Parker, 2012; Hermanto, Supriyono & Mardiyono, 2014). A positive image is likely to provide value to the party that leads to party loyalty, giving them a competitive edge and this can lead to increased partisanship among the voters. There is likely to be cognitive evaluation on the party image consistency, trustworthiness and other attractive attributes which eventually lead to emotions in the course of communication between voters and candidate or party. These emotions can be as a result of past experiences or information. This information exposure is likely to affect attitude towards the party which in turn, is likely to influence attitude towards voting. Reflecting from the similarity heuristic (Kahneman &Tverski, 1972), the relationship between a particular voter's personality characteristics and political candidates' perceived characteristics align voters' preferences towards a party or a candidate. Perception of similarity

can induce feelings of reinforcement of voters' social identity, selection of expected behaviours (voting), or approval from their significant others (Read & Grushka-Cockayne, 2007).

5.3.5.2 Possible linkages between perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting

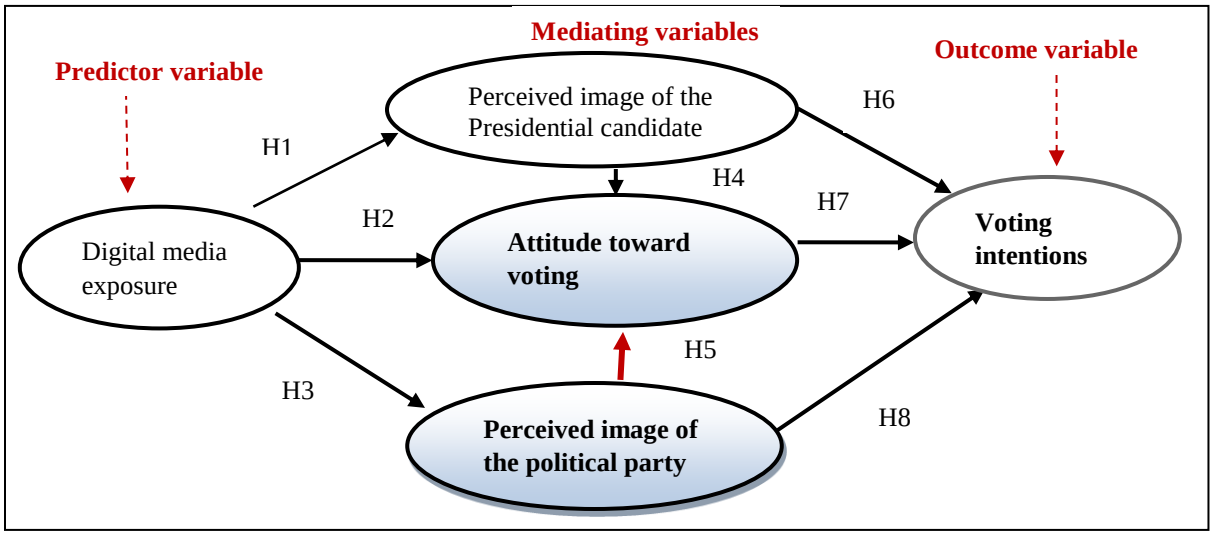
The attractiveness of the party may arise from perceived similarities or congruency in interests, values, norms (Saili, Mingli & Zhichao, 2012) and beliefs between the voters and the political party. A feeling of common interest is developed by the voters which eventually influences attitude towards voting and linkage between them is built up. Due to a feeling of common interest, relationships are formed between the voters and the political party, which in the long run turns into partisanship or a long term relationship commitment (Chang, 2013) and trust which eventually lead to party loyalty (Parker, 2012). This can have an effect on the voters through driving the vote intention toward the party constantly. This political party perception can be guided by past behaviours, past performance and organisational reputation and trust (Hermanto et al., 2014) which eventually impact attitude towards the party and subsequently affect voters' attitude towards voting. Reflecting from TPB, individuals follow the norms established by a reference group as guidelines for behaviours that are either expected or discouraged (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). A favourable relationship between the political party and the voter's significant others is likely to influence the voter's perception of the party and eventually, attitude towards voting as influenced by his/her attitude towards the political party. Accordingly, a positive linkage between perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting can safely be deduced.

5.3.5.3 Empirical evidence supporting the hypothesised statement

Prior studies conducted in non-African settings, such as the Uited States of America, China, Netherlands and Malaysia also provide supporting evidence of a relationship between brand image and loyalty (e.g., Strandberg et al., 2015); affective commitment (e.g. Tsang et al., 2011), trust (e.g., Amani, 2015); political interest (e.g., Anderson, 2010; Rosas, 2010) and purchase intention (e.g., Ko, Kim, Claussen & Kim, 2008). Consistent with the empirical evidence on the linkage between image and these cognitive and behavioural outcomes, the current research proposes that positive political party perception will likely yield positive attitude towards voting. Hence, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H5: *There is a positive relationship between perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting*

Figure 5.6: PI positively influence ATV



5.3.6 Perceived image of the presidential candidate and voting intentions

The relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and voting intentions is presented in the following section.

5.3.6.1 Importance of the hypothesised relationship

Voting intention, similar to consumers' purchase intentions, following exposure to any convincing message, is a topic of interest for researchers and marketers (Hwang et al., 2011). For an individual to be able to perform an act, he /she undergo an evaluation process. This evaluation is guided by norm, beliefs and attitudes and other background factors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2002). In the context of a presidential candidate, a voter-customer is likely to evaluate the attributes of the candidate as a political brand using his own judgement criteria. If this individual believes that the candidate is credible and trustworthy, this positive attitude is likely to influence his intention to vote in the elections in which the favourable candidate is participating. The multi-sensory imagery that a voter picks up about the current status of the candidate gathered from the atmosphere, that voters' sense is surrounding various parties is likely to influence voter perception of the presidential candidate and this perception is likely to eventually influence voting intentions (Smith & French, 2011). Reflecting on the agenda building paradigm (Carroll & McCombs, 2003) and the use of

technology, an individual can create an image of a presidential candidate in the media, which is likely to influence other voters to have a positive or negative perception of the candidate and ultimately, this image is likely to influence decision-making. Social influence is likely to have an impact on the candidate perception as well as voting behaviour. For example, if an individual feels and believes that his significant others do not approve of the candidate and feel that based on past experience, the candidate has not perform as expected, the individual builds an attitude which is likely to influence his voting intentions.

5.3.6.2 Possible linkages between perceived image of the presidential candidate and voting intentions

A cross examination of the existing empirical evidence indicates that brand image has a direct and positive effect on purchase intention (Bian & Moutinho, 2011; Caruana & Ewing, 2010). This explains why most managers undertake to build favourable brand images to gain market share, gain a competitive advantage and build positive exchange relationships with the consumers. Consequently, it is likely that a favourable brand image is attained when positive relationship expectations or outcomes are realised. Most political managers use the media to create awareness of the political products and build a positive image in the minds of the voter-customer. Consumers with a positive attitude towards a presidential candidate are likely to trust the candidate with their vote. Existing empirical evidence indicates that trust reduces uncertainty and transactional cost (Lohtia, Bello & Porter 2009). Trust in the candidate as a credible representative is likely to influence voting intentions. When the electorate perceives risk in participating in elections, they lose interest in politics and when they lose interest, they avoid participating in the electoral process, hence have a negative attitude towards voting. When voters have no confidence in the voting process, they are likely to lose confidence in the presidential candidates, thereby attain a negative perception of the candidate, build a negative attitude towards voting and this ultimately affects voting intentions. This study therefore submits that when thevoter-customer has a positive image, he or she is likely to feel secure due to the implicit belief, positive perception and prospects of a trustworthy relationship with the political candidate and this will influence his or her voting intentions. Thus, a relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and voting intentions can be conjectured.

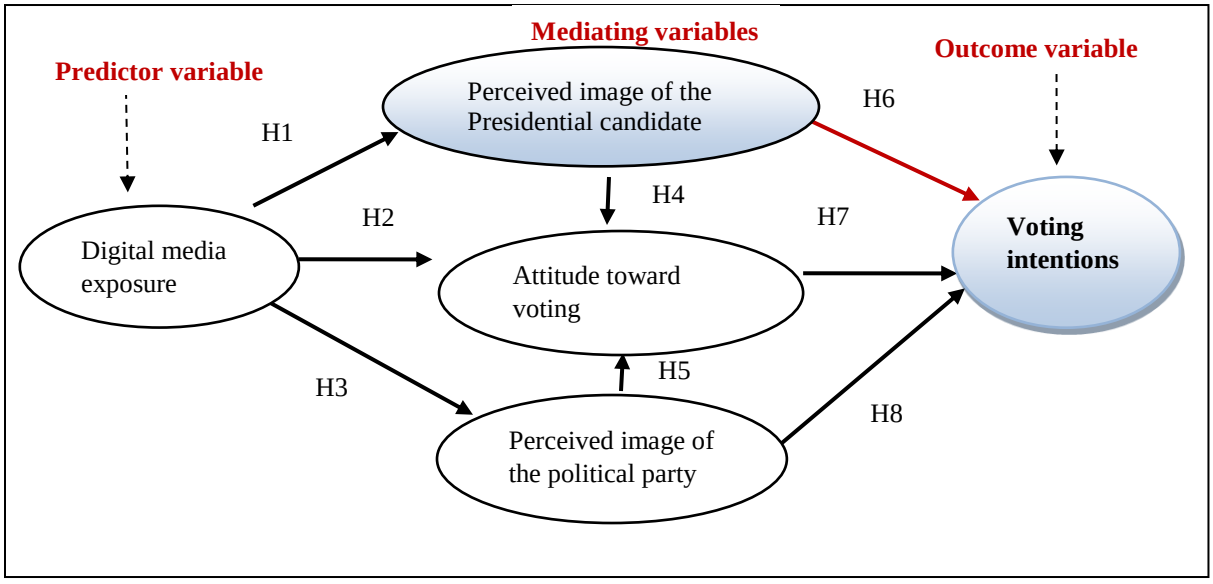
5.3.6.3 Empirical evidence supporting the hypothesised statement

Numerous researchers have investigated the construction of people's perception of political candidates (e.g., Laustsen, 2017; Iyengar & Kinder, 2013; Adams & Mullen, 2013). These studies propose that the consideration of the personal qualities of candidates play a central role in candidate perception and this consideration of the candidates' character has a significant impact on voter's preferences. Extant literature highlights that power, leadership, competence, intelligence, credibility and morality as key attributes of a political candidate, though there is no consensus among researchers on the attributes of candidate (Benoit & McHale, 2004). Using the media, voters are likely to re-assess candidate image in an effort to come up with a voting decision (Cwalina et al., 2005).

However, brand image literature has also provided support to the positive relationship between perceived image and behavioural intentions in varying contexts, such as the effect of brand image on perceived risk (Chang & Tseng, 2013), online purchase intentions (Aghekyan-Simonian, Forsythe, Kwon & Chattaraman, 2012), purchase intentions in physical store environment (e.g., del Rio et al., 2001). Based on theoretical grounding and the empirical confirmation from previous studies, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: *There is a positive relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and voting intentions.*

Figure 5.7: PPC positively influence VI



5.3.7 Attitude towards voting and voting intention

The relationship between attitude towards voting and voting intentions is presented with its importance as well as the empirical evidence towards the support of the stated hypothesis in the study.

5.3.7.1 Importance of the hypothesised relationship

Voting intention is a combination of voter-consumers' interest in and possibility of voting in an election. According to Kim, Kim and Johnson (2010); Lloyd and Luk (2010), intention is strongly related to attitude and preference toward a brand or a product assuming consumers' future behaviour is based on their attitudes. For example, an individual intending to perform an action is likely to make a thorough conscious effort to decide whether he or she is going to act in a specific predetermined manner. It means the future action of the individual is likely to be influenced by his or her cognitive evaluation of the task and intentions to perform the task. The electorate's voting intention represents the value and worth of the political product and this value is determined on the basis of their attribute evaluation and their judgement criterion (Lee & Lee, 2009). Reflecting from the Michigan model (Campbell et al., 1960; Miller & Shanks, 1996) voters rely on shortcuts—such as group cues or affective partisan loyalties to simplify political decision-making and guide their individual behaviour. Accordingly, it is inferred that attitude towards voting will positively impact voting intentions.

5.3.7.2 Possible linkages between attitude towards voting and voting intentions

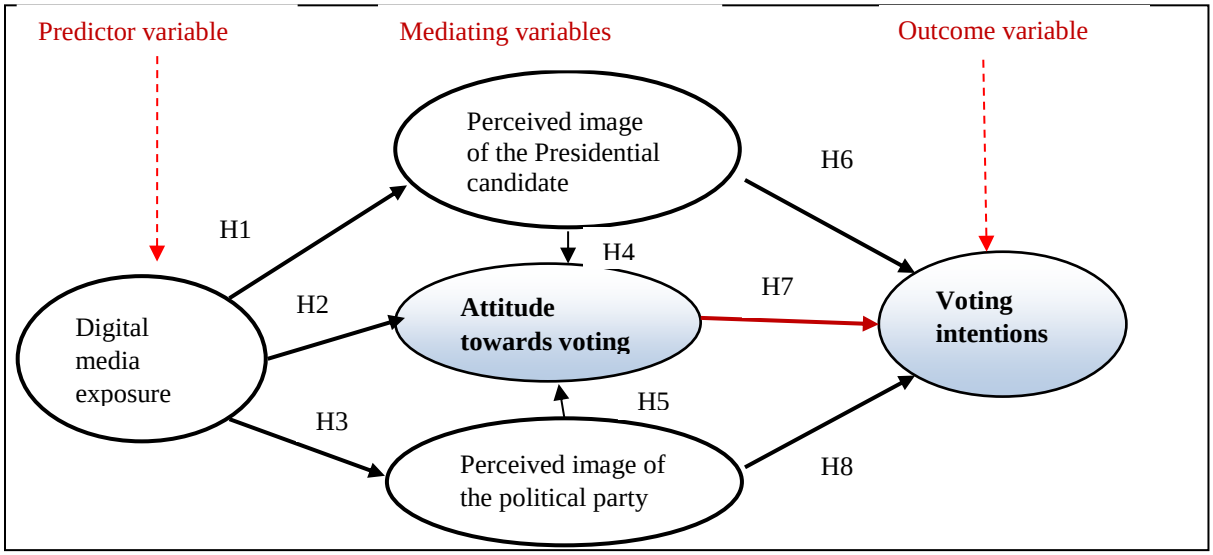
It is expected that a consumer's attitude towards an act is the proximal determinant of behavioural intention (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Reflecting from the theory of planned behaviour, it is expected that the more favourable an attitude towards voting and subjective norm and the greater the perceived behavioural control, the stronger should be an individual's voting intention. During election campaigns, voters are exposed to numerous stimuli; as a consequence, those with intention to vote are likely to engage in selective exposure, selective perception and anintegration process in order to reach an attitude which guides their decision-making. The decision is likely to be influenced by perceived social norms and perceived behavioural control. However, if there are to be any changes in the voting intention, the voter is likely to mentally construct a reason which justifies the decision modification. Thus, drawing from the foregoing reasoning, a positive linkage between attitude towards voting and voting intentions can be presumed.

5.3.7.3 Empirical evidence supporting the hypothesised statement

The relationship that has existed between attitudes and behavioural intention has been widely research in various marketing literatures (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; Shim et al. (2001; Watchravesringkan & Shim, 2003). Attitude towards voting is likely to be affected by trust in the actual process, trust in the participating organisations and candidates and trust in the outcome. Empirical evidence indicates that trust reduces uncertainty (Lohtia, Bello & Porter, 2009) and fosters the achievement of performance outcomes from exchange between the voters and the political players (Krishnan, Martin & Noorderhaven 2006). Consequently, it is likely that overall positive attitude towards voting is attained when positive relationship expectations are realised. Generally, attitudes towards voting are likely to be associated with individuals who anticipate experiencing direct personal consequences from the electoral outcome. This is congruent with Fishbein's attitude model (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Accordingly, it is anticipated in the current study that successful and progressive political organisations will intensify voter-customers' emotional feeling towards their products and eventually stimulate their relationship with voter-customers so as to augment their voting intentions. In addition to the above assertions, existing literature investigating such a relationship has shown a significant correlation between attitude and behavioural intentions and between organisations and consumers in various contexts such as the international setting and high-technology sector in countries such as United States of America (U.S.), Taiwan, Korea, Belgium and Romania (see, for example, Chen, Jing, Lee, 2012; Kim & Park, 2013; Boonen, Meeusen, Quintelier, 2014; Pagalea & Uta, 2012, Monsuwé, Dellaert & De Ruyter, 2004). Drawing from the foregoing reflections, this study postulates that:

H7: *There is a positive relationship between attitude towards voting and voting intentions.*

Figure 5.8: ATV voting positively influencing VI



5.3.8 Perceived image of the political party and voting intentions

A hypothesised positive relationship between perceived image of the political party and voting intentions is explained in terms of its importance as well as empirical evidences supporting the stated hypothesis.

5.3.8.1 Importance of the hypothesised relationship

Voting intention acts as the outcome variable for the present study. The execution of voting intentions leads to actual voting and electoral success. It is therefore important for political organisations to show an understanding of what factors influence voter-consumers when developing voting intentions. By knowing what factors shape consumers' voting intentions, political managers and practitioners may develop different aspects of their marketing strategy, such as how to build the image of the party. Reflecting from the bandwagon effect theory, it is likely that voting intentions may be influenced by a preference for conformity (Kiss, & Simonovits, 2014; Wu, & Lin, 2017) and social information (Cheung, Xiao & Liu, 2014). For example, an individual interprets her observation that most of her reference group is positive about voting for a particular political party as an indication that the preferred party is the best. This understanding is grounded on the assumption that some members of the reference group have private information which would convince her to act alike if this information were made available to her (Morton, Muller, Page & Torgler, 2015). This quality signal immanent in social information

and preference for conformity, influences voter-customers' voting decision, subsequently causing them to either vote or note vote along with the expected majority of fellow voters.

5.3.8.2 Possible linkages between perceived image of the political party and voting intentions

A cross examination of empirical evidence indicates that political interest and political trust seems inherent to constructing political perception and voting intention (Anderson, 2010). A voter's perception of fair and trustworthy elections is likely to impact his or her voting intentions. The underlying factor of interpersonal trust functions as an activator towards political opinion and voting behaviour (Chirumbolo, Leone & Desimoni, 2016). For example, if a voter perceives a political party as credible and trustworthy, he is likely to support the party and partake in elections. Self-generated beliefs about the political party as a brand are developed in the minds of each voter-consumer through controlled signalling and other uncontrollable information that the consumer receives about the brand and shapes the evaluation of the brand or the brand reputation. These beliefs are most likely to be formed in the minds of either present or past voter-customers (Romaniuk & Ehrenberg, 2012) and these are likely to be stronger than explicit party-generated information (Puzakova, Kwak & Rocereto, 2013). Due to the complexity and diversity of online interactions, trust in the political party's online sites is likely to determine voter-consumers' intentions (Kim & Lennon, 2013). Reflecting from the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985), the more positive the attitudes of consumers toward a political party, the stronger would be their intentions to search for information about the party. As such, if the information gathered is positive, it is likely to evoke positive emotions towards the political party, providing voters with a justification to either vote or not vote (Wojcieszak, Bimber, Feldman, & Stroud, 2016). Therefore, there is an association between political brand image and voting intentions.

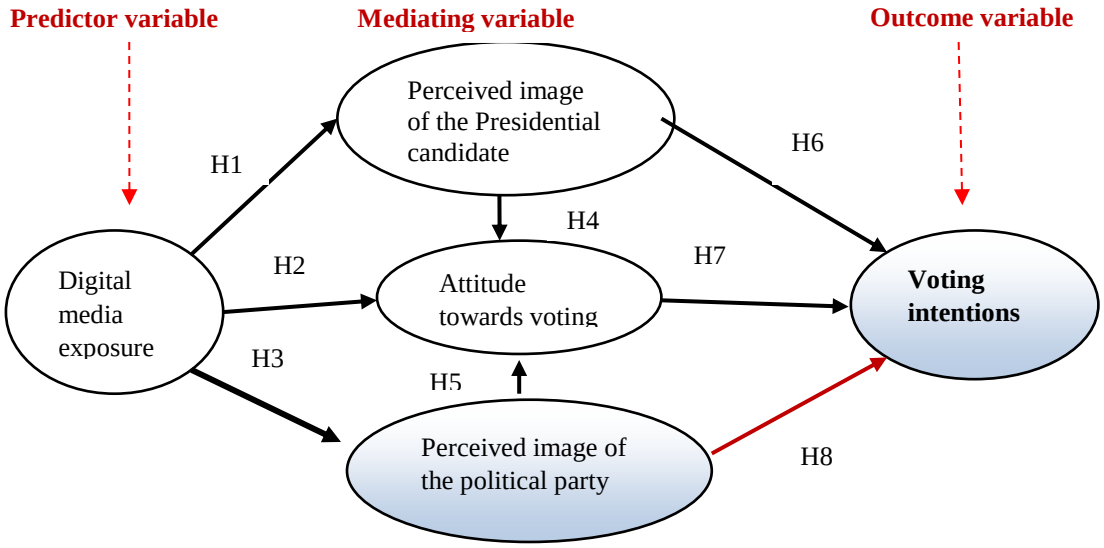
5.3.8.3 Empirical evidence supporting the hypothesised statement

Prior studies conducted in settings such as USA, Egypt, Poland, and the Netherlands also provide supporting evidence of a relationship between voting intention and political brand image (Alkhawaldeh & Halim, 2016) and celebrity endorsements (e.g.,Veer, Becirovic & Martin, 2008) and voting age (e.g., Wagner, Johann & Kritzinger, 2012), as well as election campaigns (e.g., Bechtel, 2012) from the voter perspective. Therefore, voting intentions seems to be of fundamental importance to both managers and paractitioners. Consistent with the empirical evidence on the

linkage between political brand image and voting intention, the current research proposes that positive perception of a political party will likely have a positive impact on voting intention. Hence, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H8: *There is a positive relationship between perceived image of the political party and voting intentions.*

Figure 5.9: PI positively influence VI



5.4 Summary of Chapter Five

Chapter Five (5) provides the conceptualized model for the research study that constitutes this thesis. Further to that, the research hypotheses for the research study are developed. The study focuses on the influence of digital media exposure on perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting, perceived image of the political party and voting intentions. However, an ad hoc finding reveals that perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting and perceived image of the political party can have a mediating effect on the digital media,-voting intentions relationship. Hypotheses for the study are formulated and summarized in Table 5.1 shown below. The next chapter details the research design and methodology.

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Table 5.1: Summary of Hypotheses

SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES		
H/No.	**Hypothesis Statement**	**Hypothesized Relationship**
H1	Digital media exposure in Zimbabwe will positively influence perceived image of the presidential candidate	Digital mediaexposure→ Perceived image of the presidential candidate **(+)**
H2	Digital media exposure in Zimbabwe will positively influence attitude towards voting	Digital mediaexposure → attitude towards voting **(+)**
H3	Digital media in Zimbabwe will positively influence perceived image of the political party	Digital mediaexposure→ perceived image of the political party **(+)**
H4	Perceived image of the presidential candidate will positively influence Zimbabwe voter-customers's attitude towards voting	Perceived image of the presidential candidate→ attitude towards voting **(+)**
H5	Perceived image of the political party will positively influence Zimbabwe voter-customers's attitude towards voting	Perceived image of the political party→ attitude towards voting **(+)**
H6	Perceived image of the presidential candidate will positively influence voting intentions of Zimbabwe voter-customers	Perceived image of the presidential candidate→ voting intentions **(+)**
H7	Attitude towards voting will positively influence voting intentions of Zimbabwe voters	Attitude towards voting→ voting intentions **(+)**
H8	Perceived image of the political party will positively influence voting intentions of Zimbabwe voters	Perceived image of the political party→ voting intentions **(+)**

6 CHAPTER SIX: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

6.1 Introduction

The conventional wisdom in research methodology is that, in order to make an area of interest researchable, the research design and choice of research methods must be formulated. This chapter serves this end by discussing the overall research design of this study. This study adopted a hypothetical-deductive methodology which is generally applied within a positivist research paradigm. As is characteristic of any deductive study, theoretical hypotheses were developed and are tested in the ensuing chapters. This section provides a detailed discussion on the research philosophy and research design and justification of the related methods adopted.

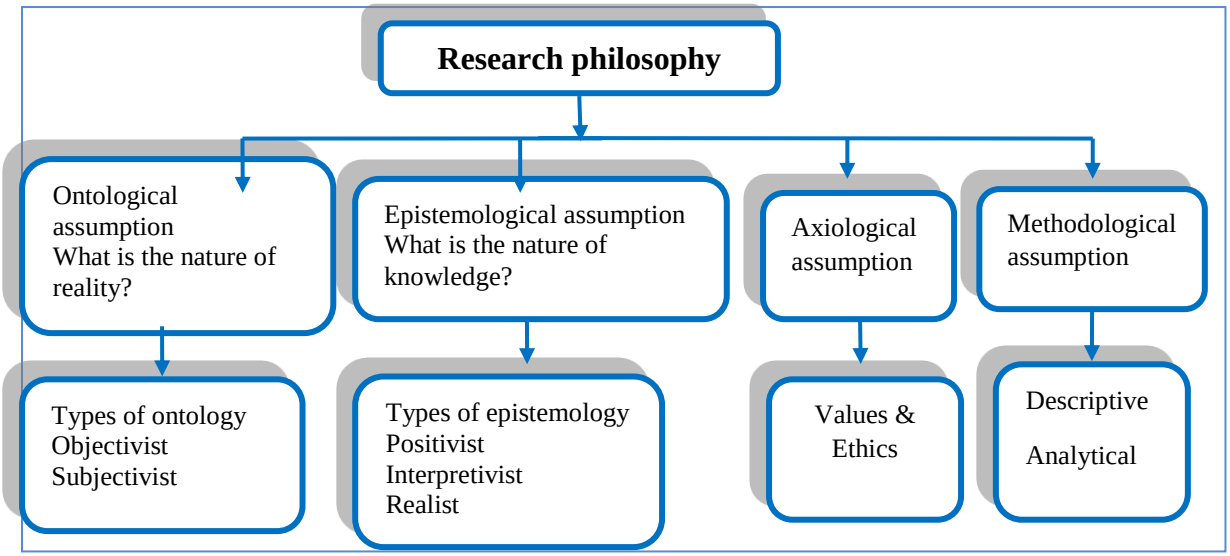
The research design for this study is a descriptive and exploratory study that is analysed through quantitative methods. Questionnaires were used to evaluate participants' exposure to digital media and to determine the level of impact on voting intentions. A descriptive statistical method was used to analyse the voting intentions survey, with self-administered questionnaires as the data collection instrument. Furthermore, the justification for the data collection method used in the study is discussed. Finally, in order to ensure trustworthiness of the research, an appropriate criterion for quantitative research is discussed. The chapter ends with a diagrammatic representation of the key facets of the envisaged outline of the research design and development of the study, and a discussion on the political marketing management approach envisaged for this study.

6.2 Paradigmatic perspectives of the research

The foundation of every research is the underlying philosophical assumptions regarding what constitutes a legitimate research and the research methods appropriate for the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge. As observed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012), a research philosophy is an illustration of critical assumptions about the way researchers perceive the world. It offers an overarching criterion within which researchers operationalise their research study (Sarantakos, 2012). Developing a philosophical standpoint requires that the researcher make several core assumptions regarding the nature of society and the nature of science (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). However, it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the sociological dimension of research, but rather the scientific dimension of research with its philosophical approaches, subjectivism (phenomenology, according to Hughes and Sharrock, 1997) and objectivism (positivism, according to Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). The focus of a research

paradigm depends on the coherence between what the study is all about and the execution of the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a). These key philosophical approaches are delineated by assumptions regarding ontology (nature of reality), epistemology (nature of knowledge and justified belief) (Ahmed, 2008), axiological (value and ethics), methodology, and rhetoric (language and communication) which significantly impact on 'what is to be researched' (Blaikie, 2007; Ahmed, 2008). The assumptions that guided this study were based on ontological, epistemological, axiological, methodological, and rhetoric assumptions as shown in figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Meta-paradigm assumptions



Source: Adapted from Collis and Hussey (2013).

However, it should be noted that whatever sociological persuasion is adopted, the researcher will find that the philosophical assumptions are consequential to each other, that is, their view of ontology affects their epistemological persuasion which, in turn, affects their view of human nature, accordingly, choice of methodology logically follows the assumptions the researcher has already prepared.

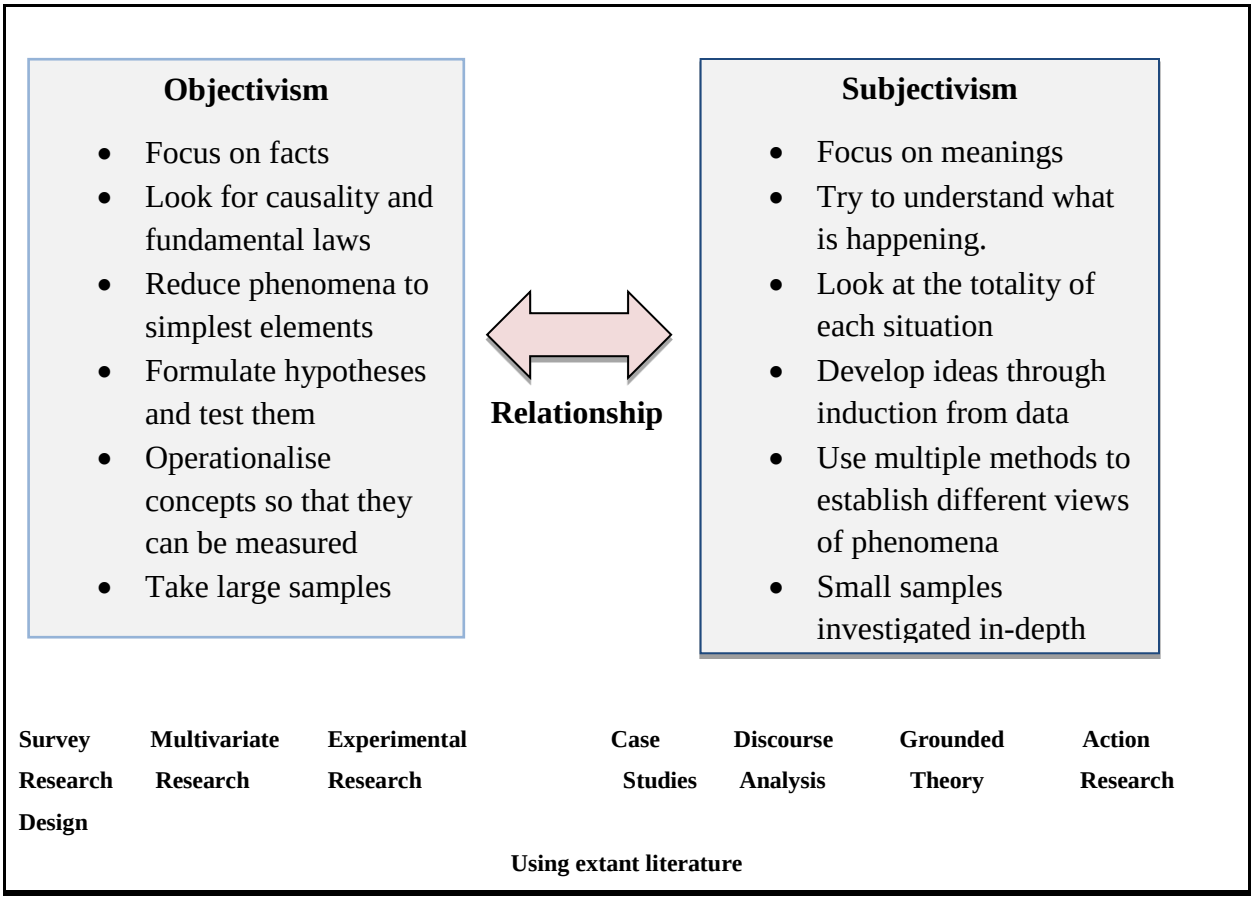
6.2.1 Ontological assumption

Ontology is defined as the context in which research is being conducted and the interpretation of reality as understood by the participants (Bryman, 2015; Bahari, 2010; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe &

Jackson, 2012). Ontology narrates the nature of reality, that is, what things, if any, have existence or whether reality is 'the product of one's mind' (Shepherd & Challenger, 2013). Thus, every individual has profoundly embedded ontological assumptions which consistently influence their views on what is true. The researcher's view of reality is the basis of all other assumptions, that is, ontological assumption predicates the researcher's other assumptions. Ontology is associated with the central question of whether social entities need to be perceived as objective or subjective (Vidgen & Wood, 2013). Objectivism portrays the position that social entities exist in reality external to social actors concerned with their existence (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). It relies on social observable facts that cannot be misrepresented in any conduct. Subjectivism affirms that social phenomena are created from the perceptions and resultant actions of those social actors concerned with their existence (ibid). Figure 6.2 shows sections of both objectivism and subjectivism ontology as illustrated by Beech, (2005); Easterby-Smith etal. (2012); Scholarios (2005).

Figure 6.2: Choice of Research Methods related to ontology

Source: Adapted from Beech (2005)



Ontological assumptions in this study were based on human actions explained as a result of real causes that temporarily precede the behaviour. Voting behaviour is explained as a result of attitudes and perceptions that influence the behaviour. The researcher and his research subjects were independent and did not influence each other (Saunder et al., 2012). The researcher understood that the context investigated consisted of voter–customers who had different ideas, experiences, thinking and meaning about reality hence the survey method was used to collect data. Thus, the study took a controlled and structural approach in conducting research by identifying a clear research topic, constructing appropriate hypotheses and adopting a suitable research methodology (Carson et al., 2001). The researcher remained detached from the research subjects so as to maintain neutrality. The current study adopted an objective ontological perspective. The research premise focused mainly on facts, adherence to fundamental laws, such as, validity and reliability of the study's constructs which were assessed, followed some specific laws (e.g. the thresholds to be met under reliability and validity), applied the principle of reductionism (e.g., data coding on Excel), concepts were operationalised and later measured and conclusions drawn from a large sample size - above the average sizes used in similar studies and hypotheses were stated and tested as proposed by Beech (2005); Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) whose assertion supports that objectivism relies on social observable facts which are not altered but are based on evidence. Statistical and mathematical techniques are central to positivist research, which adheres to specifically structured research techniques to uncover single and objective reality (Carson et al., 2001).

6.2.2 Epistemological assumption

According to Saunders et al., (2012), research paradigms inherently reflect our beliefs about the world we live in and want to live in. Bryman and Bell (2014) discussed epistemology as concerned with the question ‘how can knowledge be acquired and how can the truth be found? Epistemology refers to varied positions in the field of research on what is considered to be suitable knowledge (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). Kuhn (2012) explained epistemology as the nature of understanding about reality. Epistemology demonstrates how people obtain and understand information about the world (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012). The epistemology philosophy fundamentally explains the nature of knowledge, the scope of knowledge and how the knowledge is acquired. The current study’s epistemological assumption is that the study on voting

intentions is underpinned by a distinctive theory of what should pass as warrantable knowledge. The theoretical basis of the study includes the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology, Agenda Setting Theory and Realist Approach to Voting. Bryman and Bell (2014) classified research paradigms into three philosophically distinct categories - positivism, interpretivism and realism. The main features of these three perspectives are composed of the worldview, the nature of knowledge pursued, and the different ways by which knowledge is created and assessed within each paradigm and are discussed below.

6.2.2.1 The positivist philosophy

The positivist paradigm stems from natural science epistemology. The positivistic paradigm guarantees that the techniques and ideologies of general science are useful to the study of human events. At the ontological level, positivists assume that knowledge is objective and quantifiable. Positivists adopt scientific methods and organise the knowledge generation process with the help of quantification to advance precision in the description of parameters and the relationship among them (Steinert, 2014). Positivists believe in causality and hypotheses developed from the researcher's conceptualisation of research phenomenon are either confirmed or refuted by the observed effects (Collis & Hussey, 2013). The principal mode of the research inquiry of positivism is theory-testing based on deduction (Layder, 1993). The use of this hypothetical-deduction allows for statistical generalisation from ample sample sizes to be tested, with replaceable findings being true (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Positivist perspective maintains that scientific knowledge consists of facts while its ontology considers reality as independent of social construction. The current study on voting intentions consist of a stable and unchanging reality, hence the adoption of an objectivist perspective: a realist ontology based on the belief in an objective, real world and a detached epistemological stance based on the belief that voters' perceptions and statements are either true or false or either agree or disagree - based on the view of knowledge as hard, real and can be acquired. On the nature of humans, positivists assert that the relationship between man and society is deterministic, that is, we are born into a world in which there are causal laws that explain the patterns to our social behaviour (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015; Bryman, 2004). Essentially, positivism is grounded on values of reason, truth and validity (Strang, 2015; Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). According to Creswell (2013), positivist philosophy generates quantitative data based on large samples with the assumption that

the larger the sample, the more accurately it reflects the population. Positivism allows the formation of research hypotheses through the application of already existing theories (Saunders et al., 2012; Bryman et al., 2015). In addition, this perspective advocates that it is possible to make causal explanations and formulate models that can be generalised to the population (Ates, 2008). Such models can effectively explain cause and effect associations, and can be useful in forecasting outcomes.

Reflecting from the current study, the research problem aimed to determine whether or not the theoretically derived hypotheses appeared to be true for the tested circumstances (Saunders et al. (2012). Consistent with Saunders et al.'s (2012) assertion, the justification of the study was in testing the relationship between the variables in the research model (positivist methodology to data analysis) based on the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 2010) and considering the objectivity of the chosen approach (positivist approach) by seeking to realise scientific rigour through determining the reliability and validity of the instruments used for the research constructs (Hjørland, 2005).

6.2.2.2 The Realist Philosophy

Realism is a philosophical position which relates to scientific enquiry and is similar to positivism in that it assumes a scientific approach to the development of knowledge and is based on our knowledge of reality as a result of social conditioning, thus it cannot be understood independently of the social actors involved in the knowledge derivation process (Saunders et al., 2012). Bryman et al. (2014) defined realism as a belief that the natural and social sciences can and should apply the same kind of approach to the collection of data and to explanation. However, several authors refer to realism differently, critical realism (Bhaskar, 2013), post positivism (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011) or neo-postpositivism ((Huberman & Miles 1985; Manicas & Secord, 1982). Realism recognises differences between reality and people's perceptions of reality (Creswell, 2013). The concept of reality embodied within realism is conscious of the values of human systems and of researchers (Kraus, 2005; Creswell, 2013). In the African tradition, people never campaigned to be chiefs. Some got chieftaincy through wars and fighting. Therefore, it is imperative to find new uses for African ideas.

Direct realism says that what we experience through our senses portrays the world accurately (Creswell, 2013). The direct realist argues that illusions are a result of insufficient information. We do not perceive the world in television images; rather we use all our senses.

Critical realism argues that what we experience are sensations, which are representations of what is real (Lash, 2014). The critical realist's position is that our knowledge of reality is a result of social conditioning and cannot be understood independently of the social factors involved in the knowledge derivation process. Researchers do not rely on what is observed at the surface level to arrive at conclusions about the phenomenon. What is observed on the surface needs to be interpreted. Critical realists argue that as researchers, we will only be able to understand what is going on in the social world if we understand the social structures that have given rise to the phenomena that we are trying to understand (ibid). Therefore, the critical realist's position that the social world is constantly changing is much more in line with the purpose of business and management research which, too often, seek to understand the reason for phenomena as an antecedent to recommending change.

Historical realism requires the writer's critical knowledge of the history and interpretation of the historical events related to a phenomenon. Power structures influence the debate and outcomes. Within a critical realism framework, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies are seen as appropriate (Mertens, 2014; Creswell, 2013) for researching the underlying mechanisms that drive actions and events. Methods such as case studies and unstructured or semi-structured in-depth interviews are acceptable and appropriate within the paradigm, as are statistical analyses, such as those derived from structural equation modelling and other techniques (Bisman, 2002; Perry, Alizadeh, & Riege, 1997). Blaikie (2010) revealed that triangulation assumes an objective realism that can be made explicit through the use of diverse techniques in social research. Realism is engaged through the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods which are expressed as a mixed approach (Harwell, 2011). According to realists, the technique to determine the reality of a social phenomenon is through the triangulation of cognition.

Although several authors have used realism as a philosophy, it has been open to criticism. Field (2005) argues that the application of multiple techniques research is not an absolute assurance of the accuracy of its results. Conversely, Blaikie (2000) suggested that triangulation of mixed

method is regularly concerned with how to minimise bias, rather than determining the existence of principles of variables in a study.

6.2.2.3 The interpretivist philosophy

Interpretivist philosophy perceives reality as consisting of people's subjective experiences of the external world (Schlegel, 2015). Generally, interpretivist research is based on a relativistic, constructivist ontology that posits that there is no objective reality, but multiple realities constructed by human beings who experience a phenomenon of interest (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). Therefore, the goal of interpretivist research is to understand and interpret the meanings in human behaviour, rather than to generalise and predict causes and effects (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard & Snape, 2013). The interpretive paradigm is underpinned by observation and interpretation. Interpretive studies presuppose that people create and associate their own subjective and inter-subjective meanings as they interact with the world around them. The philosophical underpinning of interpretive research is hermeneutics (meaning is determined by context) and phenomenology (focusing on life experiences, dealing with people`s perceptions, attitudes and beliefs, feelings and emotions and providing a description of how things are experienced first hand by those involved) (Creswell, 2013; Denscombe, 2010). However, interpretivist philosophy has been criticised for its lack of scientific rigour due to its subjectivity and descriptive nature (Chowdhury, 2014). Since interpretive research does not normally involve large numbers in its study, questions are raised about the representativeness of the data and how far it can be generalised from its findings (Denscombe, 2010).

6.2.2.4 Pragmatist philosophy

The pragmatist philosophy claims that an ideology or proposition is true if it works satisfactorily, that the meaning of a proposition is to be found in the practical consequences of accepting it, and that unpractical ideas are to be rejected (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The pragmatic dimension, science, is seen as the result of both social action and nature's dynamics (Bhasker, 2013). It involves the distribution of power. Language and the way messages are structured is a result of power. For example, a boy speaking his mind coming from a squatter camp can be labelled as aggressive, yet the same child with the same attitude coming from an upmarket suburb like 'Borrowdale' in Harare, is said to be assertive. This research paradigm allows researchers to be diverse in their choice of methods. Pragmatism acknowledge that any knowledge ''produced''

through research is relative and not absolute, that even if there are causal relationships, they are ‘‘transitory and hard to identify’’ (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Pragmatism allows the use of mixed methods and mixed strategies because it judges research in terms of how well it addresses practical problems rather than how consistent it is with any particular ontological or epistemo-logical stance (Bhasker, 2013; Saunders et al., 2012). The pragmatist views voting as a result of social actions involved in mobilisation and nature`s dynamics. The combination of pragmatism and critical realism supports the view that all knowledge is socially constructed and all human behaviour and knowledge occurs within and simultaneously reconstructs culturally derived meanings. The purpose of social scientific inquiry into voting behaviour is to produce causal explanations which can guide, and may be evaluated through, human interventions in our social world (Babbie, 2015). Table 6.1 summarises the relationship between positivist, realist, interpretivist and pragmatist research approach.

Table 6.1: Relationships between Positivist, Realist, and Interpretivist and& Pragmatist philosophies

	Positivism	**Realism**	**Interpretivism**	**Pragmatism**
Assumption	Objective world that science can mirror with privileged knowledge	There is an external reality detached from scientists' description of it.	Inter-subjective world that science can represent with concept actor, social construction of a reality	Knowledge is a product of the historical era and the cultural context within which it is produced; the role of knowledge is to guide action and solve practical problems
Key Ideas	Search for conceptual variables that cause actions	Concrete but cannot be accessed directly	Search for pattern of meaning	Both specific beliefs and general methods of inquiry should be judged by their consequences, by their usefulness in achieving human goals
Goal of paradigm	Demonstrate causality	Exploratory, descriptive, theory building, inductive, analytical	Describe meanings, understand members' definitions of the situation, examine how objective realities are produced	
Form of theory or nature of knowledge	Verified hypothesis involving valid, reliable and precisely-measured variables	Construct validity is important	Abstract description of the meaning. Definition of solutions produced in natural contexts	Transferability

Theory transference approach	Deductive theory (Theory confirmation)	Abductive - empirical realism	Inductive theory (Theory discovery)	Abductive reasoning that moves between induction & deduction - converting observations into theories and assessing those theories through action.
Critical for assessing research	Prediction - explanation rigour, internal and external validity, reliability	Development of idiographic knowledge based social experiences such as human ideas, beliefs, perceptions, values, etc.	Trustworthiness, Authenticity	Inter-subjectivity approach & transferability
Unit of analysis	Identifiable and reduced to simplest terms (the variable)		Meaning: symbolic act	The research question or hypothesis determines the **unit** of **analysis**.
Research methods	Experiments, surveys (questionnaires), secondary data analysis, quantitatively coded documents	Exploratory, descriptive, theory building, inductive, analytical	Ethnography, participants' observation, interview, conversational analysis, grounded theory development.	In-depth interviews
Type of Analysis	Quantitative, regression, Likert scale, SEM, quantitative grounded theory testing	Non-statistical, triangulation	Case studies, conversational and textual analysis, expansion analysis.	

Source: Adapted from Easterby-Smith, et al. (2004); Swanson and Chermack (2013).

Despite the inherent differences between research paradigms, no philosophy is regarded as more valuable than any other. The philosophy provides the justification for the research methodology, which is inherently informed by the nature of the phenomena under study. The current study is situated in the positivist paradigm. Table 6.2 displays the characteristics of positivism as used in this study, classified into the purpose of the research, the nature of reality (ontology), nature of knowledge and the relationship between the inquirer and the inquired-into (epistemology), axiology, rhetoric assumptions and the methodology used (Loseke, 2012).

Table 6.2: Characteristics of Positivism as reflected in the study

Purpose of the research: *To assess, measure and establish the effect of digital media exposure on perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting, perceived image of the political party and finally voting intentions from the voter-consumer perspective*	
Ontological assumption	**Epistemological assumption**
▪ There is a single objective reality, fixed, measurable and observable. ▪ Voting intentions can be observed and measured. There is a single defined reality for the research constructs and if measured, will be readily visible to all who observe it.	▪ Genuine knowledge is objective & quantifiable. The goal of science is to test & expand theory. ▪ The acquisition of knowledge of the effects of digital media on voter-customers' attitudes, perceptions and voting intentions is an objective process, one that can be measured, the measured and objective report is reliable & useful knowledge.
Axiological assumption	**Methodological assumption**
▪ Objectivity is good and subjectivity is inherently misleading ▪ The measurements for digital media exposure, voter attitudes, perceptions & voting intentions will objectively inform the theory of planned behaviour which is valuable to understand.	▪ Using quantitative research methods which require objective measurement and analysis is the only acceptable method to generate valid knowledge. ▪ A new survey instrument was adapted from the theory of planned behaviour (TPB); a three input construct model of attitude towards behaviour, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control which influence behavioural intentions (Ajzen, 2001). Additional existing scales were also adapted to measure variables of hedonic motivation, perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting, perceived image of the political party and voting intentions. After a pilot study, a two-stage survey was conducted to explain behavioural intention and the subsequent digital media exposure and use. The measurement and structural models were tested using AMOS 24.

Source: Adapted from Losake (2012)

The key words pertaining to quantitative methodology are observation, measurement and interpretation (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). Data collection for positivism is carried out with the researcher being remote from the phenomena under study (Saunders et. al., 2012), so that the research can be entirely objective.

6.2.3 Axiological assumption

The study adhered to the ethical obligations by following the research protocol according to the guidelines of the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC) and the University of Witwatersrand following the approval of the research by both organisations. The axiological assumption pertains to ethics that are accepted to guide research principles and respect the rights of subjects. Although the objectives of research in consumer marketing are mostly to improve the social well-being of the customers, researchers should adhere to ethical guidelines, principles of justice in order that human subjects are protected all times. In order to adhere to research protocols and ethical standards, the following obligations and steps were considered: Respect for participants' confidentiality, rights to withdraw from a study, and anonymity. Information related to voting in Zimbabwe is sensitive, hence it is confidential. Sometimes access to such information may cause harm that might result in physical damage. In this study, participants were informed that no information would be related to individuals' identity. The study ensured total anonymity in the data collection process and analysis. Before this study commenced, the ethical aspects of the research project were explained to the participants.

Informed consent: Prior to administering the survey questionnaire, the researcher informed the participants about the purpose of the study, the methods of data collection, approval of the study by the research ethical committees of the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC) and the University of the Witwatersrand (UW). Each participant signed a written letter of consent, which informed them about voluntary participation and their right to withdraw at any point of the study. The participants were also informed that there were no rewards or incentive for participating in the study. According to Babbie (2008), the importance of obtaining verbal or written consent from participates in a research study is to remove any form of force or coercion in trying to persuade people to participate in a study.

Protection from harm and risk: In this study, the researcher ensured that the research study neither caused any harm or risk to participants, nor forced them to participate or provide information that would cause physical or emotional harm. No participants were exposed to physically or psychologically harmful situations during their participation.

6.2.4 Methodological assumption

Methodological assumption answers to the question ‘what is the process of research?’ Meaningful phenomena are operationalised by determining variables that can be accurately measured. Quantitative research emphasises the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between isolated variables within a framework which is value-free, logical, reductionist and deterministic, based on a priori. It requires a deductive approach where a pre-constructed standardised instrument is used. Quantitative research demands randomly selected large representative samples from where the logic and power of probability sampling facilitates comparison and statistical aggregation of the data leading to generalisation. The researcher is, however, detached from the research process.

6.2.5 Rhetoric assumption

The research is written from the perspective of a disinterested researcher scientist. The report is couched in mathematical terms. The language of the research is impersonal, formal and rule-based text.

6.3 Research strategies

Saunders et al. (2012) categorised research strategies into seven categories namely: survey, experiment, grounded theory, case study, action research, ethnography, as well as archival research. The selection of a particular strategy relies greatly on the objectives of study, research questions employed, the degree of information accessibility, resource availability and the philosophical underpinning. Table 6.4 presents the characteristics of different research strategies.

Table 6.3: Characteristics of Research strategies

Strategy	Characteristics of research strategies
Survey	A popular and common strategy; mainly in deductive approach; suitable for research questions of who, what, where, how much, how many; research purpose: exploratory, descriptive tools; questionnaire, quantitative data or structured interview, structured observation; time-consuming work and narrow scope of data - limited questions.
Case study	An empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon with multiple sources of evidence particularly when boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2003). makes use of multiple methods of data collection and 'thick descriptions' of the phenomena under study (Yin, 2003) Answers to questions related to : 'why', 'what', 'how'; Research purpose: exploratory and explanatory and triangulation of data: qualitative and quantitative.
Grounded theory	A typical inductive approach; theory developing and building process. To predict and explain behaviour; research purpose: exploratory; data collection: without a theoretical framework; theory is developed from data and data analysis: constant reference to data to develop and test theory.
Experiment	Define a theoretical hypothesis; Selection of samples of individuals from the population; random allocation of samples to different experimental conditions: the experimental vs. control group; introduction of intervention to one more of the variables; measurement on a small number of dependent variables and control of all other variables.
Action research	Concerned with the resolution of organisational issues; with involvement of practitioners in the research; researcher is part of the organisation and interactive nature of the process.
Ethnography	A typical inductive approach: describes and explains the social world; researcher needs to immerse himself/herself in the social world as completely as possible and research process needs to be flexible and responsive to changes.

Source: Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis (2012)

The current study employed the survey strategy due to the fact that a deductive approach was followed; the scope of the questions used were close ended questions and conclusive in nature; a descriptive design was also adopted. The paraphernalia of positivism are characterised typically in the methodological assumption exhibiting operational definitions, objectivity, replicatability and causality. The social survey was identified as the preferred instrument of research because it can apparently be readily adapted to concerns such as objectivity, replicability and causality. Through questionnaire items, concepts were operationalised; objectivity was maintained by the distance

between researcher and respondents (voters) with the possibility of external checks upon the questionnaire. Replication can be carried out by using the same research instrument in another context; and the problem of causality has been eased by utilising path analysis and related regression techniques, to which surveys are well suited. It is evident from Table 6.4 that, the characteristics of the survey strategy posited by Saunders et al. (2012) was consistent with the study's characteristics.

6.4 Research Design

A research design is a systematic plan to study a scientific problem (Yin, 2003). Research design outlines a set of procedures that optimises the validity of data for a given research problem (Bryman, 2015), informed by the research topic (Creswell, 2012), and the research philosophy (Saunders et al. 2012). Research design is typically classified into three types: exploratory research design, causal research design and descriptive research design (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010; Sekaran & Bougie 2013). Research design may be classified according to the fundamental objective of the research, that is exploratory and conclusive research design - where the conclusive design includes descriptive and causal research design (Wiid & Diggins, 2015).

6.4.1 Exploratory Research design

Exploratory research is unstructured and qualitative, often employed as a contribution for further research (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). Exploratory research is used by researchers to get new insight into the general nature of the problem, the possible alternatives and the relevant variables that need to be considered in future (Aaker et al., 2013). According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013), exploratory studies are undertaken when no information is available on how similar problems or research issues have been resolved in the past. Exploratory research normally comprises: focus group, expert case studies, pilot studies, and personal interviews as part of its data collection technique (Zikmund, 2000).

6.4.2 Descriptive research design

A descriptive research design seeks to describe a group of people or other entities (Churchill et al., 2010; Maholtra, 2010). Descriptive research undertakes to address questions of ‘who’, ‘what’,

'where', 'when' and 'how' (Burns & Bush, 2010; Churchill et al., 2010; Wilson 2012). In descriptive research, researchers describe what they intend to measure (Kothari, 2011).

6.4.3 Causal research design

Causal research is research that illustrates causality between variables or occurrences. Causal research either confirms and describes the relationship or shows it to be false (Wild & Diggins, 2015). Causal research can be conducted by means of laboratory or field experiments. In laboratory experiments, the researcher recreates the conditions of the situation in an artificial environment in order to control and manipulate variables and investigate results. Field experiments are conducted in a natural setting such as real market conditions where complete control of extraneous variables is not feasible (Wild & Diggins, 2015).

However, the current study employed a descriptive research design. The study aimed at establishing the relationship between digital media exposure and intention to vote in Zimbabwean presidential elections. This is supported by Sekaran and Bougie (2010), who posited that descriptive survey research design explains the relationship that exists among research variables. The study evidently identified a political marketing problem to be investigated. Research objectives were clearly established, followed by a proposed conceptual model with its stated hypotheses to be tested. In finding solutions to the identified problems, descriptive research design was adopted in the study.

6.5 Research Approach

Quantitative and qualitative are distinct research approaches that vary with respect to epistemology, ontology as well as the connection between theory and research (Bryman et al., 2014).

6.5.1 Qualitative approach

Qualitative research is naturalistic; it attempts to study the everyday life of different groups of people and communities in their natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research is designed to help researchers understand people, and the social and cultural contexts within which they live. Qualitative data is derived from direct observation of behaviours, participant interviews, from written opinions, or from public documents (Grbich, 2012).

6.5.2 Quantitative approach

This study undertook a quantitative research approach. Quantitative research assumes a deductive approach, which has a positivist epistemology, and usually deals with numerical data (Creswell, 2012). Quantitative research can be statistically analysed, in order to explain social phenomena and to test for causal relationships between constructs. Therefore, quantitative research methods use statistics to explain the results and use deduction by developing hypotheses (Gilbert, 2001). There are several advantages and disadvantages to quantitative research, for example, it is far less time-consuming than qualitative research, and far more economical for a large number of participants. A quantitative survey method is very effective for collecting information from a large number of respondents, and is able to test individual behaviours. The efficiency of a quantitative research lies in its capacity to determine how the vigour of reciprocal causal relationships fluctuates over time (Bryman et al, 2015). A quantitative approach seeks to manage or eliminate extraneous factors within the internal composition of the study and data that is generated can also be examined by standardised testing (Saunders et al., 2012). Nevertheless, an apparent fundamental difference between qualitative and quantitative research is the form of data collection, analysis and presentation. Qualitative research employs inductive data analysis to provide a better understanding of the interaction of mutually determining influences and to explain the interacting realities and experiences of researcher and participant (Collis & Hussey, 2013; Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). Quantitative research uses deductive approach in analysing theory from existing knowledge, through developing hypothesized relationships and proposed outcomes for study (Cormack, 2000).

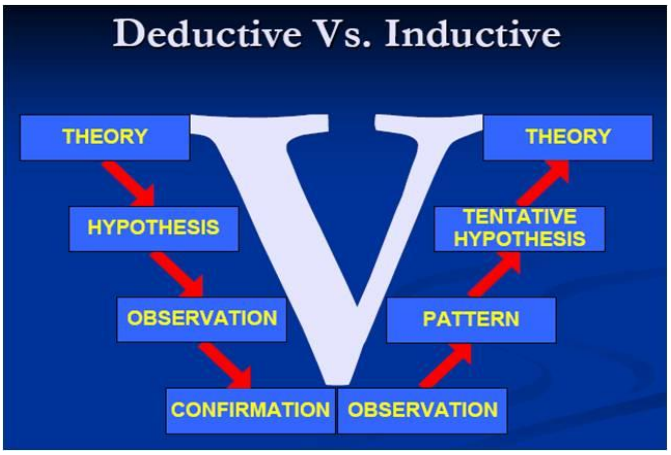
6.5.3 Deductive Approach

Deductive research refers to the empirical investigation of conceptual and theoretical structures (Bryman, 2015; Overton, 2013). The deductive approach is characterised as the progress from general to particular (top-down approach). A deductive research approach focuses on testing existing theory through empirical research. It permits the formulation of hypotheses and the statistical testing of expected results to an accepted level of probability (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2013). The current study assumes a deductive approach in which hypotheses that have been deduced from previous literature are tested.

6.5.4 Inductive Approach

Inductive approach (bottom-up approach) moves from the specific observations to broader generalisations and theories (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The researcher infers the implications of the findings for the theory that prompted the entire exercise (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Inductive reasoning is grounded on inducing general principles from particular instances; i.e. experimental data from specific investigations are used to derive general laws, which would include the particular case tested. Figure 6.3 shows the difference between the deductive and inductive approach.

Figure 6.3: Comparison of Deductive and Inductive Approach



Source: Adapted from Creswell (2012)

6.5.5 Justification for adopting a deductive approach in the study

Quantitative research undertakes a deductive approach, which has a positivist epistemology and usually deals with numerical data (Creswell, 2012). The most commonly used methods for explaining and predicting human behaviour are those of quantitative research (Kothari, 2004). In the current study, eight hypotheses were developed deduced from previous literature and tested for acceptance or rejection. Conclusions were then drawn from the propositions, allowing the researcher to generalise and draw inferences about the general population from the selected sample (Creswell, 2012). In the case of voting intentions, this permitted the researcher to investigate whether consumer marketing practices could be effective in the general population. The advantage that such research provides is that marketing practice will be guided by evidence rather than

anecdotal observations of the individual voter-customer. Initially, a review of literature was done; then conceptualisation of a model was developed for empirical investigation, after which the proposed hypotheses were tested. A quantitative research method was adopted. A deductive research approach was used to test theoretically formulated hypotheses. Specified variables were measured, while responses were analysed in terms of the formulated hypotheses derived from existing theory. Therefore, the theory is tested by means of formulated hypotheses, through an empirical study, and statistical methods. One of the objectives of the current study is to test the relationship between digital media exposure and a variety of variables, such as perceived image of the presidential candidate, perceived image of the political party, attitude towards voting and voting intention.

6.5.6 Rationale for adopting quantitative research design

In selecting a research methodology, Denscombe (2014) suggests that it is appropriate to select that paradigm whose assumptions are best met by the phenomenon being investigated. Many scholars (e.g., Treiman, 2014; Macnamara, 2005; Riff, Lacy & Fico, 2014) argue that human behaviour is best researched using quantitative data. Quantitative investigations look for distinguishing characteristics, basic properties and empirical confines. This study is about human behaviour (voting intentions) and digital technology as a causal agent of behaviour. It is also generally recognised that quantitative researchers are concerned with the outcomes or products rather than the processes. A quantitative research design has always been concerned with defining an epistemological methodology for determining the truth-value of propositions and allows flexibility in the treatment of data, in terms of comparative analysis, statistical analyses and repeatability of data collection in order to verify reliability. Due to the processes used, quantitative approaches place considerable trust in numbers that represent opinions or concepts. As this study is quantitative in nature, a large sample of respondents is surveyed, where the numerical data is analysed through the use of statistical methods. Furthermore, this study tests the relationships between the dependent and independent variables, with the aim of identifying causal relationships. Generally, a quantitative research method is accepted as one of the most frequently used in business and social sciences research methodology. Quantitative research holds several advantages. For instance, it is less time-consuming than qualitative research and more economical for a large sample of participants and the survey method is highly effective for collecting

information from ample respondents (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, the resulting outcomes do not present contextual findings; rather they support extensive generalisations of elements that influence voting intentions across all possible contexts.

However, the fundamental difference between qualitative and quantitative research is the form of data collection, analysis and presentation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). While quantitative research presents statistical results represented by numerical or statistical data, qualitative research presents data as descriptive narration with words and tries to understand occurrence in natural settings (ibid).

6.6 Sources of data: Primary and Secondary data sources

How data is obtained is paramount to understanding the entire research process (DePoy & Gitlin2015). Data sources are classified under primary source and secondary source. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013), primary data are source of data items that are new to the problem under investigation, that is, original data performed by individual researchers or organisations to meet specific objectives. On the contrary, secondary data is linked to data which has previously been gathered for other reasons or studies (Collis & Hussey, 2013; Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2013). The current study employed primary data to assist the researcher identify the influence of media exposure on voter perception of the candidate leader, political parties, attitude towards voting as well as intention to vote in presidential elections in Zimbabwe.

6.7 Measurement and scaling

A self-administered questionnaire survey approach was adopted for the quantitative study to measure the marketing concept and corroborate its effect on the mediating factors as well as their interactions toward influencing voting intentions. A structured questionnaire was designed for the study to collect data from a relatively large size of samples. The questions in the study were mainly involved with attitude and perception measurement. Measurement is the process of assigning numbers or other symbols to objects and events in accordance with pre-specified rules. Scaling is the process of creating a continuum on which objects are located according to the amount of the measured characteristic they hold (Dunn-Rankin, Knezek, Wallace & Zhang, 2014). Measurement and scaling are basic tools used in scientific methods and are used in nearly all marketing research situations (Babin & Zikmund, 2015; Aaker et al., 2000). The scale of measurement for a variable

can determine the most appropriate type of statistical analysis of the data. Wiid and Giggines (2015) observed that a researcher needs to determine the level of measurement needed to produce the desired information. They further said that each level of measurement conveys different amounts of information about the measured objects and thus determines the kind of analysis that is needed to interpret the collected data. The four basic levels of measurement are nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio scales (Hair, 2015; Zikmund et al., 2013).

- *Nominal scale:* Involves assigning numbers as labels to objects/events or classes of objects into mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories simply for identification purposes. In order to classify people into political party affiliation, each member is classified as a member of one political party and must fit into categories provided in the research.
- *Ordinal scale:* entails assignment of numbers to persons or objects so that they reflect their rank ordering on some characteristics or attributes.
- *Interval scale*: not only separates objects by rank order but also represents equal increments of the attribute being measured. Numbers on an interval scale have equal intervals between adjacent numbers, but the scale has no absolute zero.
- *Ratio scale*: is a special kind of interval scale that has a natural or absolute zero point, one for which there is universal agreement about its location. This is the only type of scale that permits comparisons of absolute magnitude. A ratio scale is common when the researcher is counting the number of events. A ratio scale has order, equal intervals, and an absolute zero. However, most measurement is indirect, such that the phenomenon of interest is inferred from an indicator it presumably affects or to which it is correlated.

In the current study, a combination of nominal and interval scales was used. The study's demographics such as: gender, age, residential location, educational level, employment status, voter registration status and access to Internet were measured using norminal scale. Among the existing multi-item scales, Likert scale and summated ratings of 7-point multi-item measures was employed to measure the constructs in the current study. The choice of multi-item Likert 7-point scale is based on its applicability in testing perceptions, feeling and attitudes as well as behaviours in business research (Joshi, Kale, Chandel & Pal, 2015). A 7 point likert scale ensures scale validity as it provides inclusive, exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories Compared with other popular scales such as Thurstone scale rankings, semantic differential scale, Likert scale is relatively easy to construct and administer (Sreejesh, Mohapatra & Anusree, 2014) and for

informants to respond. The multi-item measures in a Likert scale enable the scale to capture the different underlying aspects of the theoretical construct. For example, the voting intentions construct includes multi-faced activities that are depicted by a voter-customer, each of which should be identified in the scale and results in a multi-item scale performing better that a single-item scale. Compared with multi-item measures, the random measurement error for an individual item is often considerable; the same scale position is unlikely to be checked in successive administrations of an instrument. In contrast, with multiple items, the reliability and validity of a scale tend to improve and measurement error decreases as the number of items increases (Eisinga, Grotenhuis & Pelzer, 2013; Cole & Preacher, 2014). Practically, in marketing research, most of the empirical quantitative studies have proved the Likert scale as valuable and useful measures. Concerning the number of points in such scales, no clear-cut rule is given for the number to be used. It is argued that the increasing number of scale points should result in enhanced measurement precision (e.g., Munshi, 2014; Harzing et al., 2009). Thus, rating scales used in most surveys usually range from five (5) to nine (9) categories. The current study adopts a seven (7) point Likert scale.

6.8 Measurement instrument

Research scales were operationalised essentially on the basis of previous works. Minor adaptations were made in order to fit the current research context and purpose. Digital media exposure used different scales on each component of the construct, that is, website exposure, social network exposure and online news exposure. 'Website exposure' used a seven-item scale adopted from previous works of Gasser, Cortesi, Malik and Lee (2012); and 'social network exposure' used sixteen-item scale and 'online news' used an eight-item scale. 'Perceived image of the presidential candidate' used a nine-item scale adopted from Weaver (1996) and Kiad (2004). 'Attitude towards voting' was measured using a nine-item scale adopted from Ajzen (2001). 'Perceived image of the political party' adopted a ten-item scale adopted from Aaker (1997) and Kaperer (2004). Finally 'voting intentions' used a four item-scale adopted from Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and five–item scale from the works of Levy and Gend-Guterman (2012). As pointed out earlier, all the measurement items were measured on 7-point Likert-type scales that are anchored by 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree to express the degree of agreement. Individual scale items are listed

in Appendix 3. Outlined in the section below are the adapted measurement items used in the current research.

6.9 Research Construct Measurement

Extant literature posits that assessing and establishing validity of operationalised constructs remains fundamental to the interpretation of relationships between a construct and indicators. According to Cooke and Campbell (1979), construct measurement relates to the interpretation of substantive relationships and interpretation of data arising from any measurement procedure. It is concerned with the generalisability of results across diverse conditions of measurement (Cronbach et al., 1972) and it is a necessary condition for theory development and testing (Bagozzi, 1980).

6.9.1 Independent (Predictor) variable - Digital media exposure

An independent or predictor variable refers to a variable that determines the values of dependent variables (Kleinbaum, Kupper, Nizam & Rosenberg, 2014). It is typically denoted by the letter χ. In the current research, digital media exposure is the predictor variable that directs the dependent variable (voting intentions) in either a positive or negative way (Sekaran, 2000). Digital media exposure was measured using item-scales adapted from Gasser, Cortesi, Malik and Lee (2012) to suit the context of the study. Based on 7-point Likert scale, participants were expected to rate their level of agreement on statements related to digital media exposure within the Zimbabwe context which were anchored from 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Slightly agree, 6 = Agree and 7 = Strongly agree.The following items were used to measure digital media exposure.

Table 6.4: Digital media exposure measurement items (adapted)

Website exposure
I have visited and read political party websites
I often visit and read my preferred political party website
I often visit other opposition party websites
I feel convinced by these political party websites to vote for a particular political party.
I often feel positively about these party websites that I have read online
I generally grant full attention to these political party websites
I find political party websites to be more engaging than other online sources of information

Social Networking exposure
I have read and watched political party programmes on Twitter and YouTube
I feel convinced by these political party programmes to vote for a particular political party
I often feel positively about these party programmes that I see on Twitter and YouTube
I generally grant full attention to these political party downloads
I find political party downloads on Twitter and YouTube more engaging than other online sources of information
I often 'follow' or 'like' a political figure on Twitter (clicking 'like' or 'follow')
I often 'follow' or 'like' a political figure on YouTube
I often 'follow' a politician or a political party on Facebook
I have read a blog about politics and current affairs on the Internet
I have often commented or discussed politics or current affairs on the Internet
I have often written texts on a personal blog about politics or current affairs
I have often watched and read presidential candidate speeches on YouTube
I have often used my cell-phone as a main point of access for news
I have often accessed the Internet on tablets
I have often accessed the Internet on other mobile devices
I often engage in online political discussion

On-line news exposure
I watch, read or listen to news on the Internet
I have read a local tabloid on the Internet
I 'follow' Zimbabwe political news on YouTube
I 'follow' local news closely online when something important is happening.
I feel convinced by online news to vote in the general election
I often feel positively about online news
I generally grant full attention to online news
I find online news more appealing than other sources of information

6.9.2 Mediating variables

The aim of mediating variables is to uncover causal pathways between variables that are often overlooked in the assessments of non-linear models (Pearl, 2011). Therefore, by exploring the effect of mediators on the direct effect between X and Y, this contributes significantly to the quality of statistical analysis. The mediating variables in the current study were: perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting and perceived image of the political party.

6.9.2.1 Perceived image of the presidential candidate

Perceived image of the presidential candidate used a nine-item scale adapted from Weaver (1996) and Kiad (2004). The measurement was modified to fit the setting of the current study. A seven point Likert scale was employed on statements that related to the perceived image of the presidential candidate within Zimbabwe's political market. It was anchored from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = Agree and 7 = strongly agree. The following items were used to measure pperceived image of the presidential candidate.

Table 6.5: Perceived image of the Presidential candidate measurement items (Adapted)

Perceptions
Indicate your overall feeling towards your preferred political party presidential candidate
Indicate your feelings towards the other political party`s presidential candidates
Personal characteristics Statement
My preferred political party`s presidential candidate is sincere
My preferred political party presidential candidate is competent
My preferred political party presidential candidate is diplomatic
My preferred political party presidential candidate is corrupt
My preferred political party presidential candidate is accountable
My preferred political party presidential candidate is arrogant
My preferred political party presidential candidate is modest
Personal Traits
My preferred political party presidential candidate has morals
My preferred political party presidential candidate provides strong leadership.

My preferred political party presidential candidate really cares about people like me.
My preferred political party presidential candidate is knowledgeable.
My preferred political party presidential candidate is intelligent.
My preferred political party presidential candidate is honest.
My preferred political party presidential candidate is optimistic.

6.9.2.2 Attitude towards voting

Attitude towards voting used a nine-item scale adapted from Ajzen (2001). The measurement was modified to fit the setting of the current study. A seven point Likert scale was employed on statements that relate to voters' attitude towards voting in presidential elections in the Zimbabwe context. It was anchored from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = Agree and 7 = strongly agree. The following items were used to measure attitude towards voting.

Table 6.6: Attitude towards voting measurement items (Adapted)

Attitude towards voting
Voting for a political party will match my political attitude
I am convinced that voting for a political party will be beneficial to Zimbabwe
If I have to vote in the next election I would have a hard time to justify why
It makes no difference to my life who wins the election
For me voting in elections regularly is extremely valuable
Most of my friends and acquaintances think that voting is a good idea
Politicians are only interested in peoples' votes not their opinion
Voting can make a difference
Online media influenced my attitude towards voting.

6.9.2.3 Perceived image of the political party

The scale of political party personality adapted a ten-item scale from Aaker (1997) and Kapferer (2006). The measurement was modified to fit the setting of the current study. A seven point Likert scale was employed on statements related to voters' attitude towards voting in presidential

elections in the Zimbabwe context. It was anchored from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = Agree and 7 = strongly agree

Table 6.7: Perceived image of the political party measurement items (Adapted)

Political Party Personality-Statements
My preferred political party is a betrayer
My preferred political party is boastful
My preferred political party is democratic
My preferred political party is peaceful
My preferred political party is violent
My preferred political party is not associated with any philosophy, policies and programmes
My preferred political party is tribal
My preferred political party is sincere
I feel a specific relationship with any of the political parties in Zimbabwe
Party image portrayed on political party platforms is the opposite of reality

6.9.3 Dependent (Outcome) variable

A dependent or outcome variable is the variable under investigation and is depicted by the letter γ. It is always the predicted or the estimated variable (Russell & Purcell 2009; Lind et al., 2008; Sapford & Jupp, 2006). The outcome variable for the current study model is 'voting intentions'. Voting intentions used a ten-item scale adapted from Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and Levy and Gende-Guterman (2012). The measurement was modified to fit the setting of the current study. A seven point Likert scale was employed on statements that relate to voting decision-making by voter-customers in Zimbabwe. It was anchored from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Slightly agree, 6 = Agree and 7 = Strongly agree. The following dimensions were used to measure voting intentions.

Table 6.8: Voting intentions measurement items

Voting Intention measurement items (adapted)
I intend to vote in the forthcoming general elections
I will try to vote in the forthcoming election
I plan to vote in the forthcoming election
For me voting in the forthcoming election is worthless
The people in my life whose opinion I value would approve of my voting in the forthcoming election
It is expected of me that I vote in the forthcoming election
I am convinced that I will vote in the next presidential election
I do not believe that voting in presidential elections would make much difference
Most of my online friends think that voting is a good idea
What I read on the Internet makes me more likely to vote

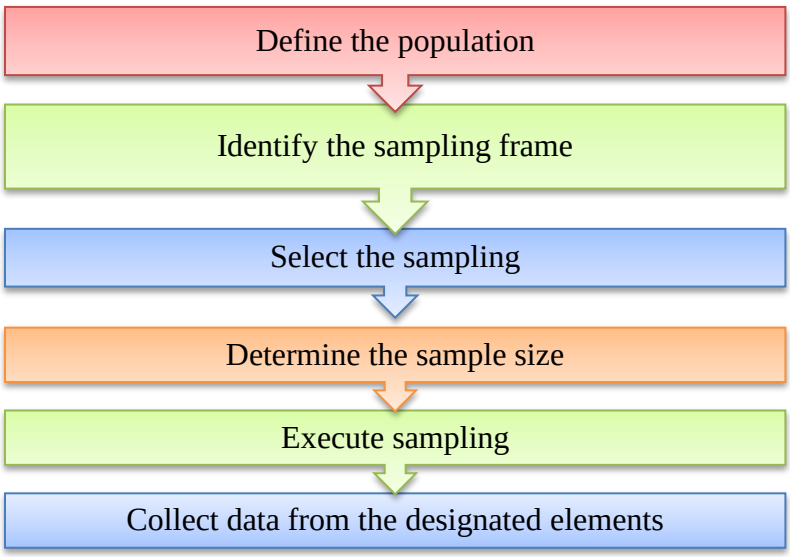
6.10 Pre-testing the instrument (Piloting)

Once the survey was developed, a pilot study was conducted to pre-test the research instrument to ensure completeness of the measure and precision of the items and to confirm its sufficiency for the purpose of the present study. Numerous researchers advocate for pilot testing (Iravo, 2011; Bryman & Bell, 2014; Sarantakos, 2012) in order to evaluate the competence of the research design as well as the measuring instruments. However, according to Parasuraman et al. (2004), there is no standard requirement of respondents to be used for a pilot testing. On the contrary, Burns and Bush (2010) suggested a range of five to ten as acceptable for pretesting. A pilot group of 30 respondents were randomly selected so as to evaluate the item content, the clarity of the instructions, and the language and functionality of the survey. Consequently, a few comments generated improvements in certain aspects of the questionnaire, such as the structure and technically ambiguous wording. Once these changes were implemented, a second pilot test study was conducted to confirm eligibility of the amended research instrument. However, the results confirmed coherence of research instrument and research objectives.

6.11 Sampling procedures

Subsequent to preparing the questionnaire, the next step was to select the elements from which the information would be collected. Following Fowler's (2013) process for drawing a sample, a six-step sampling procedure followed in this research is presented in Figure 6.4 below:

Figure 6.4: Sampling procedures



Source: Tustin (2005)

When organising a sampling design, it is imperative to determine the extent to which the research design will influence the reliability of the results and whether this will be sufficient to warrant concern over the reliability of the work or whether the results will still be regarded as significant (Santy et al. 1998). This analysis is essential since a completely erroneous sampling design may lead to the attainment of inconsistent results caused by wrongful interpretation. A sampling design needs to be precise and any existing supporting information about the population must be considered since it may be used to significantly adjust and create a more appropriate design (Grafstrom, 2010). The current study sampling design focused on four characteristics – target population, measurement instrument design; data collection technique and data analysis approach.

6.11.1 Target population

To complement the research flow, the current study was conducted from the voter-customers' perspective. The population of the sample comprised all eligible voters in Zimbabwe. The

constitution of Zimbabwe stipulates that everyone from 18 years of age and above is eligible to vote, hence the population is guided by the age of majority. According to data from the National Central Statistical Office, Zimbabwe has a total of six million, two hundred and ninety five thousand, five hundred and seventeen people in the 18 and above age band (6295517) inclusive of those who turned 18 years in 2016 (Zimbabwe Census National Report, 2012). Based on the aforementioned population statistic, 3 617 963 male and 3 147 759 female constitute the research population. As defined by Bryman and Bell (2007), the target population refers to the universe of units from which the sample is selected. A review of literature demonstrates that demographic characteristics and political background often constitute the strongest predictors of political involvement (Bennett & Iyengar, 2010; Drew & Weaver, 2006) hence these are considered in this study.

6.11.2 Sampling frame

After deciding the population of the sample, the subsequently step was to select the sample frame against which the sample was to be drawn. As defined by Denscombe (2007), a sampling frame is an objective list of the population from which the researcher extracts a sample. According to Ritchie, Lewis and Elam (2013), there are three characteristics of a good sample frame to consider, that is, comprehensiveness, probability of selection, and efficiency. In this study, the research sampling frame was the national census database of Zimbabwe. The population from which data was collected includes a proportion of males and females within different age bands, urban and rural and mixed set-up. According to the Zimbabwe Constitution, only those above the age of majority (18 years) are eligible to vote, hence the respondents are expected to be 18 years and above. However, the researcher notes that there are limitations to the use of the census statistics. This researcher acknowledges that the census register includes those who have passed on in either geographical sense or mortal sense since it is only updated every ten years. This register may not be regularly updated on a routine basis. The current figures were updated in 2012. However, forecast figures were supplied by CSO though the researcher found it prudent to use actual figures enumerated in 2012 rather than the forecast. However, the researcher continued to check for completeness and up-to-datedness of the sampling frame throughout the research process.

6.11.3 Sampling method

A significant decision for a quantitative study involving a sample is how the sample units are to be selected. The decision involves the selection of a sampling method. Morrison (1993) emphasises that the quality of a study is determined not only by the suitability of the methodology and instrumentation but also by the aptness of the sampling approach adopted. The option between probability and non-probability sampling methods often involves both statistical and practical considerations. Statistically, probability sampling allows the researcher to exhibit the sample's representativeness, an explicit statement as to how much variation is introduced, and identification of possible bias (Rea & Parker, 2014). Thus, based on this reason, probability sampling is considered appropriate for this survey-based study. According to Fowler (2013), almost all samples of populations of geographic areas are stratified by some regional variable so that they will be distributed in the same way as the population as a whole. Because some degree of stratification is comparatively simple to realise and it never hurts the thoroughness of sample estimates, as long as the probability of selection is the same across all strata, it usually is a desirable feature of a sample design. Stratified sampling improves the sampling efficiency by increasing the accuracy at a faster rate than the costs increase (Rea & Parker, 2014; Bryman et al., 2015). In the study, since the data in the sampling frame are considered comprehensive and can be easily divided into strata based on demographic details and on the geographic areas (Urban, Rural and Mixed), a proportional stratified sampling technique for the distribution of questionnaires was adopted. Zimbabwe has ten (10) administrative provinces. Using systematic sampling, four out of ten provinces were selected, Harare, Masvingo, Mashonaland Central and Bulawayo. Each of the selected provinces is stratified into districts: Harare- four (4) districts; Masvingo- seven (7) districts, Bulawayo-five (5) districts and Mashonaland Central-nine districts (9) (ZCNR, 2012) and number of respondents apportioned proportionally to each province. However, these details on geographic stratification are only for sampling purposes, it did not reflect on the questionnaire. In order to reduce systematic error, proper training of interviewers and adherence to proper norms of developing and conducting surveys was implemented. Data collectors were recruited and trained to distribute and collect the questionnaires in the different areas designated in the research.

6.11.4 Sample size

Sample size provides a foundation of the estimation of sampling error. It has a direct impact on the suitability and the statistical power of structural equation modelling to be used in the current study. The establishment of the final sample size involves judgment as well as calculation. According to Rea et al. (2014), four factors determine the sample size: the number of groups within the sample, the significance of the information and the precision required of the results, the cost of the sample, and the variability of the population. Considering Rea et al.'s (2014) suggestions, this study randomly selected 450 eligible voters in Harare, Masvingo, Mashonaland Central and Bulawayo who are on the census database list. From an estimated population of 6.7 million eligible voters in Zimbabwe, an allowance of a 95% confidence level was allowed, using a 5% confidence interval. The researcher estimated a sample size of at least 384, determined through the use of an estimator "Raosoft sample" as well as Kreijce and Morgan (1970). To decrease possible sampling error, a sample of 450 participants was surveyed.

6.11.5 Selection of key informants

According to Campbell (1955), the criteria for choosing key informants are that the informants should be knowledgeable about the issues covered in the survey and be able and willing to communicate with the researcher. Voter-customers are the exclusive decision maker when it comes to voting. The voter is the sole determinant of voting. In addition, engaging in digital media use or exposure to media is an individual choice although influenced by the significant others and the environment. It is the prerogative of the individual voter to participate or not to participate in a presidential election. Choosing the prospective voter as the key informant for relative Zimbabwe population was considered appropriate (John & Reve 1982; Brown et al. 1995).

In the political market, political parties as political entities interact with the electorate directly and indirectly through the media, although not every Zimbabwean resident is a prospective voter. There are statutes that one has to fulfil to be an eligible voter in Zimbabwe, such as appropriate age (18+), a citizen of the country. For inclusion in the sample, the eligible voter had to be 18 years or over. Given these requirements, the voter-customer above the age of majority (Zimbabwe standards), is assumed to have an appreciation of the political players and their respective activities with regards to electoral campaigning as well as some degree of exposure to either traditional or

digital media. These participants were expected to exhibit an appreciation of the major political parties in Zimbabwe, their respective presidential candidates, party philosophy as exhibited by their programmes and activities. Eventually, the questionnaires were completed by eligible voter-customers who were either registered or not registered in accordance with the research plan. However, challenges were met on evaluating preferred presidential candidate, as the country was already in campaign mode in preparation for 2018 elections as well as the succession issue which was the prevailing topical issue.

6.12 Measure used to enhance response rate

There is a large body of literature on strategies to make a survey more effective. The advantages and disadvantages of the measures enhancing the response rate are discussed below and those used in the study are consequently decided.

6.12.1 Face-to-face surveys

This method involves significantly higher administration costs, owing to organising appointments, travel and the fact that each survey has to be administered separately. Face-to-face surveys tend to account for more detail than any of the other methods, which adds to the substantial time required for each survey. The responses are usually staggered due to the lengthy process and the availability of respondents. This approach differs from informal interviews in that the survey follows a more structured procedure of asking questions (Brinkmann, 2014; De Vaus, 2013). The benefits of this approach are that the surveyor interacts with the respondents and is able to clarify any misunderstandings and the results are more detailed and possibly more accurate than e-mail and mail out methods. This study chose face-to-face survey because of its strengths.

6.12.2 Cover letter

Cover letters have become a part of most questionnaire surveys. Research by Dillman (2007) and others has shown that the messages contained in a self-administered questionnaire's cover letter eventually affect the response rate. Accordingly, a cover letter adjunct to the questionnaire was provided, in which a brief introduction and purpose of the research project and the individual, non-commercial academic nature are stressed. Additionally, the significance of the study, the importance of their assistance, and the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity of the response

are highlighted. As advised by Dillman (2007), a covering letter was appended to each research questionnaire for this study.

6.12.3 Follow-ups

Multiple contacts are essential for maximising responses for mail surveys and have been shown to be more effective than any other technique for increasing responses (e.g. Fowler, 2013; Dillman, 2007). The latest research confirms that this is also true for electronic surveys (McPeake, Bateson & O'Neill, 2014; Magro, Prybutok & Ryan, 2015). However, in the context of the current study none of the aforementioned methods were used but rather trained data collectors from the communities were recruited to distribute and collect the questionnaires manually to respondents.

6.12.4 Personalisation of correspondence

Although personalisation is considered as holding a positive effect on response rates and is an integral part of tailored design (Dillman, 2007), it is however argued by Kumar et al. (2002) that this technique is not proven to increase response rates. The targeted respondents are normally regarded the most knowledgeable and perhaps the most interested persons to discuss the subject. However, the respondents were not expected to pass or forward the questionnaire to other participants. Confidentiality was paramount.

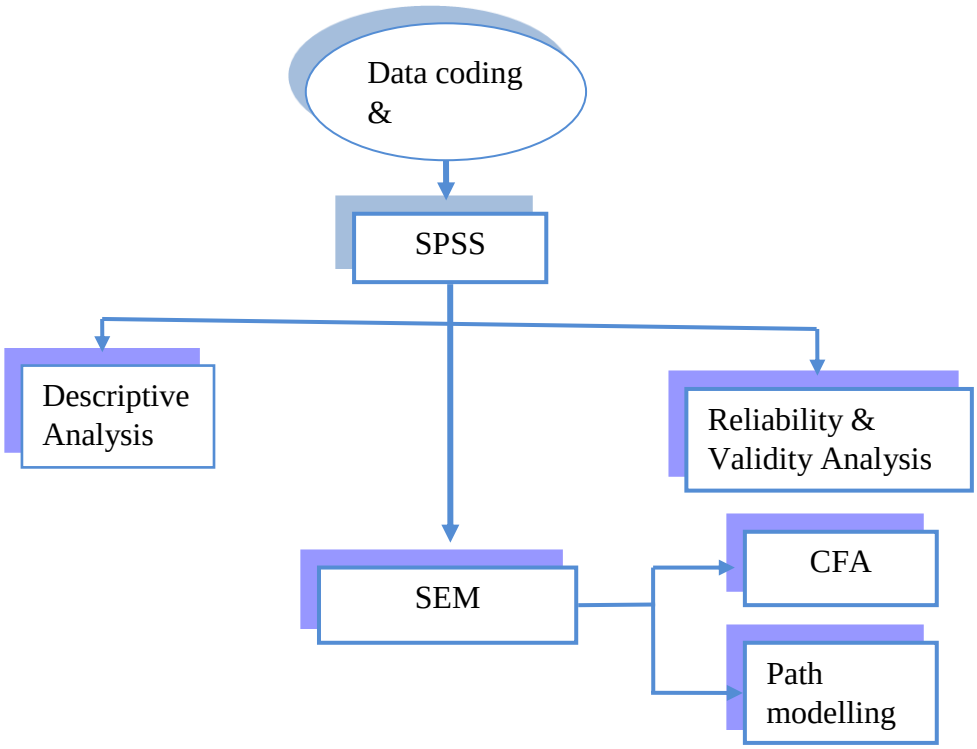
6.13 Data screening

Subsequent to the data collection, the data screening process suggested by Malhotra (2013) and DeSimone, Harms and DeSimone (2015) was implemented to ensure data were cleaned before performing further statistical analysis. Screening the data is the first step towards obtaining some insights into the characteristics of the data. It is important to ensure the accuracy of data entry and assessment of outliers before proceeding to analyse summary statistics for the survey responses. The major analytical tasks in the data screening process include questionnaire checking, editing, coding, and tabulation. Responses were carefully coded with an identification number related to a specific respondent. Using SPSS 24, each data field was tested for mean and standard deviation to detect any typographical errors and possible outliers. Data were cleaned after errors in data entry were corrected.

6.14 Data analytical procedure

To analyse the empirical data, several statistical methods were used. First, coefficient alpha and adjusted item-to-total correlations were used in assessing the internal consistency of each construct. Data were analysed using SPSS 24. For the assessment of final measures, confirmatory factor analysis was performed using the AMOS 24 program (*Analysis of moment structures*). Statistical procedures used to validate measures consisted of assessment of items and scale reliability, uni-dimensionality, and convergent and discriminant validity. Details of structural equation modelling is analysed in Chapter seven. The interpretation of results is also discussed in Chapter Seven. Figure 6.5 demonstrates the procedures of data analysis approach.

Figure 6.5: Data analysis approach



6.15 Tests of Measures and Accuracy Analysis Statistics

Moving from demographic data analysis of the data collected, the reliability and validity of the measuring scales need to be assessed to ensure valid data analysis. This is most important for this study since some of the scales have been modified to adapt to the particular marketing context. Wilks (1961) recommended three requirements of measurement. First, measurement must be an operationally definable process. Measurement involves the operationalisation of constructs in defined variables. Second, measurement should be valid or accurate (validity). Third, the outcome of the measurement process must be reproducible (reliability). The total error of a measurement consists of systematic errors, which involve validity test, and random errors, which are measured by a reliability test (Aaker, 2007). However, a number of methods exist to test reliability and validity of scales. The differences among the methods and the technique specifically used for this study are discussed. The next subsection presents reliability tests, followed by a discussion of validity issues.

6.16 Reliability tests

Reliability refers to the extent to which the application of a scale produces consistent results if repeated measures are taken (DeVellis, 2016; Hair et al., 2010). It is essentially classified according to whether it is concerned with the stability of results over time or internal consistency of items in a scale. Internal consistency is concerned with the homogeneity of individual items to other items measuring the same construct (Drost, 2011). This study uses Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to check the measure reliability.

6.16.1 Cronbach's coefficient α

When items are used to form a scale, they need to have internal consistency. The items should all measure the same thing, so they should be correlated with one another. A useful coefficient for assessing internal consistency is Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's coefficient α is one of the most common internal consistency approaches. Cronbach's coefficient α determines the mean reliability coefficient for all possible ways of splitting a set of items in half. As a result of this advantage, Cronbach α is the most frequently used approach for assessing the reliability of a measurement scale with multi-point items. The value of α, which ranges from 0 to 1, represents the level of the reliability in the measurement. The closer the value of α is to 1, the more the reliability in the

measurement. A low value indicates that either there are too few items or there is little commonality among the items (Jakpar, Na, Johari & Myint, 2012). No clear rules have been offered for evaluating the degree of reliability coefficients; they generally depend on the purpose of the research. The coefficient α for the different constructs in this study is computed using the reliability procedure in the computer program SPSS (version 15).

6.16.2 Composite Reliability

One method now commonly used to check internal consistency of the measurement model is the Composite Reliability (CR) index. For the composite reliability to be accepted, the index should be equal or greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010; Nunnaly, 1978). It is calculated using the following formulae:

$$CR\eta = (\Sigma\lambda yi)^2 / [(\Sigma\lambda yi)^2 + (\Sigma\varepsilon i)]$$

Where

$CR\eta$ = Composite reliability,

$(\Sigma\lambda yi)^2$ = Square of the sum of the standardised regression weights

$(\Sigma\varepsilon i)$ = Sum of error variances

The resultant coefficient is similar to that of Cronbach's α (Peterson & Kim, 2013). The threshold for Composite Reliability (CR) should be equal or greater than 0.7 to signify an internal consistency (Hair et al., 2010; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Tseng, Dornye & Schmitt, 2006).

6.16.3 Average Value Extracted (AVE)

The average variance extracted (AVE) estimate reflects the overall amount of variance in the indicators accounted for by the latent construct. Higher values for the variance extracted estimate (greater than 0.50) reveal the indicators well represent the latent construct (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010). To calculate the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), the standardised factor loading values in the CFA results are used. The formula used to calculate Average Variance Extracted (AVE): is shown below:

$$V\eta = \Sigma\lambda yi^2 / (\Sigma\lambda yi^2 + \Sigma\varepsilon i)$$

Where:

$V\eta$ = Average Variance Extracted (AVE),

$\Sigma\lambda yi^2$ = Sum of the squared factor loadings,

$\Sigma\varepsilon i$ = Sum of error variances.

6.17 Validity Tests

Validity is concerned with the degree to which a test or instrument measures the attributes that it is supposed to measure (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). It is concerned with the accuracy of measurement. Since one never has direct evidence of the 'true' value of the concept under measurement, validity assessment is a complex issue. There are three basic approaches to estimate the validity of an instrument: content validity, criterion validity, and construct validity. In this section of the chapter, we are primarily concerned with testing the construct validity rather than the other two. Construct validity corroborate how well results from the data obtained fit the theories around which the analysis was designed (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

6.17.1 Construct Validity

Construct validity is concerned with the extent to which a measure assesses the construct it is purported to assess (Kent, 2007), which is the important part of the scientific process and is the type of validity receiving most of the attention in social science (Churchill, 1979). To establish this type of validity, two categories of construct validity normally need to be determined: convergent validity and discriminant validity.

6.17.2 Convergent validity

Convergent validity refers to the degree to which the scale correlates in the same direction with other measures of the same construct, i.e. the items show *homogeneity* within the same construct (Schwab, 2006). Evidence of convergent validity of a measure is provided by the extent to which it correlates with other methods designed to measure the same construct (Ramayah et al., 2011). Variables believed to measure the same variable demonstrates convergent validity when the item – to - total correlation among them is at least reasonable in scale. Ideally, an item is expected to be related with other items that measure the same constructs (convergent validity), but differ from items which measure different constructs (discriminant validity) (Peter, 1981). It is suggested for

the item loadings to be greater than 0.5 to indicate acceptable validity (Schwab, 2006). Both categories are commonly evaluated by using factor analysis.

6.17.3 Factor Analysis

Factor analysis attempts to identify underlying variables that explain and summarise the patterns of correlations among variables and to reduce a large number of variables to a smaller number of constructs (Hair et al., 2009). VARIMAX rotation is the ideal orthogonal rotation method used in factor analysis as it is capable of reducing the number of variables with high loadings on each factor and allows for the simplification of interpretation of factors (Hair et al., 2009). This study decided to undertake the principal components method of extraction with a VARIMAX orthogonal rotation procedure to examine the construct validity.

6.18 Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity is concerned with the extent to which a measure is distinct from other measures, showing heterogeneity between different constructs (Malhotra, 1996). Therefore, discriminant validity occurs when the scores from measures of different constructs do not converge (Schwab, 2006). An inter-construct correlation matrix is used to evaluate the presence of discriminant validity. Discriminant validity ensures that measures of different constructs should load on separate constructs. That means the constructs are distinct. This study used the correlation matrix and the Chi-square CFA Test methods to check on discriminant validity of the research constructs.

6.18.1 Correlation matrix

If research constructs are distinct then their correlation (pair-wise) value should be less than one (>1.0). However, in order to confirm the existence of discriminant validity, a correlation between constructs should be less than 0.7 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Another measure for evaluating discriminant validity is observing whether the average variance extracted (AVE) for two constructs is greater than the square of the correlation between the constructs (Nusair & Hua, 2010). If the latter is found, the presence of discriminant validity is confirmed.

6.18.2 $\Delta\chi^2$ CFA Test

To exhibit the discriminant validity, a series of pair-wise confirmatory factor model comparisons assessed whether differences existed when correlations between the latent constructs were free and fixed to 1.0 (Anderson & Gerbing 1988). A significant difference in chi-square values for the fixed and free correlations indicates the uniqueness of the two constructs. Precisely, if the chi-square (χ2) difference in one degree of freedom is significant, the constructs enjoy discriminant validity and the latent constructs are said to be distinct.

6.19 Structural Equation Modelling

In order to test the proposed relationships concurrently, structural equation modelling (SEM) is requisite. SEM is a multivariate statistical framework that is used for modelling convoluted relationships between direct and indirect observed variable (Stein, Morris & Nick, 2012). With SEM, the structure of relationships can be modelled graphically enabling a clearer conceptualisation of the theory under study. The hypothesised model can be tested statistically in a simultaneous analysis of the entire system of variables to establish the extent to which it is consistent with the data. In the current study, the AMOS24 software programme was used as a tool to analyze SEM. It assists to set up a model that reflects complex relationships with the ability to use observed variables to predict any numeric variables. Structural equation modelling (SEM) takes a confirmatory approach to analysis of structural theory bearing on some phenomena (Byrne, 2001). It uses diverse types of models to predict relationships among observed variables, with the fundamental goal of providing a quantitative test of a theoretical model hypothesised by the researcher. Schumacker and Lomax (2004) posit that the goal of SEM analysis is to determine the degree to which the theoretical model is supported by sample data. If the sample data support the theoretical model then more complex theoretical models can be hypothesised. If the sample data does not support the theoretical model then either the original model needs to be modified and re-tested or other theoretical models need to be developed and tested. SEM utilises a two phase step for its analysis - the confirmatory factor analysis and the path modelling or the structural modelling.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), in this thesis relates to three types of model, firstly, a measurement model of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

exclusively focuses on the relationship between factors and their measurement variables. There are two fundamental types of factor analysis: exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Byrne, 2001). EFA is designed for a situation where links between the observed and latent variables are unknown or uncertain. Conversely, CFA is suitably used when the researcher has some knowledge of some underlying latent variable structure. In CFA, the researcher has an *a priori* specified theoretical model, in EFA the researcher does not have such a model. This current study uses CFA since the measures have been adopted from prior literature and have been generally used by numerous researchers in the past.The second type of model is a Path Model or a Path Analysis which involves the estimation of presumed causal relations among observed variables. In path analysis, the researcher identifies a model that attempts to explain why X and Y are correlated (Kline, 2005). The overall goal of the path analysis is to assess how well the model accounts for the data that is the observed correlations or covariance. The third type of model is the full latent variable model which allows for the specification of a regression structure among the latent variables. In other words, the researcher can hypothesise the impact of one latent construct on another in modelling of causal direction. The model is termed full because it comprises both a measurement model (CFA) and a structural model (depicting the links among the latent variables) (Byrne, 2001).

6.20 Standardised and Un-standardised Estimation

Kline (2005) postulates that there is a strong preference in the SEM literature for un-standardised estimates. The rationale behind this preference is that extensively used estimation methods in SEM adopt the analysis of un-standardised variables. Furthermore, there are situations where standardised estimates may be appropriate. These include the analysis of any SEM across multiple samples that are different in their variability and instances where the original metrics of the variables are meaningful rather than arbitrary (e.g. weight in kilograms, volume in litres). In all cases, important information may be lost when variables are standardised. However, the above cited cases do not apply to the current study and therefore standardised estimates are used in the current study.

6.21 Measurement model analysis

The main objective of model fitting is to determine how well the data fit the model (Khine, 2013). Determining model fit is complex because numerous model fit criteria have been developed to

assist in interpreting confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation models (SEM) under different model-building assumptions. Also, the determination of model fit in confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM) is not as clear-cut as it is in other statistical approaches in multivariable procedures such as the analysis of variance, multiple regression and discriminant analysis. According to Schumacker and Lomax (2010), CFA and SEM fit indices have no single statistical test of significance that identifies a correct model given the sample data, especially alternative models can exist that yield exactly the same data to model fit. It is recommended that various model fit criteria be used in combination to assess model fit as global fit measures (Kline, 2015). Following Schumacker and Lomax (2010), Kline (2015), Cheung and Rensvold (2002), this study uses eight model fit criteria to test the overall fit of the model.

6.21.1 Goodness of fit under SEM

Goodness- of-fit measures are classified into three types namely; absolute fit indices, incremental fit indices and the parsimony fit indices (Hair et al., 2010). The absolute fit indices show the measure of how well the model, as given by the researcher, replicates the observed data under study. They comprise: the Chi-square χ^2 statistics, the Normed Chi-square (χ^2: df or (χ^2/df), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), Root mean square (RMS), Standard root mean residual (SRMR) as well as the Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The incremental indices determine how well the estimated model fits relative to some alternative baseline model. They consist of the Normed Fit index (NFI), Tucker Lewis index (TLI) and the Comparative Fit index (Hair et al., 2010).

6.21.2 Chi-square (χ^2)

The Chi-square is used for evaluating the overall model fit and to assess the magnitude of discrepancy between the sample and the fitted covariance matrices (Hu & Bentler, 1992). A non-statistically significant chi-square value indicates that the sample covariance matrix and reproduced model-implied covariance matrix are similar. The chi-square value of zero indicates a perfect fit or no difference between the values in some covariance matrix and the reproduced implied covariance matrix. The goal in SEM is to achieve a non-statistical significance which indicates little difference between the sample variance-covariance matrix and the reproduced

implied covariance matrix (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). The difference between these two covariance matrices is contained in a residual matrix. When the chi-square value is non-significant (close to zero), residual values in the residual matrix are close to zero, indicating that theoretically specified model fits the sample data (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010).

6.21.3 Goodness-of-fit Index (GFI)

The Goodness-of-fit (GFI) calculates the variance that is accounted for by the estimated population covariance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). By observing the variances and co-variances accounted for by the model, it explains how closely the model comes to replicating the observed covariance matrix (Huang & Rundle-Thiele, 2015). GFI varies from 0-1 but theoretically can yield meaningless negative values. A large sample size pushes GFI up. Though analogous to R square in regression analysis (Kline, 2011), GFI cannot be interpreted as percentage of error explained by the model. Rather, it is the percentage of observed co-variances explained by the model, that is, R square in multiple regression deals with error variance whereas GFI deals with error in reproducing the variance-covariance matrix. For a good fit, the recommended value should be GFI > 0.95 (1 being a perfect fit) (Mishra, 2015).

6.21.4 Root mean square residual (RMR)

RMR characterise the average residual value derived from fitting of the variance-covariance matrix for the hypothesised model to the variance-covariance matrix of the sample data. However, because these residuals are relative to the sizes of the observed variance and covariance, their interpretation is complex. Accordingly, they are best interpreted in the unit of correlation matrix. The result from the matrix represents the average value across all standardised residuals and range from 0 to 1. The closer the RMR is to 0 for the model being tested, the better the model fit (Westland, 2015).

6.21.5 The Normed Fit Index (NFI)

NFI was developed as an alternative to CFI, but one which did not require making chi-square assumptions. It varies from 0 to 1, with 1 equal to perfect fit (Bentler & Bonnet, 1980). NFI reflects the proportion by which the researcher's model improves fit compared to the null model (random variables). For example, NFI=0.60 means the researcher's model improves fit by 60 compared to

the null model. By convention, NFI values below 0.90 (<.90) indicate a need to re-specify the model (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Fischer, 2013) and NFI ≥.95 indicating a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). This index is sensitive to sample size, underestimating fit for samples less than 200 (Mulaik et al, 1989; Bentler, 1990), hence not recommended to be solely relied on (Kline, 2005).

6.21.6 Tucker Lewis index (TLI)

The TLI may and is also used to assess comparative fit, with values close to 1 signifying a good fit (Khine et al., 2013). Although the Tucker-Lewis Index rectified the problem of sample size sensitivity, the value of the TLI can indicate poor fit despite other statistics pointing towards good fit (Bentler, 1990; Kline, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The problem with the TLI is that due to its non-normed nature, values can go above 1.0 and can thus be difficult to interpret (Byrne, 1998).The recommended threshold is TLI ≥0.95 (Bentler & Hu, 1999).

6.21.7 The Comparative fit index (CFI)

The Comparative fit index (CFI) also known as the Bentler Comparative Fit Index compares the existing model fit with a null model that assumes the latent variables in the model are uncorrelated (Khine, 2013). That is, it compares the covariance matrix predicted by the model to the observed covariance matrix, and compares the null model with the observed covariance matrix, to gauge the percentage of lack of fit which is accounted for by going from the null model to the researcher's SEM model. CFI varies from 0 to 1. A CFI close to 1 indicates a very good fit. By convention, CFI should be equal to or greater than 0.90 (>.90) to accept the model, indicating that 90% of the co-variation in the data can be reproduced by the given model (Westland, 2015).

6.21.8 The incremental fit index (IFI)

The IFI was developed by Bollen (1989) to address the issue of parsimony and sample size which were known to be associated with the NFI. As such, its computation is essentially the same as the NFI, except that degrees of freedom are taken into account. By convention, IFI should be equal to or greater than 0.90 (>.90) to accept the model. However, under certain circumstances, IFI can also be greater than 1(>1) (Fan et al., 1999).

6.21.9 Root mean square of approximation (RMSEA)

The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) signifies the averages of the residuals connecting the hypothesised model and the observed covariance (Byrne, 2010; Suhr, 2014). It takes into account the error of approximation in the population. This value will respond to how well the model with unknown but optimally chosen parameter values fit the population covariance matrix if it were available (Brown & Cudeck, 1993). The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) corrects the tendency of the χ^2 to reject models with large same size or number of variables. This discrepancy, as measured by RMSEA, is expressed according to degree of freedom, hence making the index sensitive to the number of estimated parameters in the model. By convention, there is a good model fit if RMSEA is less than or equal to 0.05 (<.05) and an adequate fit if RMSEA is less than or equal to 0.08 (<08) (Brown & Cudeck, 1993). Table 6.10 summarises the model of fit and acceptable fit level.

Table 6.9: Model of fit and acceptable fit level

Model Fit Criteria	**Acceptable Level**	**Interpretation**
Chi-square ***(χ^2)***	Tabled Chi-square values	Compares obtained Chi-square value with tabled value for given *df*
Goodness-of-fit ***(GFI)***	Value equal to or greater than 0.90	0 (no fit) to 1 (perfect fit)
Augmented Goodness-of-fit ***(AGFI)***	Value equal to or greater than 0.90	0 (no fit) to 1 (perfect fit)
Normal-fit-index ***(NFI)***	Close to 0 is good	Researcher defines level
Comparative fit index ***(CFI)***	Value equal to or greater than 0.90	0 (no fit) to 1 (perfect fit)
Incremental fit index ***(IFI)***	Value equal to or greater than 0.90 (no fit) to 1 (perfect fit)	0 (no fit) to 1 (perfect fit)
Root mean square error of approximation ***(RMSEA)***	<0.05	Values less than 0.05 indicates a good model fit

Source: Hooper, Coughlan & Mullen (2008)

6.22 Testing for mediation

Mediation denotes a situation where the effect of the exogenous variable on the endogenous variable can best be explained using a third mediator variable which is caused by the independent variable and is itself a cause for the dependent variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Judd & Kenny, 1981; MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007a; Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The significance of mediation to studies related to media effects has been stressed by various scholars (e.g. McGuire, 1986). According to Maholtra (2010), mediation test is done to establish the variable that delivers the best justification for the portion of the total variance in the scores of the independent variable and to match other theories that drive the marketing discipline such as theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and Vroom's expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964).The conceptual model of this study comprises one independent variable, digital media exposure (DMEX), three intervening variables [Perceived image of the presidential candidate (PPC), Attitude towards voting (ATV), perceived image of the political party (PI)] and one dependent variable, voting intention (VI). The mediation effect between digital media exposure and voting intention was tested using a multiple linear regression analysis run in SPSS 24. To examine the effect of mediation, the four steps (causal steps) in the Baron and Kenny (1986) approach were carried out by means of the regression equations. It is argued in extant literature that mediation is one of the defining relationships in marketing domains such as political communication and marketing communication (Scheer, Miao & Palmatier, 2015; Verma, Sharma & Sheth, 2016). A critical assessment of the use of SEM in marketing research reveals that not many studies test for mediation. Most marketing researches using multivariate technique (SEM) have failed to use this technique beyond discussion of direct effects. SEM often contains multiple potential mediators for most independent-outcome variable relationships (Bentler, 1995; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996).

6.23 Chapter Summary

The chapter has presented a broad description of the research design and methodology employed in the study. It started with research philosophies or the research paradigm; after which the discussion of the methodology was placed into headings such as the sampling design which consist of: the target population, sampling frame, sample size and sampling method were all discussed. The statistical technique used was the structural equation modelling (SEM) - where partial least squares software was used to assess both validity and reliability while the confirmatory factor

analysis (CFA) and the path modelling were also done with Amos. The account on how thresholds were met, coupled with their ultimate interpretations of the data was all systematically explained. The description of how the university's ethics was adhered to was also presented. In the next chapter, the results of the study are presented.

7 CHAPTER SEVEN: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the statistical analysis and survey results obtained from the data collected on how digital media exposure influences the voting intentions of the Zimbabwean electorate. Chapter seven (7) commences with a discussion on the data screening process, followed by the presentation of the data analysis procedure used in the current study. An overview of the descriptive statistics, an analysis of the reliability and validity of the measurement instrument is made, an overview of the model of fit and finally, a path modelling analysis is conducted and presented. Cronbach`s Alpha, the Composite Reliability (CR) value and the Average Value Extracted (AVE) are used to measure reliability, whereas for validity, Factor Analysis is used to check convergent validity and correlation matrix and chi-square – Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) difference are used to check discriminant validity. This section is followed by a presentation of the research model fit. Various indicators such as the chi-square value, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Lewis-Tucker Index (TLI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) are used to ascertain if the research models fit the data. Finally, a synopsis of Chapter Seven (7) is provided.

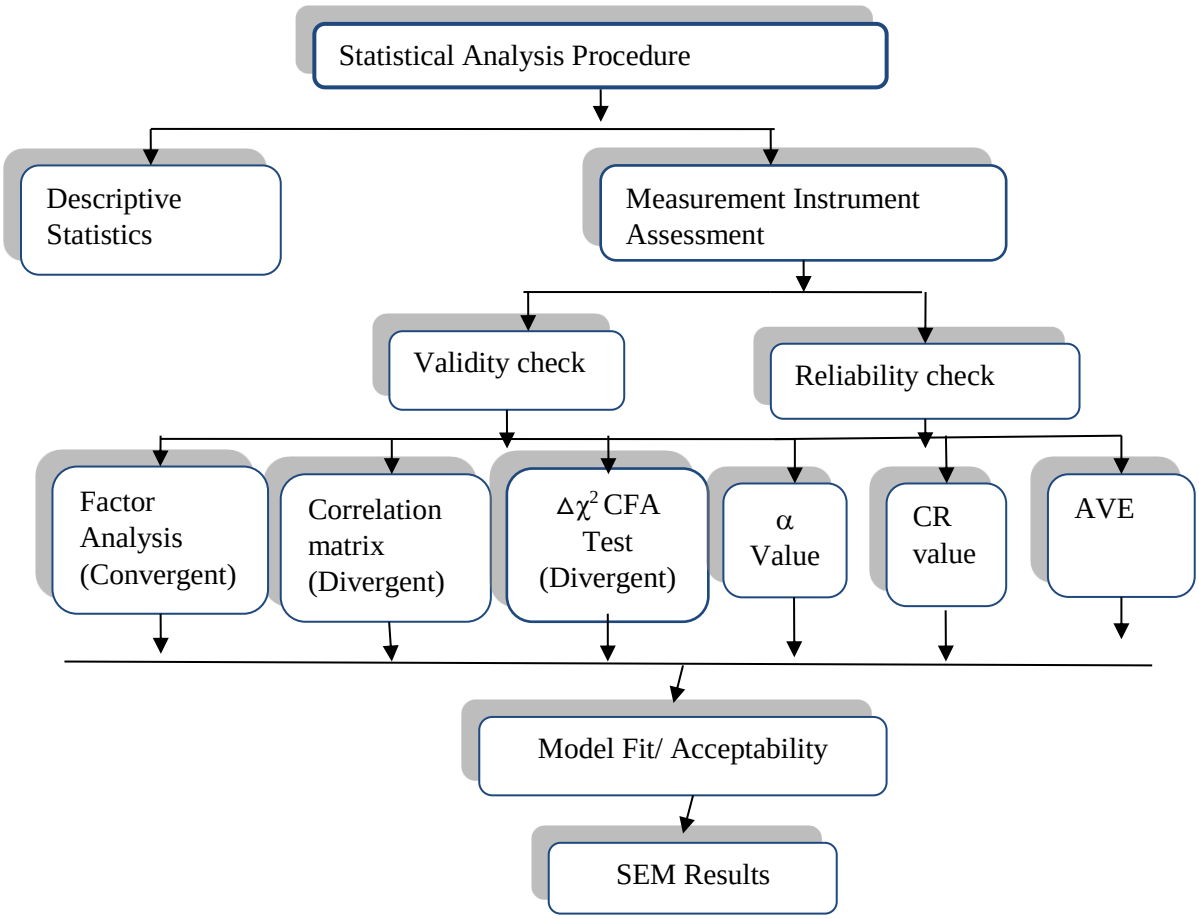
7.2 Data Screening

Following the data collection, the data screening process, as suggested by Cooper and Schindler (2014); DeSimone, Harms and DeSimone (2015), was executed to make certain data were cleaned before performing further statistical analysis. Screening the data is the initial step towards obtaining some insights into the character of the data. It is vital to ensure the accuracy of data entry and assessment of outliers before proceeding to analyse summary statistics for the survey responses. The most important analytical tasks in the data screening process include questionnaire checking, editing, coding, and tabulation. Responses were cautiously coded with an identification number related to a specific voter-customer (participant). Using SPSS 24, each data field was tested for mean and standard deviation to detect any typographical errors and possible outliers. Data were cleaned after errors in data entry were corrected.

7.3 Data Analytical Procedures

To analyse the empirical data, several statistical methods were employed. In assessing the internal consistency of each construct, coefficient alpha and adjusted item-to-total correlations were used. Data were analysed using SPSS 24. Regression analysis is used to examine whether the proposed mediators have a mediating effect in the predictor outcome relationship. For the assessment of final measures, confirmatory factor analysis was performed using the AMOS 24 program. Statistical procedures used to validate measures consisted of assessment of items and scale reliability, uni-dimensionality, and convergent and discriminant validity. Figure 7.1 reveals the procedures of statistical analysis as well as the main tasks that are undertaken in Chapter Seven (7).

Figure 7.1: Statistical Analysis Procedures



7.4 Descriptive Statistics

According to Burns and Bush (2006), the principal rationale of descriptive statistics is to offer abridged distinguishing information about the sample and form the basis of quantitative data analysis. The descriptive statistics provides an overview of the demographic presentation of the respondents regarding - gender, age, geographic location, educational level, employment status, voting registration status and most commonly used medium/method used to access information that is likely to influence voting behaviour including the mean; the standard deviation; frequency values and their respective percentages, with particular reference to the interval scale. Descriptive statistics make it easy to summarise the features of a large data set by means of numbers (Wilson, 2012). As observed by Babbie (2010), the use of frequency distribution illustrates the existence of different values in a sample. For this study, the profile of the voter-consumers who participated in the research was presented in a frequency distribution.

7.5 Demographic Profile of Respondents

In terms of the demographic profile of the respondents, the following factors are considered: gender, age, geographic location, educational level, employment status.

7.5.1 Age Category

Table 7.1 presents the age groups among the sample of respondents and a discussion of the same is provided.

Table 7.1: Age range of respondents

Age group	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
18years -24years	72	23.8	23.8
25years -34years	84	27.8	51.7
35years -44years	76	25.2	76.8
45years-54years	53	17.5	94.4
55years & above	17	5.6	100
Total	302	100	

As shown on table 7.1 approximately 51.6% of the participants were below the age of thirty four years, 25% of the participants were in the range thirty four to forty four years and almost six percent were above fifty five years. The analysis indicates that the majority of the respondents were in the range 18 years to 44 years age group whose cumulative percentage is 77%.

7.5.2 Gender of respondents

In view of the fact that the aim of this study is to investigate the voting behaviour of the Zimbabwean electorate; the respondents were preselected based on their geographic location and their gender. According to the Zimbabwe constitution, a voter is expected to vote in the area in which he registers to vote and should be above the age of 18 years. Although all citizens above the age of 18 are expected to be registered voters, there is no way of enforcing compulsory registration of voters, hence some citizens are not registered voters.

Figure 7.2: Gender of respondents

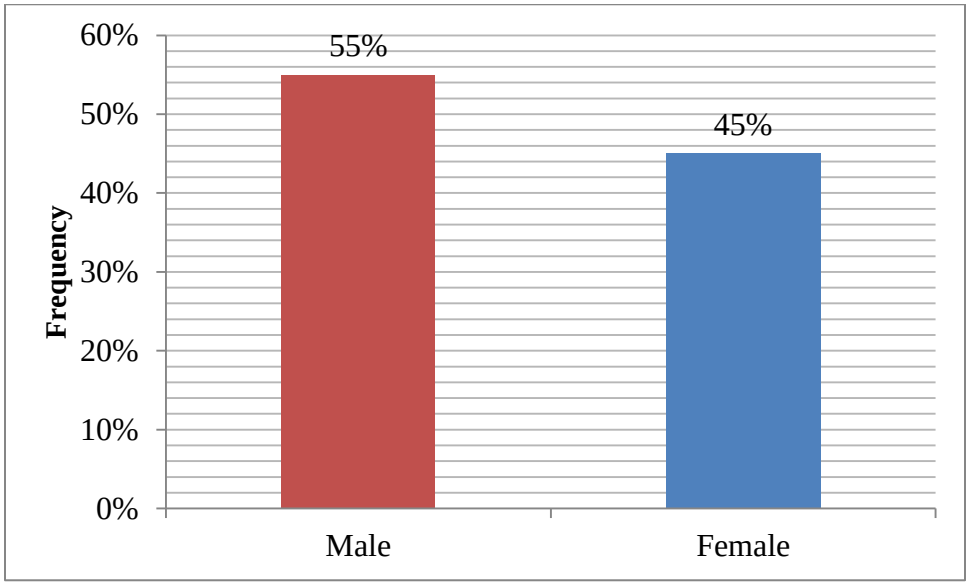
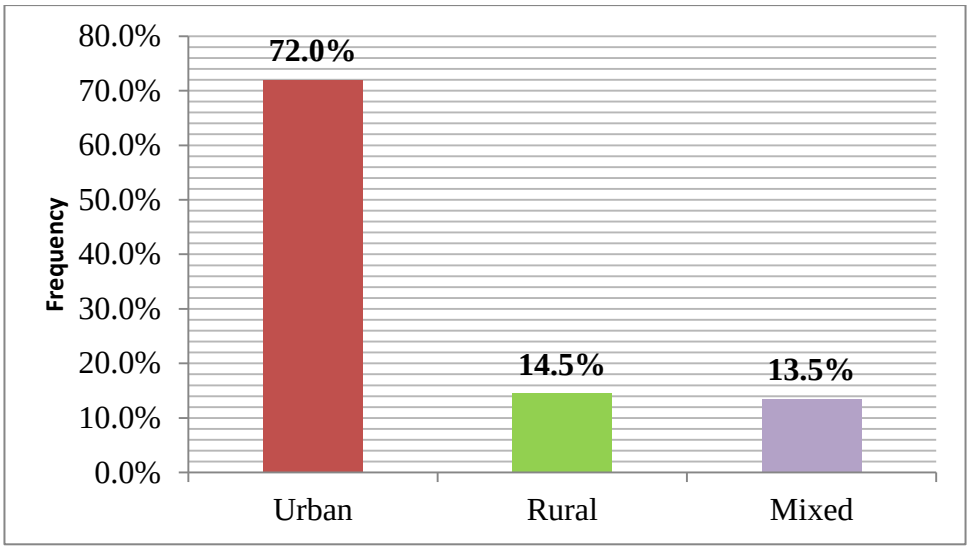


Figure 7.2 shows the frequency distribution of respondents according to gender. The gender of the respondents in the survey revealed that 55% of the respondents were male while 45% were female. This 55% constituted 15.1% of male eligible voters in the age range 18- 24 age group, with the majority of 77% in the 25-54 age group and only 7.2% in the 55+ age group. Although voting statistics in Zimbabwe indicate that females outnumber male counterparts in political participation, the survey shows otherwise. During the survey, it was noted that female respondents were not eager to participate in the survey in which there was a mention of party leadership. This could be the reason why so many females were not comfortable to participate. This has serious implications for political marketers. The age group between 18 years to 54 years become the prime age to target if a political party is to realise competitive advantage.

7.5.3 Geographical Location

Figure 7.3 presents a comparative analysis of the residential areas in which the respondents reside.

Figure 7.3: Residential Locationof respondents

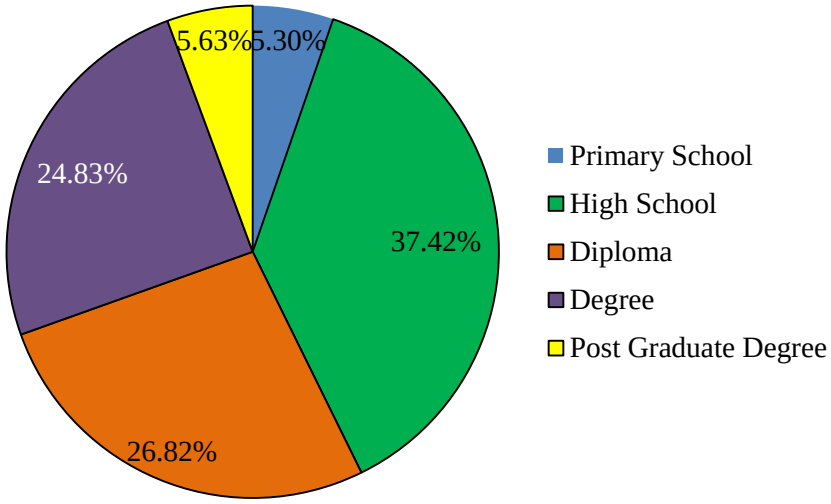


In Zimbabwe, residential locations are classified as rural, urban and mixed locations which constitute areas that are peri-urban. From the survey data, urban respondents constituted 72.9% of the respondents, rural 14.6% and from the mixed area 13.6%. The majority of the participants was urban male (77%) while rural male constituted 10.85% and mixed 12.05%. Of the female participants, 64.7% were from urban areas, 15, 4% from rural areas and 15.5% from peri-urban which is classified as the mixed residents. These differences can be attributed to fear in participating where political parties and political leadership is rated. However, there was no mention of the particular parties, though rural voter-customers were sceptical. It must be noted that the level of participation in rural areas might have presented a bias in the sample population.

7.5.4 Educational level

The education profile of respondents is shown in figure 7.4 and a discussion is presented.

Figure 7.4: Educational level of respondents



On the educational level of the respondents, analysis has shown that fifty seven percent of the respondents have either a diploma, degree or post-graduate degree as their highest qualification while forty three percent ended at either high school or primary school. The analysis revealed that the majority of the respondents had gone through high school which shows the level of literacy of the majority of the respondents. Figure 7.4 shows the cumulative percentage of the respondents in terms of their highest qualification. The analysis shows that only 5.3% of the respondents attained grade seven, 37.4% high school, 26.8% diploma level; 24.8% attained degree level and 5.6% attained post-graduate degrees, respectively. The analysis indicates that the educational level of the majority respondents is diploma level and high school with a cumulative percentage of 64, 2%. From diploma level to degree level constituted almost half of the participants. Those who did not attain a qualification beyond primary school were only five percent of the respondents and with post-graduate qualification 5.6% respectively. It then explains that the majority of respondents in most locations in Zimbabwe have high school qualifications as their highest qualification as summarised in Figure 7.4.

7.5.5 Employment Status

The results of the respondents' occupation profile are presented in figure 7.5 followed by a discussion.

Figure 7.5: Employment Status

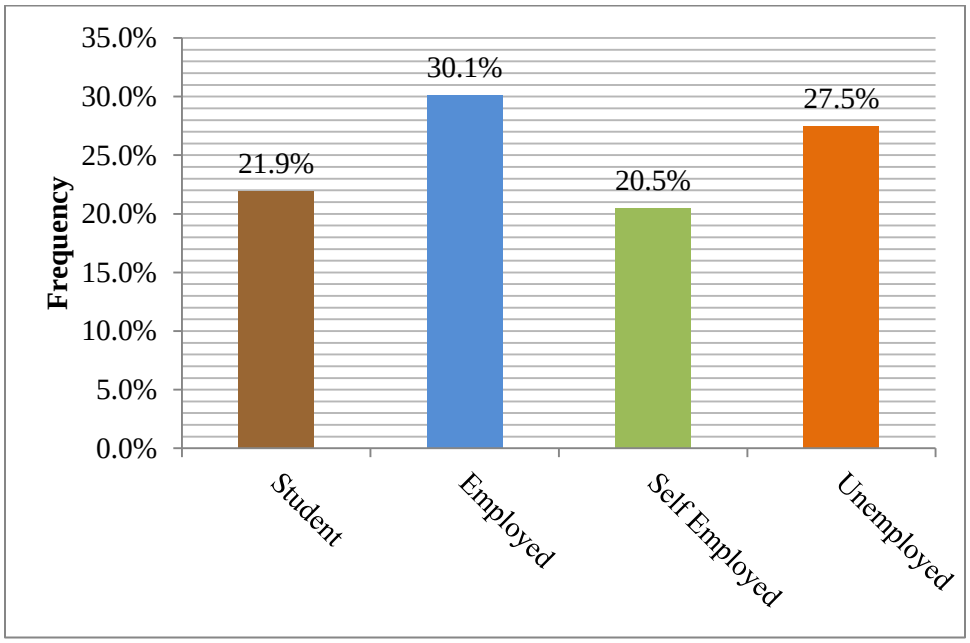


Figure 7.5 shows the frequency of respondents classified as students, employed, self-employed and unemployed in percentages. Of the 302 respondents, 66 indicated that they were students 153 are employed and finally 83 were unemployed. Approximately 21.9% of the respondents were students, 30% employed, 20.5% claimed to be self-employed and 27.5% of the respondents were unemployed. The analysis shows that cumulatively 50.6% of the respondents are employed either self or in organisations and 49% of the respondents were either students or unemployed.

7.5.6 Voter Registration Status of eligible voters

Figure 7.6: Voter Registration Status

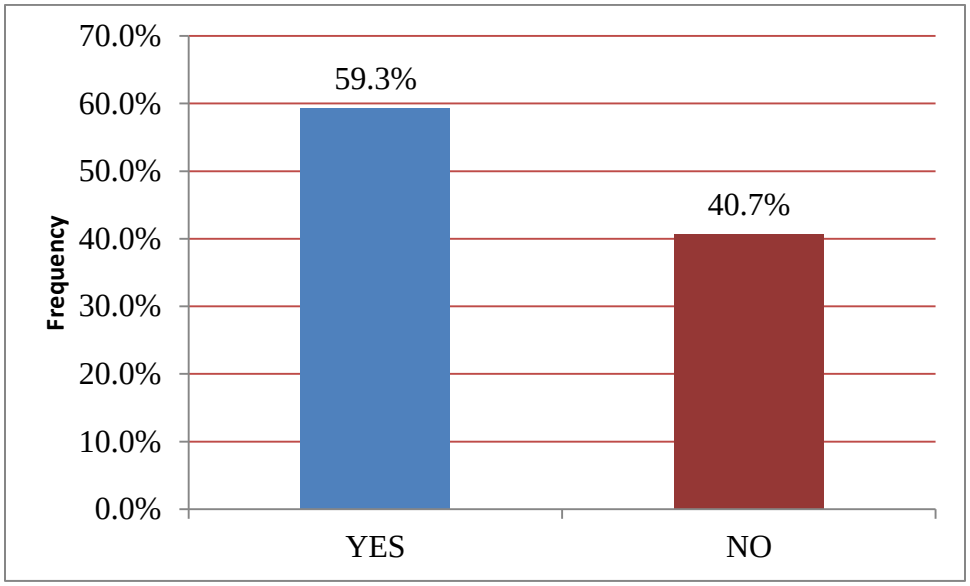
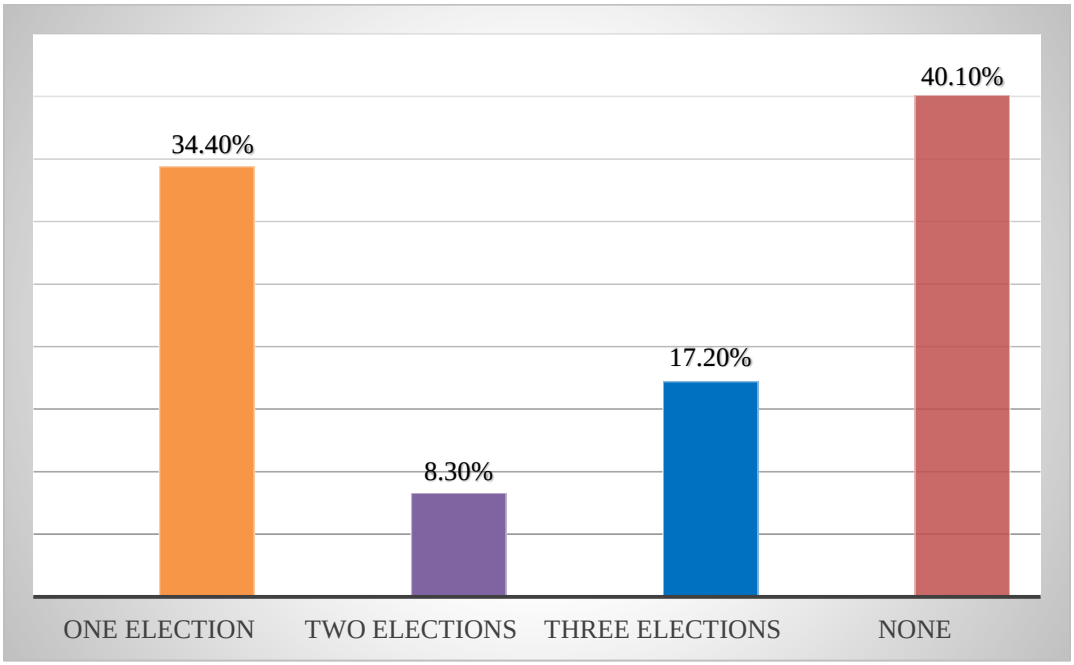


Figure 7.6 above illustrates the number of registered voters amongst the respondents. Out of 302 respondents, 179 indicated that they are registered voters and 123 respondents indicated that they did not register to vote. The analysis as reflected on figure 7.6 indicates that the majority of the participants, which is 59.3 % percent, are able to vote whereas 40.7 % are not able to vote, since registration is a mandatory requirement for one to vote in Zimbabwean Presidential elections.

Figure 7.7: How many times did you vote since 2002?



Based on information on Figure 7.7, approximately 34% of the participants indicated that they voted only in one election, 8% in two elections, 17% participated in three elections and finally 40% indicated that they never voted in any Presidential election in Zimbabwe. Based on the data presented on figure 7.7, only 60% of the respondents indicated participation and 40% indicated abstaining from election. It should be noted that although the 40% of the respondents are eligible voters, they decided not to participate in all three presidential elections.

7.5.7 Do you have access to the Internet or World Wide Web?

Figure 7.8: Access to internet

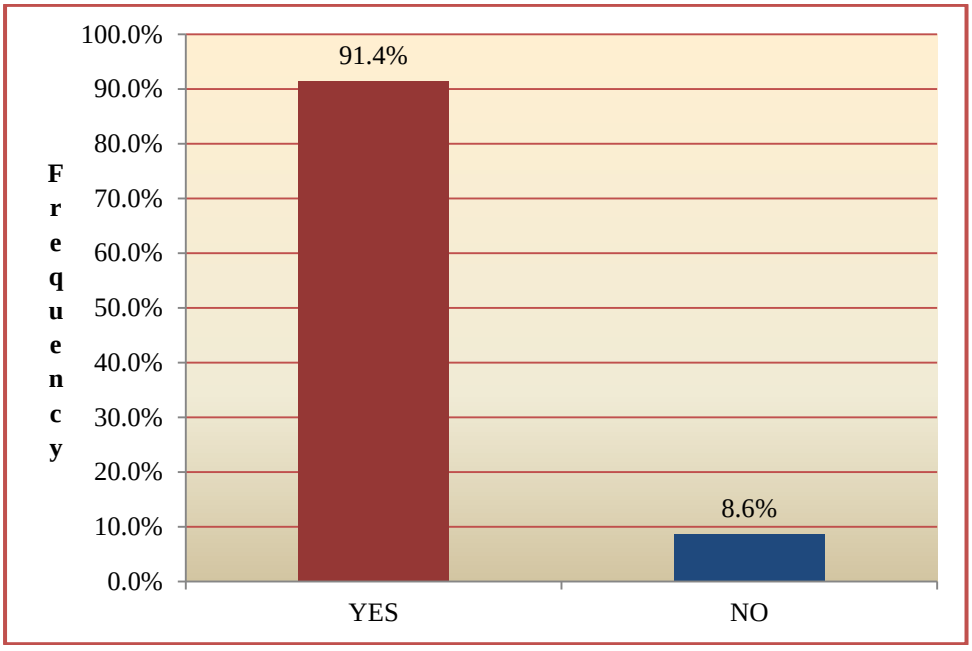


Figure 7.8 illustrates the number of respondents who have Internet access. 276 respondents, representing 91.4% of the respondents, indicated that they have access to the Internet and can access online media while 26 respondents, which is 8.6% of the participants, indicated that they have no access to digital media. Table 7.2 shows the distribution of different age groups and the level of access to the internet.

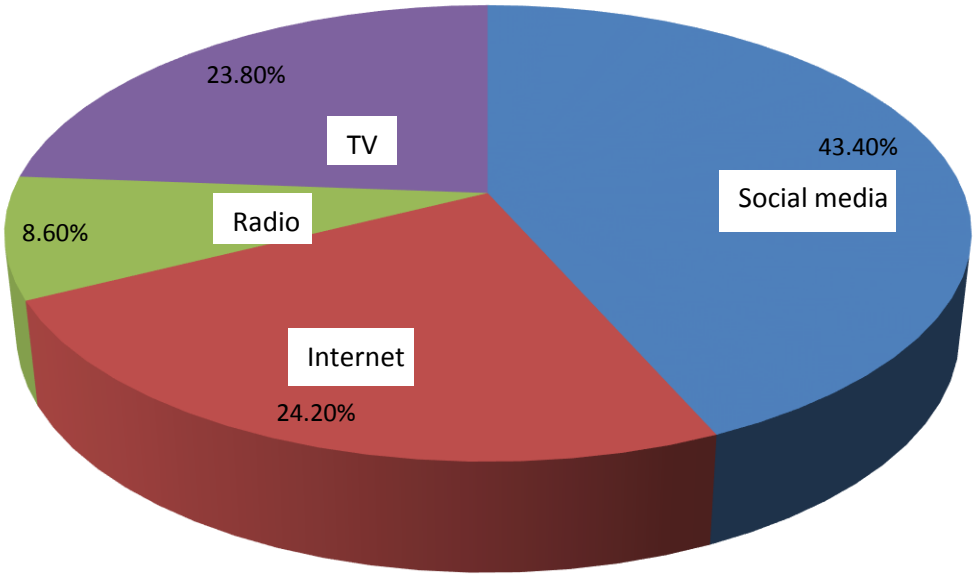
Table 7.2: Access to Internet per age range

Age	Access to Internet		Total (%)
	Yes (%)	No (%)	
18 years - 24 years	20.5	3.3	23.8
25 years - 35 years	25.5	2.3	27.8
35 years - 44 years	23.2	1.9	25.2
45 years - 54 years	17.2	0.33	17.6
55 years & Above	5	0.66	5.6

It is interesting to note that the age group 18 to 54 which is a combination of generation Y and generation X dominates in terms of access to the Internet. Those above 55 years (who are mostly baby boomers) were the least on access to the Internet. According to generational cohort theory, significant historical events and social changes in society affect the values, attitudes, beliefs and predispositions of individuals (Twenge, 2010; Campbell, 2008; Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal & Brown, 2007). However, research has found that although baby boomers are comfortable with interactive technology (Zickuhr, 2011), they do not certainly turn to technology as their most preferred mode of communication or information search (Forkner-Dunn, 2003), though generally they do not like change (Raths, 1999). However, these were not represented significantly in the survey as shown by their participation level (5.6%). The study also indicates that 38.4% of those who have access to the Internet have never voted.

Figure 7.10 illustrates the medium mostly used by participants to access information and current affairs.

Figure 7.9: Sources of Information



The majority of the participants indicated that social media is used most as a source of information and news on current affairs. Out of the 302 respondents, 43% get most of their information through social media, 24% used other modes on the Internet, while 9% use radio as their medium, and 24% of the respondents use the television as their source of information and current affairs. General analysis shows that the majority, 68% of the participants, are familiar with online media in the form of social media, encompassing Twitter, YouTube and Facebook and the Internet in general.

7.5.8 Demographic Profile summary

Table 7.3 below presents a summary of the profile of participants.

Table 7.3: Sample demographic Characteristics

Educational level			**Age**		
	Frequency	%		Frequency	%
Primary School	16	5.3	≦ 18-24years	72	23.8
High school	113	37.4	25 -34years	84	27.8
Diploma	81	26.8	35 -44years	76	25.2
Degree	75	24.8	45-54years	53	17.5
Post Graduate Degree	17	5.6	55years≦	17	5.6
Total	302	100	Total	302	100
Geographic location			**Gender**		
	Frequency	%		Frequency	%
Urban	217	71.9	Male	166	55
Rural	44	14.6	Female	136	45
Mixed	41	13.6	Total	302	100
Total	302	100			
Employment status			**Media frequently used**		
	Frequency	%		Frequency	%
Student	66	21.9	Social media	131	43.4
Employed	91	30.1	Internet	73	24.2
Self Employed	62	20.5	Radio	26	8.6
Unemployed	83	27.5	TV	72	23.8
Total	302	100	Total	302	100

The profile indicates that more than half of the participants were below the age of thirty five years (35) while two fifths were below the age of fifty four (54) and the minority was above fifty five (50) years age group. Fifty seven percent (57%) of the participants had an educational level above diploma level; forty three percent (43%) had an educational level below diploma level. The analysis further indicates that the majority of the participants live in urban areas with a frequency of 72%, while the remaining 28% live in either rural areas or in peri-urban areas, classified in the study as mixed areas. In terms of gender, the majority of participants, fifty five percent (55%), were male while forty five percent (45%) were female. The analysis indicated that male and female participants occupied almost equal proportions of the research sample although the former had slightly higher share. Fifty two percent (52%) of the participants were either students or employed while forty eight percent (48%) of the participants were either self-employed or unemployed. On

the type of media frequently used, the analysis indicated that the majority, representing 67.6% of the respondents, use online media as their source of current news and information while 32.4% indicated radio and television as their main source of current affairs and information. On voter registration, fifty nine percent (59%) of the participants were registered voters while forty one percent (41%) were not registered to vote, despite being above eighteen years. According to the Zimbabwean constitution an individual is eligible to vote when he or she attains eighteen years (18) of age, however, the voter-customer is required to register to vote or else he or she cannot exercise the right to vote. Presidential election were introduced in 2002, hence frequency of participating in election was measured from 2002 (ZEC, 2013).

On number of times each participant voted if they voted at all, 34.4% voted in only one election, 8.37% voted in two elections, 17.2% voted in three elections and finally 40.1% have never voted in any of the presidential election from 2002 to 2013 elections. Of the 35 to 44 years age group 43.9% voted only once, 10.9% participated in two elections, 24.7% voted in all three presidential elections and 20.5% never voted in any of the presidential elections. In the 25 to 34 years category, 40.8% voted in one election, 6.1% in two elections, 3.7% in three elections and 49.7% have not participated in any election. In the 45 to 54 age group, 33.9% voted in one election, 20.8% voted in two elections, 37.8% voted in all the three elections since 2002 and finally 7.5% abstained from voting in all three presidential elections. In terms of access to online media, ninety two percent (92%) of the participants indicated that they have access to online media while using either the Internet or through social media, while nine percent (8%) of the respondents indicated that they have no access to online media.

7.6 Descriptive statistics of study variables: Measurement Instrument

Descriptive data is obtained to express characteristics of the observed data and summarised as statistics. This involves the measure of dispersion which is applied to describe the variability in a sample or population and to provide an overall description of a set of data, providing an idea of how well the mean, median, range, standard deviation represents the data (Hair et al, 2009). The current study has a sample of 302 observations. Dispersion within the current dataset is described based on the frequency, mean, range, standard deviation of each measurement item as shown on Table 7.4. These measures of dispersion are then used to analyse the reliability of the constructs under study.

Table 7.4: Measures of dispersion

Measurement Items		**Descriptive Statistics**			
		Mean	**Overall Mean**	**Std Deviation**	**Overall SD**
Digital Media Exposure- Website (DMEX web)	DMEXweb1	3.80		2.246	
	DMEXweb2	3.01		1.977	
	DMEXweb3	2.84		1.883	
	DMEXweb4	2.83		1.925	
	DMEXweb5	2.65		1.740	
	DMEXweb6	2.64		1.763	
	DMEXweb7	2.69		1.838	
			2.922		**1.910**
Digital Media Exposure- Social Network (DMESN)	DMEX-SN1	3.31		2.143	
	DMEX-SN2	3.11		1.973	
	DMEX-SN3	3.68		2.059	
	DMEX-SN4	2.80		1.753	
	DMEX-SN5	2.85		1.737	
	DMEX-SN6	2.80		1.838	
	DMEX-SN8	3.71		2.161	
	DMEX-SN9	4.40		2.163	
	DMEX-SN10	3.30		2.116	
	DMEX-SN11	2.31		1.470	
	DMEX-SN12	4.57		2.123	
	DMEX-SN13	4.83		2.127	
	DMEX-SN14	4.26		2.212	
	DMEX-SN16	2.41		1.650	
			3.545		**1.981**
Digital Media Exposure – On-line News (DMEOLN)	DMEX-OLN1	4.98		2.081	
	DMEX-OLN2	4.59		2.068	
	DMEX-ONL3	4.00		2.157	
	DMEX-OLN4	4.25		2.209	
	DMEX-OLN5	4.04		2.113	
	DMEX-OLN6	3.50		1.942	
	DMEX-OLN7	3.31		1.995	
	DMEX-OLN8	3.47		2.021	
			4.017		**2.073**
Perceived image of the Presidential Candidate	PPC Per1	5.26		1.659	
	PPCPer2	2.74		1.609	

(PPC-perception)					
			4.0		**1.634**
Perceived image of the Presidential Candidate – personal characteristics (PPC-pc)	PPCpc1	5.17		1.664	
	PPCpc2	5.27		1.569	
	PPCpc3	5.24		1.524	
	PPCpc4	2.79		1.580	
	PPCpc5	5.01		1.574	
	PPCpc6	2.77		1.510	
	PPCpc7	5.04		1.572	
			4.470		**1.570**
Perceived image of the Presidential Candidate – personal traits (PPC-pt.)	PPCpt1	5.15		1.611	
	PPCpt2	5.37		1.479	
	PPCpt3	5.05		1.717	
	PPCpt4	5.39		1.405	
	PPCpt5	5.48		1.420	
	PPCpt6	5.01		1.623	
	PPCpt7	5.12		1.481	
			5.224		**1.533**
Attitude Towards Voting (ATV)	ATV1	4.95		1.945	
	ATV2	5.25		1.850	
	ATV3	3.39		2.088	
	ATV4	2.84		2.045	
	ATV5	5.10		1.905	
	ATV6	5.24		1.756	
	ATV7	4.36		2.348	
	ATV8	5.56		1.730	
	ATV9	4.20		2.080	
			4.543		**1.971**
Perceived Image of the Political Party (PP)	PI 1	2.53		1.638	
	PI 2	2.72		1.721	
	PI 3	4.96		1.712	
	PI 4	5.15		1.672	
	PI 5	2.53		1.520	
	PI 6	2.93		1.591	
	PI 7	2.62		1.632	
	PI 8	4.94		1.720	
	PI 9	3.39		1.823	
	PI 10	3.94		2.051	

			3.571		**1.708**
Voting Intention (VI)	VI 1	5.58	**4.689**	1.742	**1.827**
	VI 2	5.61		1.692	
	VI 3	5.62		1.617	
	VI 4	2.62		1.899	
	VI 5	5.39		1.750	
	VI 6	5.61		1.618	
	VI 7	5.63		1.667	
	VI 8	2.95		2.005	
	VI 9	4.14		2.164	
	VI 10	3.74		2.117	
			4.689		**1.827**

Note: DMEXweb= Digital Media Exposure-Website; DMEXSN= Digital Media Exposure (Social Network); DMEXOLN=Digital Media Exposure (On-line News); PPC-perception =Perceived image of the Presidential Candidate (perception); PPC-pc=Perceived image of the Presidential Candidate (personal characteristics); PPC-pt= Perceived image of the Presidential Candidate (personal traits); ATV=Attitude towards Voting; PI= Perceived Image of the Political Party; VI=Voting Intention; SD= Standard deviation

As posited by Hair et al. (2007), the relationship between the mean and the standard deviation is that a small estimated standard deviation (SD) denotes that respondents' responses were consistent and that the response distributions lay close to the mean. Conversely, a large standard deviation indicates that the responses are varying, making the response distribution values fall away from the mean of the distribution (Slove, 2001). The following is a descriptive analysis of each construct on the research conceptual model.

7.6.1 Digital Media Exposure - Website (DMEX web)

The SD of items on of the construct DMEX (website) is 1.910 which indicates that the data points are not far from the mean (2.922) indicating that the data points are clustered around the mean. Data items on this construct have a mean of 2.922 and a median of 2.69. There is no evidence of outliers on the data set for this construct. However, the median (2.69) and the mean (2.922) display a different statistic, hence the data are asymmetric. A range of 1.16 indicates the dispersion of the data. The sample data dispersion is small as reflected by the range (1.16).

Given that the mean (2.922) is greater than the median (2.69), the data is positive. Items used to measure DMEX web are not far from the mean 2.922 with a SD of 1.910 indicating that the items were clustered around the mean. In the current study, SD of 1.910 is used to measure the media

exposure using websites. Media exposure is an important factor in determining how political organisations efficiently use the media to influence voting behaviour and it determines the variation in electoral returns within the participating political players and also gives the political parties a mathematical basis for political marketing 'investment' decisions. It can be inferred using the SD of 1.910, which is significantly low which means that the majority of respondents disagree with the statements asked. When evaluating electoral investment, politicians should estimate both the expected returns in terms of expected votes and the uncertainty of the future returns (lost votes and abstaining voters). Standard deviation provides a quantified estimate of the uncertainty of future electoral returns.

However, there is a possibility of electoral gain and competitive advantage for political organisations that utilise digital media, particularly websites. Based on the descriptive data in Table 7.4, DMEX-SN (mean=3.545, SD=1.981) becomes the second important source of media exposure that voters consider to be a source of political information. This finding indicates that most people prefer on–line news as a source of information than through social media, specifically 'Twitter', 'Facebook' and 'YouTube' during campaign periods.

7.6.2 Digital Media Exposure - Social Network (DMESN)

The overall SD of measurement items DMEX (Social media) is 1.981 with a mean score 3.545 median 3.42 and range 2.55. Therefore approximately 95% of the scores fall in the range shown below:

3.545-(2*1.981) to 3.545+ (2*1.981) which is -3.958 to 7.507

Given that the mean (3.545) is greater than the median (3.42), therefore the data is positive and moderately skewed to the right. Items used to measure DMEX SN are not far from the mean 3.545 with a SD 1.981 indicating that the items were clustered around the mean and indicate how far the individual responses to questions vary from the mean. Because the standard deviation is below 2 this indicates that the mean is representative of the average perception of the respondents. The majority of respondents were either neutral or disagreed with the statements on digital media exposure (social network) asked. Therefore, the measurements can be considered as inconsistent with the prediction. It was predicted in the research that social media has contributing factors towards digital media exposure which was expected to influence voting intentions. However, the

measurement did not fall within the range of values that could reasonably be expected to occur if the prediction were correct. Based on the descriptive data in Table 7.9, DMEX-SN (mean=3.545, SD=1.981) the majority of the respondents were either indifferent or disagreed with the statements provided.

7.6.3 Digital Media Exposure – On-line News (DMEOLN)

Based on the information alluded to earlier in the chapter, DMEX- OLN (mean= 4.017, SD=2,073), this information indicates that the data points are dispersed from the mean due to the magnitude of the SD. The SD is above two (2), an indication of the presence of outliers. This implies that the mean value is not representative of the average view or perceptions of the respondents. Half of the respondents are not almost neutral while the other half is very neutral in their response.

7.6.4 Perceived image of the Presidential Candidate (PPC)

Data on measurement items, perceived image of the presidential candidate (PPC) - perception indicate that the mean and the median are similar, hence data are symmetric. In these results, the mean is 4.0 and the median score is 4.0 while the SD 1.634. The mean and the median are the same, hence data are symmetric. Using the SD to determine how spread out the data is from the mean, the following statistic (Table 7.5) is utilised:

Table 7.5: PPC (perception) data dispersion

	PPC-*perception*	**PPC- *personal characteristics***	**PPC *personal traits***
Respondents	302		
Mean	4.0	4.47	5.224
SD	1.634	1.57	1.533
Median	4.0	5.04	5.15

PPC–Perception SD (1.634) indicates that data values are clustered around the mean. In these results, the degree of variation in candidate rating for the presidential candidate is 4.0 and the median is 4.0. The data shows normal distributed data exhibiting relatively little skewness which

explains the uniformity of the mean and median (4.0).Variable PPC personal characteristics indicates mean score (4.47) with a lower value than the median (5.05). However the SD (1.570) indicates that the data points are clustered around the mean. The overall SD of measurement items PPC –personal traits is 1.533 with a mean score 5.224 median 5.15 and range 2.50. Therefore, approximately 95% of the scores fall in the range 2.164 to 8.29. Given that the mean (5.224) is greater than the median (5.15), therefore the data is positive. Items used to measure PPC (personal traits) are not far from the mean 5.224 with a SD 1.533 indicating that the items were clustered around the mean and the distribution of the individual responses to questions vary from the mean. Therefore, the measurements can be considered as consistent with the prediction. All items of the construct PPC registered mean below 2 showing that the majority of the respondents were neutral and indifferent. Half of the respondents are almost neutral while the other half somewhat agrees with the statement asked.

7.6.5 Attitude towards Voting (ATV)

Data on measurement items, ATV indicate a mean value of 4.543 and SD 1.971. A standard deviation 1.971 indicates that data values are clustered around the mean. This means that the majority of the respondents are neutral. They do not disagree or agree with statements asked.

7.6.6 Perceived Image of the Political Party (PI)

As shown in table (7.5) above, the construct perceived image of the political party (PI) has a mean value of 3.571 and a standard deviation of 1.708. This means that the majority of the respondents disagreed with the statements asked while some were indifferent, not agreeing or disagreeing with the statements asked.

7.6.7 Voting Intention (VI)

The construct voting intention has a mean value of 4.689 and a standard deviation of 1.827, an indication that the data points are clustered around the mean. This means that the majority of the respondents are neutral. They are indifferent. They do not agree or disagree with the statement asked.

7.7 A comparison of the impact of the individual factors on voting intention

In order to establish which factor among the four (4) variables influences voting intention the most, the impact of each of the factors was compared by ranking the variables in terms of their mean scores. This is shown in Table 7.6.

Table 7.6: Summary of mean scores

Variable	*No. of item in scale*	*No of subscale*	*Reliability of scale α*	*Mean*	*Position in Rank order*
DMEX	31	3	0.929	3.116	3
PPC	6	3	0.943	5.196	1
ATV	9	1	0.850	5.05	2
PI	10	1	0.848	2.6	4

An analysis of the mean scores (Table 7.6) reveals that perceived image of the presidential candidate (X= 5.196) exerted the greatest impact on voting intention, followed by attitude towards voting (x=5.05), then digital media exposure (0.312), while perceived image of the political party (2.6) was ranked fourth. The mean score values for both perceived image of the presidential candidate as well as attitude towards voting indicates an inclination towards the "slightly agree" and "agree" level on the Likert scale used in the study. The mean score value for digital media exposure indicates an average scoring between the "slightly disagree" and "neutral" levels on the Likert scale. These findings confirm the existence of a positive relationship between voting intention and each of the four factors, namely digital media exposure, perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting and perceived image of the political party.

To further refine the results, an assessment of the mean scores of all individual dimensions that fall under the four factors, namely digital media exposure, perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting and perceived image of the political party was conducted using the ranking technique. This would confirm whether the findings obtained through the analysis of the summary of the mean scores for the three factors are valid. This inter-factor analysis of the mean scores for all the sub-scales for the four factors is indicated in Table 7.7.

Table 7.7: Inter-factor mean score ranking

Variable	No of items	Mean	Position
DMEX(web)	7	2.922	8
DMEX(social network)	16	3.545	7
DMEX(online news)	8	4.017	4
PPC (perception)	2	4.0	5
PPC(personal characteristics)	7	4.470	3
PPC(personal traits)	7	5.224	1
ATV	9	4.543	2
PI	10	3.571	6

A notable result on observing the inter-factor mean score ranking matrix (Table 7.7) is the dominating influence of PPC on voting intention. Notably, the highest factors are PPCpt (x=5.224), ATV (x=4.543) and PPCpc (x=4.470). DMEX oln (x=4.017) is the fourth highest ranking factor. PPC (perception) and PI ranked fifth and sixth respectively, and DMEX (social network) and DMEX (web) ranked seventh and eight (2.922), inclining towards "disagree" and "slightly disagree" on the Likert scale. These findings therefore underline the impression that PPC is the most influential factor on voting intention.

The distribution on the multi-factor mean score ranking confirms the perspective that among the four factors considered in the current study, DMEX has the least impact on voting intention. The two DMEX factors DMEX web (2.922) and DMEX SN (3.545) occupied the trailing positions seventh and eighth. These results are supported by empirical literature. Numerous researchers attest that perception and attitudes are the most critical antecedents to consumer behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Rule et al., 2010).

7.8 Research Study Measure Reliability and Validity

The measurement model is instrumental in measuring reliability, validity and model of fit.

7.8.1 Reliability Tests

Subsequent to demographic analysis of the collected data, it is essential to appraise the reliability and validity of the measuring scales to ensure valid data analyses. This process is mainly significant for the current study because a few of the scales have been adapted to the particular political marketing context. Wilks (1961) outlines three requirements of measurement. Firstly, the process of measurement must be operationally defined; secondly, measurement ought to be valid or accurate (validity) and thirdly, the measurement process outcome should be replicable (reliability). Kent (2007) and DeVellis (2016) assert that the level to which the application of a scale generates consistent results when repeated measures are taken as an indicator of reliability. Therefore, homogeneity of individual items measuring the same construct is a major focus of internal consistency (Peter, 1979). Urbach and Ahlemann (2010) further contend that the level of similarity of results obtained by the use of independent, but comparable measures of the same constructs is an indicator of reliability. The consistency of the measuring instruments is monitored by ensuring that the parameters used maintain the same properties. This study uses Cronbach's alpha; Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to check the measurement reliability, as well as inter-item correlation as part of internal consistency reliability. Internal consistency is critical when measuring items that are correlated. Cronbach's coefficient alpha determines the mean reliability by dividing a set of items into two equal parts. The level of Cronbach's coeffic ient alpha is related to the number of items being tested, for this reason, Schitt (1996) argues that the interpretation of alpha is intricate because with time, responses can be multidimensional. The test and retest are used to test and estimate reliability. The value ranging from zero to 1 (<0) indicates reliability levels, the closer the value is to 1 (one), the higher the reliability of the the scale. A low alpha is associated with little commonality among the items. The coefficient alpha for different variables in the study was computed using the reliability procedure of the SPSS (24) and AMOS 24. Similarly, higher inter-item correlations revealed statistical consistency among the measured items. The following section presents internal reliability assessment for the five constructs that constitute this research, Digital media exposure, perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting, perceived image of the political party

and voting intentions.

7.8.2 Internal consistency of reliability analysis: DMEX

The results of scale reliability test for the construct digital media exposure is shown in table 7.8. Items DMEX 1, 7, 10, 12, 14 to 26, and item 28 were deleted due to the fact that the factor loadings were below 0.5 which is the recommended threshold (Pallant, 2013). As shown in table 7.8, item to total values ranged from 0.601 to 0.766 and therefore, were above the threshold of 0.3 (often ≥0.3) with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.929 confirming reliability of the measurement scales as indicated by Hair et al. (2009) and Kipkebut (2010) who recommend that values in the range 0.6 and 0.7 are considered reliable. It is evident that the Cronbach's alpha value for the construct DMEX which is 0.929 is above the recommended threshold of 0.7 confirming reliability of the measurements of items used in the study. According to literature, composite reliabilty values that are acceptable are normally between zero and one (<-1) (Ramayah et al., 2011). An index that is greater than 0.7 represents sufficient internal consistency of the construct (Nunnaly, 1978; Hair et al., 2009). Composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct were computed using the formula proposed by Fornell and Lacker (1981) shown below and the full calculation in Appendix 1:

Formulae:

(CR): $CR\eta = (\Sigma\lambda yi)^2/[(\Sigma\lambda yi)^2+(\Sigma\varepsilon i)]$

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

Where

$V\eta=\Sigma\lambda yi^2/ (\Sigma\lambda yi^2+\Sigma\varepsilon i)$; where

$\Sigma\lambda yi^2$ = sum of the squared factor loadings; $\Sigma\varepsilon i$ = sum of error variances (Chinomona, 2013)

The Composite Reliability, Average variance extracted (AVE) and the highest shared variance results for all constructs is shown in Table 7.8. As seen in Table 7.8, the extrapolated shared correlation values were converted to highest shared variance by squaring the shared correlation and the highest shared values were then compared with AVE to see which one was the greatest. However, analysis statistics specifically for DMEX are shown in Table 7.8. The composite reliability is above the recommended value of 0.7 suggested by Holland (1999), thus indicating

acceptable internal consistency and reliability of the respective measures. Loadings of individual items on the construct DMEX are shown in Table 7.8. The individual item loading are all above the recommended 0.5, ranging from 0.509 to 0.855 (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) indicating acceptable individual item reliabilities as more than 50 percent of each item variance is shared with its respective construct. In this study, the average variance extracted estimate reflected the overall amount of variance in the indicators which are accounted for by the latent construct. Higher values for the variance extracted approximate (>0.40) reveal that the indicators represented the latent construct well. The average variance extracted for the construct DMEX was 0.53, thus within the marginal to acceptable threshold, according to literature, and is consistent with that of Fraering and Minor (2006) and Hair et al. (2011).

Table 7.8: Accuracy statistics analysis: DMEX

Research construct		**Descriptive Statistics**		**Cronbach's Test**		**Factor loading**	**C.R**	**AVE**	**Highest Shared Variance**
		mean	**SD**	**Item-Total**	**α Value**				
DMEX	DMEX2	3.116	1.935	0.728	.929	.739	0.93	0.53	0.030
	DMEX3			0.639		.742			
	DMEX4			0.683		.771			
	DMEX5			0.670		.698			
	DMEX6			0.742		.833			
	DMEX8			0.711		.779			
	DMEX9			0.766		.855			
	DMEX11			0.716		.750			
	DMEX13			0.601		.619			
	DMEX27			0.651		.581			
	DMEX29			0.616		.557			
	DMEX30			0.706		.645			
	DMEX31			0.626		.509			

7.8.3 Internal consistency of reliability analysis: PPC

The results of the scale reliability tests shown in table 7.9 indicate item–to-total values ranging from 0.659 to 0.841 and therefore were above the threshold of 0.3 as recommended by Dunn, Seaker and Waller (1994). Items PPC2, PPC6, PPC8, PPC 11 were deleted since their factor loadings were below 0.5 (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

Table 7.9: Accuracy statistics analysis: PPC

Research construct		Descriptive Statistics		Cronbach's Test		Factor Loadings	C.R	AVE	Highest Shared Variance
		Item mean	Average SD	Item-Total	α Value				
PPC	PPC1	5.196	1.561	0.665	0.943	.711	0.94	0.58	0.446
	PPC3			0.810		.814			
	PPC4			0.841		.815			
	PPC5			0.752		.715			
	PPC7			0.687		.660			
	PPC9			0.659		.728			
	PPC10			0.700		.736			
	PPC12			0.766		.826			
	PPC13			0.756		.769			
	PPC14			0.699		.722			
	PPC15			0.809		.857			
	PPC16			0.727		.739			

The construct's Cronbach's alpha coefficient index 0.943 exceeded the recommmended threshold of 0.7 as recommended by Du Plessis (2010); Bagozzi and Yi (1988); Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), therefore these statistics confirm that the measures used in this study are reliable. A higher inter-item correlation (range 0.438 to 0.853) revealed statistical agreement among the measured items.

Following the analysis of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, internal consistency was also used to evaluate the composite reliability (CR) index of the construct. Using the formulae presented in the previous section, the composite reliability was calculated and tabulated in Table 7.9. The results in Table 7.9 indicate the CR index for PPC as 0.94, thereby exceeding the estimate criteria used in literature. The construct PPC had an Average Extracted Variance of 0.58 which is above the threshold recommended in literature and therefore provides evidence for acceptable level of research scale reliability (Fraering & Minor, 2006; Hair et al., 2009).

7.8.4 Internal consistency of reliability analysis: ATV

The results of scale reliability test for the construct ATV is shown in Table 7.10.

Table 7.10: Accuracy statistics analysis: ATV

Research construct		**Descriptive Statistics**		**Cronbach's Test**		**Factor loadings**	**C.R**	**AVE**	Highest Shared Variance
		Average mean	Average SD	Item-Total	α Value				
ATV	ATV1	5.05	1.877	.693	0.850	.824	0.83	0.50	0.528
	ATV2			.672		.660			
	ATV5			.641		.650			
	ATV6			.683		.707			
	ATV8			.648		.667			

As can be seen, item-to-total values ranged from 0.641 to 0.693, while the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability (CR) indexes were 0.85 and 0.83 respectively. These values exceeded the estimate criteria used in prior research. The average variance extracted (AVE) value was 0.5, therefore marginally accepted according to literature (Fraering & Minor, 2006). These results provided evidence for marginal to acceptable levels of research scale reliability.

7.8.5 Internal consistency of reliability analysis: PI

Loadings of individual items on the construct PI are shown in Table 7.11.

Table 7.11: Accuracy statistics analysis: PI

Research construct		Descriptive Statistics		Cronbach's Test		Factor Loading	C.R	AVE	Highest Shared Variance
		mean	SD	Item-Total	α Value				
PI	PI1	2.6	1.627	.736	0.848	.828	0.86	0.68	0.297
	PI2			.704		.821			
	PI5			.748		.825			
	PI7			.569		.583			

The individual loadings are all above the recommended 0.5 (Anderson & Gerbin, 1988) indicating acceptable individual item reliabilities as more than 50% of each item's variance is shared with the construct. The composite reliability for the construct PI was 0.86 which is above the recommended value of 0.7 suggested by Holland (1999), thus indicating acceptable internal consistency and reliability of the respective measures. The average variance extracted AVE was 0.68 exceeding the

recommended threshold of 0.4, hence providing evidence of acceptable levels of research scale reliability (Fraering & Minor, 2006). The inter-item correlation is above the threshold with a range 0.452 to 0.688 confirming reliability of the items measuring perceived image of the political party (PI).

7.8.6 Internal consistency of reliability analysis: Voting Intentions

The results of scale reliability tests for the construct Voting Intentions are shown in Table 7.12.

Table 7.12: Accuracy statistic analysis: VI

Research construct		Descriptive statistics		Cronbach's Test		Factor Loadings	C.R	AVE	Highest Shared Variance
		Average mean	Average SD	Item-Total	α Value				
VI	VI1	5.573	1.681	0.859	0.939	.912	0.94	0.77	0.528
	VI2			0.847		.924			
	VI3			0.853		.931			
	VI5			0.741		.867			
	VI6			0.783		.740			
	VI7			0.822		.816			

Total correlation for each item varied between 0.741 and 0.859 which means each item is internally consistent with all other items. Cronbach's coefficient alpha and composite reliability (C.R.) indexes were 0.939 and 0.94 respectively, therefore have good internal consistency. A higher level of Cronbach's coefficient alpha demonstrated a higher reliability of the scale. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients and composite reliability (C.R.) values exceeded the estimate criteria used by prior literature. The alpha value diminishes if any item is deleted from the construct which range between 0.922 and 0.937. It simply demonstrates the contribution of each item to the reliability of the construct. The average variance extracted (AVE) value was 0.77, thus providing evidence for acceptable levels of research scale reliability.

7.8.7 Summary accuracy statistics for the model

Table 7.13: Accuracy statistics analysis for the model

Research Construct		Descriptive Statistics		Cronbach's Test		Factor Loading	CR	AVE	Highest shared variance
		Mean value	SD	Item-Total	α Value				
DMEX	DMEX2	3.116	1.935	0.728	0.929	0.739	0.93	0.53	0.030
	DMEX3			0.639		0.742			
	DMEX4			0.683		0.771			
	DMEX5			0.670		0.698			
	DMEX6			0.742		0.833			
	DMEX8			0.711		0.779			
	DMEX9			0.766		0.855			
	DMEX11			0.716		0.750			
	DMEX13			0.601		0.619			
	DMEX27			0.651		0.581			
	DMEX29			0.616		0.557			
	DMEX30			0.706		0.645			
	DMEX31			0.626		0.509			
PPC	PPC1	5.196	1.561	0.665	0.943	0.711	0.94	0.58	0.446
	PPC3			0.810		0.814			
	PPC4			0.841		0.815			
	PPC5			0.752		0.715			
	PPC7			0.687		0.660			
	PPC9			0.659		0.728			
	PPC10			0.700		0.736			
	PPC12			0.766		0.826			
	PPC13			0.756		0.769			
	PPC14			0.699		0722			
	PPC15			0.809		0.857			
	PPC16			0.727		0.739			
ATV	ATV1	5.05	1.877	0.693	0.850	0.824	0.83	0.50	0.528
	ATV2			0.672		0.660			
	ATV5			0.641		0.650			
	ATV6			0.683		0.707			
	ATV8			0.648		0.667			
PI	PI1	2.6	1.627	0.736	0.848	0.828	0.86	0.68	0.297
	PI2			0.704		0.821			
	PI5			0.748		0.825			
	PI7			0.569		0.583			
VI	VI1	5.573	1.681	0.859	0.939	0.912	0.94	0.77	0.528
	VI2			0.847		0.924			
	VI3			0.853		0.931			
	VI5			0.741		0867			
	VI6			0.783		0.740			
	VI7			0.822		0.816			

Note: DMEX=Digital Media Exposure; PPC=Perceived image of the presidential candidate; ATV=Attitude towards voting; PI=perceived image of the political party; VI=Voting intentions.

C.R= Composite Reliablity

A.V.E= Average Variance Extracted

* Scores: *1= Srongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3=Somewhat Disagree; 4=Neutral; 5=Somewhat Agree; 6=Agree; 7=Strongly Agree*

***Significance level $p<0.01$

Measurement model fits: χ^2/df =1.280; GFI=0.886; CFI=0.981; IFI=0.919; TLI= 0.975; RMSEA=0.030

Table 7.13 shows the summary descriptive statistics used to analyse the reliability of the constructs under study. Hair et al. (2009) posit that the relationship between mean and standard deviation is that a small estimated standard deviation suggests that the participants' responses were consistent and that the response distributions are set close to the mean. Conversely, a large standard deviation indicates that the responses are varied, making the response distribution values fall further away from the mean distribution (Sclove, 2001). In order for the response distribution values of all variables to be considered consistent, they must fall below 1 for each construct as shown in Table 7.13. However, this study had some political connotations that could have affected the responses. Zimbabwe as a country is in the current period battling succession issues which are highly sensitive, hence response distributions for the variables depended on whether there was indication of presidential candidates' preference. Most of the respondents preferred to be neutral when responding to questions rating preferred candidates, hence large standard deviations indicating that the responses were very varied. Table 7.13 also presents key statistics of reliability analyses for the five constructs.

7.8.8 Cronbach's alpha coefficient test

Results summary of scale reliability are shown in Table 7.13. The corrected item-to-total correlation values shown in Table 7.13 indicate the degree at which each item correlates with the total score (Pallant, 2010). Individual items or questions ought to be correlated between each distinct item and the total score (Field, 2006). Values that are less than three (<3) show that the item is not measuring what the scale intends to measure (Pallan, 2010). In this study, individual items that were less than three were considered incorrect item scores and were therefore removed prior to the statistical analysis. The correlation for each item varies between 0.569 and 0.859 which means each item is internally consistent with all the other items and also demonstrates the reliability nature of the items that were used for the study. From the results, it is evident that all the variables indicate satisfactory levels of reliabilty. In fact, the lowest Cronbach's coefficient alpha was detected to be 0.848 (PI), while the remaining values are between 0.850 and 0.929 satisfying the universal recommended level of 0.70 for the research indicators, as recommended by Cronbach (1951) and Nunnally (1978), confirming that the measures used in the study are reliable. Appendix 2 presents the results of the Cronbach's coefficient alpha values. Each of the extracted constructs exhibit strong internal consistency, well above 0.70, as illustrated by the

Cronbach's alpha coefficients listed in Table 7.13.

7.8.9 Composite Reliability (CR)

It is evident that the composite reliability (CR) indexes were between 0.83 and 0.94. The composite reliabity was calculated and tabulated in Table 7.13. CR estimates were further confirmed by manual calculation. These values exceeded the estimate criteria used by prior literature.

7.8.10 Average Variance extracted (AVE)

Overall, all average variance extracted (AVE) values were above 0.4 and ranged between 0.53 and 0.77, thus registering acceptable levels of research scale reliability, according to the literature (Fraering & Minor, 2006). These results provided evidence for acceptable levels of research scale reliability. In summary, the construct reliabilities and the average variance extracted estimates suggest the scales are internally consistent.

7.9 Validity Tests

Validity of the instrument was tested using the correlation matrix; the average variance extracted (AVE) as well as the factor loadings. In measuring the correlation, Average variance extracted as the Shared value (SV), the convergent validity and the discriminant validity were used in estimating the measurement validity.

7.9.1 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed by examining individual item loadings for each corresponding research construct. All loadings were above the recommended value of 0.5 (Schwab, 2006). As indicated in Table 7.13, the factor loadings ranged between 0.509 and 0.931. Thus, all the items finally used had a loading of more than the recommended 0.5, indicating acceptable individual item convergent validity as more than 50% of each item's variance was shared with its respective construct. This evidence supports the convergent validity of all scale items. Furthermore, the Composite Reliability was above the recommended threshold of 0.6, and therefore further confirmed the existence of convergent validity.

7.9.2 Discriminant Validity

Correlation between constructs

One of the methods used to check the discriminant validity of the research constructs is the evaluation of whether the correlations among latent constructs were less than 1.0. As indicated in Table 7.14, the inter-correlation values for all paired latent variables are less than 1.0, therefore indicating the existence of discriminant validity. Respectively, the variables did not present any problems of multicollinearity, such as a high correlation value greater than 0.89 (Brown & Cudeck, 1993). All correlations were below 0.8 and were therefore in conformity with the recommended threshold, hence indicating discriminant validity (Fraering & Minor, 2006). However, since the correlation values of digital media exposure (DMEX); perceived image of the presidential candidate (PPC); attitude towards voting (ATV); perceived image of the political party (PI) had values less the recommended 0.7 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; O'Rourke & Hatcher, 2013; Chinomona, Lin, Wang & Cheng, 2010) (See Table 7.22), some further tests (AVE-SV test and $\Delta\chi^2$/CFA Test) were conducted to establish discriminant validity. The study also used AVE as an alternative method to check discriminant validity related to the correlation matrix (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Table 7.14: Inter-construct correlation matrix

Research Construct	**Construct correlation**				
	DMEX	**PPC**	**ATV**	**PI**	**VI**
Digital media exposure (DMEX)	1.000				
Perceived image of the presidential candidate (PPC)	-0.080	1.000			
Attitude towards voting (ATV)	0.089	0.668**	1.000		
Perceived image of the political party (PI)	0.176**	-0.545**	-0.422**	1.000	
Voting intention (VI)	0.099	0.622**	0.727**	-0.244**	1.000

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
Source: Calculated from research results

The inter-construct correlations ranged between 0.080 (showing signs of discriminant validity) and

0.727** (indicating a fair level of convergent validity). Based on the inter-construct correlation matrix, discriminant validity existed as a result of highly dissimilar constructs. The constructs that had correlations above 0.5 may show signs of convergent validity, that is Voting intentions (VI) and Attitude towards voting (ATV) (0.727**); VI and PPC (0.622 as well as ATV and PPC (0.668**).

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Shared Variance (SV)

Discriminant validity was also established by checking if the AVE was greater than the highest shared variance value (SV) (Nusair & Hua, 2010). It is ideal for the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is greater than 0.4 for the construct to be considered reliable (Fraering & Minor, 2006). Table 7.15 shows the Ave as well as the highest shared variance for all the constructs.

Table 7.15: Construct AVE and HSV

Construct	AVE	Highest shared variance
DMEX	0.53	0.030
PPC	0.58	0.446
ATV	0.50	0.528
PI	0.68	0.297
VI	0.77	0.528

As can be seen in Table 7.15, all the average variance extracted are above the highest shared values (SV) for all the research constructs, except attitude towards voting construct whose shared variance is slightly higher than its AVE (AVE=0.50; SV= 0.528). According to the formula of checking discriminant validity using highest shared variance and AVE, the AVE should be greater than the highest shared variance of a construct in question. As seen in table 7.23, the highest shared variance for DMEX is 0.03 and AVE 0.53. This confirms that there is discriminant validity in this construct since AVE is greater than the highest shared variance.

The highest shared variance for PPC is 0.446 with an AVE= 0.58, confirming discriminant validity in this construct. The highest shared variance for ATV is 0.528 and AVE= 0.50. Although the AVE for this construct is below the highest shared variance, it is above the recommended threshold of 0.4 therefore confirming the existence of discriminant validity in this construct. Also given that the correlation matrix is confirming that there is discriminant validity, there is every reason to

accept it on this construct. The AVE for PI is 0.68 which is greater than the highest shared variance of 0.297, confirming the existence of discriminant validity in the construct. AVE for VI is 0.77, which is greater than the highest shared variance of 0.528, therefore confirming discriminant validity.

Δ χ^2 CFA Test

The third method used to confirm the existence of discriminant validity is the Chi-square difference in all two-factor (i.e., any paired latent constructs) CFA tests (which restricted the factor inter-correlations to unity) (Anderson & Gerbing, 1998). Significant differences in the Chi-square values between constrained and unconstrained models show the differences between the constructs, thus a Chi-square difference of one degree of freedom confirms the existence of discriminate validity between the constructs in the theoretical model. All the related results are shown in Table 7.15.

7.10 Structural Equation Modelling

The current study employed structural equation modelling (SEM) for the purpose of analysing data. Structural Equation modelling is a multivariate statistical framework that is used for modelling complex relationships between directly and indirectly observed variables (Stein, Morris &Nock, 2012). SEM is regarded as a comprehensive technique and has become a favoured technique for researchers across disciplines (Byrne, 2012; Ngo & O'Cass, 2012). As observed by Marsh et al. (2012), the traditional multivariate study methods are not capable of evaluating or correcting measurement error while SEM is capable of correcting these errors prior to analysing data integrating endogenous and exogenous variables. SEM employs a two phase step for its analysis - the confirmatory factor analysis and the path modelling or the structural modelling (Yuan et al., 2010).

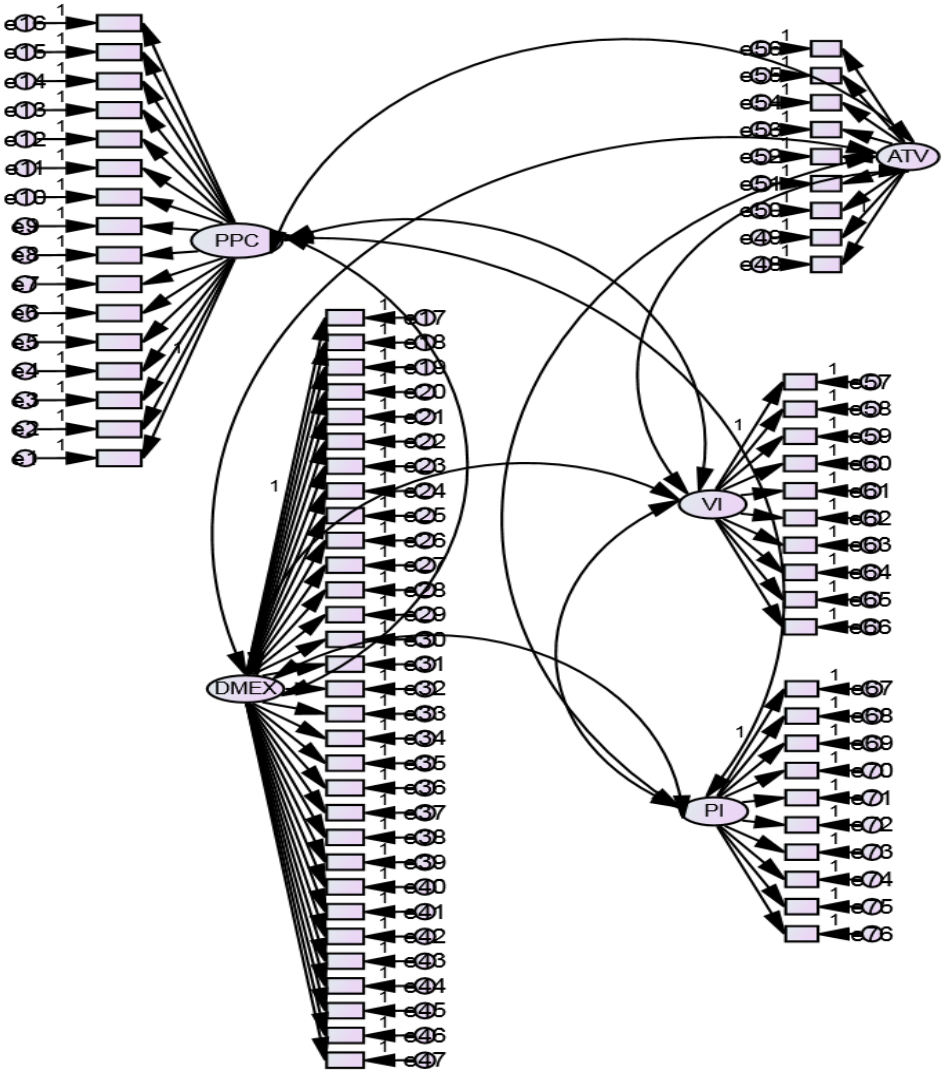
7.10.1 Conceptual model fit assessment

According to the two-step procedure (Anderson & Gerbing, 1998), prior to testing hypotheses, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed essentially to develop and specify the measurement model (Hair et al., 2010) and examine scale accuracy (including reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity) of the multiple item construct measures using

AMOS 24. Initial specification search led to deletion of some of the items in the construct scales in order to provide acceptable fit and consequential scale accuracy. Testing for model fit is conducted to determine whether the conceptual model fit the collected data. Figure 7.10 depicts the CFA model (baseline measurement model) that was developed.

Once the measurement model has been specified, its validity needs to be determined, which depends on establishing acceptable levels of goodness-of-fit. Goodness-of-fit specifies how well the particular model replicates the observed covariance matrix amid the indicator items (Hair et al., 2010). The model is depicted in Figure 7.10 and the goodness-of-fit results are shown in Table 7.18.

Figure 7.10: CFA model/ Overall measurement model



7.10.2 Model Fit of measurement indices

This section presents the analysis of the study's model fit by assessing model fit indices groups as absolute fit indices, incremental fit indices as well as parsimony fit indices, so as to determine the degree of acceptable or good model fit (Hair et al., 2010). The following indices were examined: CMIN or the Chi - square (x^2/df), the Normed Fit Index (NFI), incremental fit index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). As part of the processes in ensuring acceptable or good model fit, standardised regression weights which were below 0.5 as part of the loadings were deleted and errors were correlated using the modification index resulting in improvement of model fit.

7.10.2.1 Chi-square index

Table 7.16: Chi-square Index

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	247	894.402	699	.000	1.280
Saturated model	946	.000	0		
Independence model	43	11035.380	903	.000	12.221

The chi-square index was assessed as part of the confirmatory factor analysis in determining the model of fit of the study. The CMIN/Df value of 1.280 was considered as an acceptable fit for the model. The value is consistent with Bentler and Bonet (1980), Schumacker and Lomax (2004) and Hair et al. (2010) who recommended goodness-of-fit of chi-square value to be less than 0.3 (<.3) as shown in Table 7.16. Thus, it is evident that the Chi-square indicates a good model of fit.

7.10.2.2 Baseline comparison index

Table 7.17 presents the findings for the baseline comparison index. The baseline model for the study was evaluated using NFI; TLI also known as Non-normed Fit Index (NNFI); RFI and IFI (Schumacker & Lumax, 1966). An examination of the baseline comparison indices presented the following results: Normed-Fit-Index NFI (0.919) is accepted at level>0.9, therefore confirming mode-of-fit; RFI (0.895); IFI 0.981; Tucker-Lewis-Index TLI (0.975) and finally Comparative-Fit-Index CFI (0.981) as shown in Table 7.17. According to Hair et al. (2010), either the CFI or the TLI and the RMSEA is expected to provide sufficient results for the model fit. In the current study, all the indices were above 0.9, indicating strong good model of fit (Tabachnick & Fidell,

2007).

Table 7.17: Baseline Comparison Index

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.919	.895	.981	.975	.981
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Table 7.18: Goodness of Fit

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.186	.886	.846	.655
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	1.026	.165	.125	.157

The GFI index was assessed in determining the model of fit of the study. The GFI value of 0.886 was considered as an acceptable fit for the model. GFI should be equal to or greater than 0.90 to accept the model (Bollen & Pearl, 2013) though theoretically can yield meaningless negative values. A large sample size pushes GFI up. GFI cannot be interpreted as percentage of error explained by the model; it is the percentage of observed co-variances explained by the model.

7.10.2.3 Root mean square approximation (RMSEA)

The Root mean Square Error of Approximation was examined as part of the model fit and it indicated a value of 0.030. According to Hooper, Coughlan and Mullen (2008), the recommended value for RMSEA should be below 0.06 (< 0.06) to be accepted for a model fit. As evident in the results shown in Table 7.19, it can be confirmed that with a value of 0.03, the RMSEA is accepted, indicating good model fit.

Table 7.19: Root mean square approximation Index (RMSEA)

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.030	.024	.036	1.000
Independence model	.193	.190	.196	.000

7.10.2.4 Parsimony -Adjusted Measures

Table 7.20: Parsimony-Adjusted Measures

Model	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI
Default model	.774	.711	.759
Saturated model	.000	.000	.000
Independence model	1.000	.000	.000

The parsimonious normed fit index (PNFI) value of .711 was considered as an acceptable fit for the model. For measure of PNFI, a greater value indicates a better fit and a more parsimonious mode.

Summary of Model Fit indices for CFA

Table 7.21 gives a summary of the goodness-of-fit indices obtained for the study. Hair et al. (2010) contend that goodness-of-fit (GOF) indicates how well the specified model replicates the observed covariance matrix among the indicator items. The model is shown in Figure 7.10 and a goodness-of-fit result is shown in Table 7.21.

Table 7.21: Goodness of Fit for the overall measurement model

Model of fit indices	Accepted Threshold	Study measurement model	Acceptable/ Unacceptable
Absolute Fit Indices			
Chi-Square Value : χ^2/df	<3	1.280	Acceptable
P-Value			
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	≥0.9	0.886	Accepted
Random Measure of Standard Error Approximation (RMSEA)	≤0.08	0.030	Acceptable
Incremental Fit Indices			
Comparative fit index (CFI)	≥0.9	0.981	Acceptable
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	≥0.9	0.981	Acceptable
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	≥0.9	0.919	Acceptable
Tucker Lewis Index(TLI)	≥0.9	0.975	Acceptable
Parsimony Adjusted Indices			
Parsimony Fit (PRATIO)	Close to 1	0.774	Acceptable
Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI)	Close to 1	0.711	Acceptable
RCFI based on CFI	Close to 1		

Measurement model fit (CFA): χ^2/df =1.280; GFI=0.886; CFI=0.981; IFI=0.919; TLI= 0.975; RMSEA=0.030

Significance level p <0.01

Source: Calculated from research results

The results for the model fit indices of the primary assessment of the confirmatory factor analysis of all the manifest variables and their indicators were all accepted as depicted in Table 7.21. The findings from the CFA indicate that the conceptual model was a conceivable representation of the key empirical data that was collected for the study. Recommended statistics for the final model assessment confirmed acceptable fit of the measurement model of the data. Since a suitable CFA measurement model fit was obtained, the study proceeded to hypothesis testing stage using structural equation modelling with the AMOS 24 software program. Brown (2014) and Kline (2015) assert that once a good fit is attained for a hypothesised model, path significance of each

relationship in the research model and the variance must be estimated. Accordingly, the path modelling and its hypotheses testing estimates are presented in the next section.

7.11 Path modelling and hypotheses testing

The following section presents the results of the hypotheses and the correlating coefficients. The results of the path coefficient, the analysis of the stated hypotheses with their resultant factor loadings, the probability value (*p*-Value) as well as the outcome of their respective relationships is presented in Table 7.22. The path coefficients reflect the nature of the strength between the variables: the higher the value, the stronger the relationship. In order to distinguish whether the hypotheses are supported or not, the *p*-values are analysed. At a 99% level of significance, the supported hypotheses are indicated with three asterisks (***). The *p*-values are presented in Appendix 3.

7.12 Model of fit and Hypotheses Testing Results

The assessment of the proposed conceptual model progressed using the data set compiled from the questionnaires. The ratio of chi-square over degree-of-freedom was 1.280. This value is less than the suggested threshold of less than 3.0 and therefore, confirms the model fit. In addition, GFI, AGFI, CFI, TLI and RMSEA values were 0.886, 0.846, 0.981, 0.975 and 0.030 respectively and confirmed model fit. All these model fit measures were above the recommended marginally accepted threshold of greater than 0.8 for GFI, AGFI, CFI,TLI and less than 0.08 for RMSEA, which suggested that the proposed conceptual model converged well and could be a plausable representation of the causal empirical data structure collected in Zimbabwe. Since the model fit is acceptable, the study proceeded to test the research hypotheses. The corresponding coefficients of the research hypotheses that assume the existence of positive relationships between the predicting variable; three mediating variables and voting intention outcome consequences were then observed. Table 7.22 tabulates these results.

Table 7.22: Hypotheses Results and Path coefficients

Path coefficient	Hypothesis	Estimate	Loading / *P*-value	Result
DMEX → PPC	H1	-.105	.082	Rejected
DMEX → ATV	H2	.158	.002	Supported & significant
DMEX → PI	H3	.243	***	Supported & significant
PPC → ATV	H4	.635	***	Supported & significant
PI → ATV	H5	-.212	.002	Rejected but significant
PPC → VI	H6	.313	***	Supported & significant
ATV → VI	H7	.697	***	Supported & significant
PI → VI	H8	.363	***	Supported & significant

NOTE: DMEX=Digital media exposure; PPC= Perceived image of the presidential candidate; ATV= Attitude towards voting; PI=Perceived image of the political party; VI= Voting intentions.
Structural model: χ^2/df =1.280; GFI=0.886; CFI=0.981; IFI=0.919; TLI= 0.975; RMSEA=0.030
Significance level: ***p<0.01

Source: Calculation derived from research results

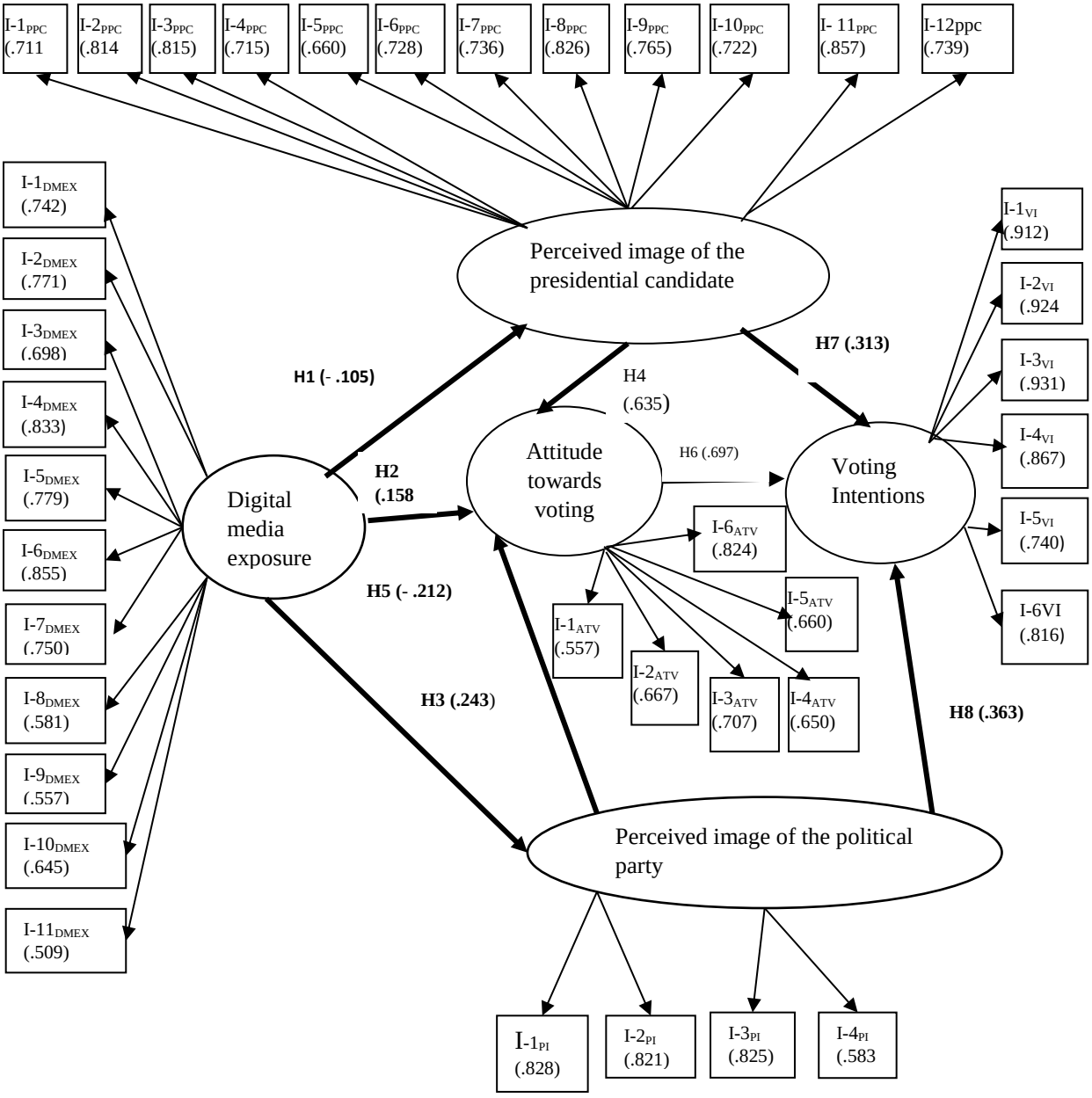
7.13 Discussion of Results

The results in Table 7.22 provided support for all the proposed hypotheses except H1 and H5. Using regression weights, DMEX to PPC with a *p*-value of 0.082 was not significant therefore there is a negative relationship between DMEX and PPC. Perhaps more of the digital media has been negative which then might have destroyed the image of the presidential candidate. Therefore, media has a negative impact on perceived image of the presidential candidate. DMEX to ATV (H2) with a *p*-value 0.02 indicated that the relationship was not significant, signifying a negative relationship between DMEX and ATV. DMEX to PI (H3) was significant at 0.01 significant levels. DMEX has a positive impact on political party perception.

Consistent with Hypotheses 2 and 3, the results indicated that the higher the level of digital media exposure amongst the voter-customers, the more likely the voter-customers would exhibit a positive attitude towards voting. However, digital media can build an agenda that can have a negative influence on voters' attitude towards voting. PPC to ATV was significant at 0.01. A candidate who is viewed positively by voters is most likely to influence their attitude towards voting. Also in support of Hypothesis 4, the results indicate that the more positive voter-customers

perceive the image of the presidential candidate, the higher the probability of the voters exhibiting a positive attitude towards voting. The strongest relationship was found to be hypothesis 4 which tested the relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and eligible voters' attitude towards voting (0.635) and Hypothesis 7 which tested the relationship between attitude towards voting and voting intention (0.697). Hypotheses two, three, six and eight indicate moderately strong relationships with path coefficient estimates ranging between 0.158 and 0.363 respectively. The coefficient for PI to ATV was not significant with a p-value of 0.02. This shows that political party perception has a negative impact on voters' attitude towards voting. A negative perception of a political party based on some attributes would have an impact on voters' attitude towards voting. The coefficient of attitude towards voting to intention to vote was positively significant while that for voter customer' perception of the presidential candidate's image was positive but not significant. The coefficient of PI to ATV (H4), with a p-value of 0.02, was not significant. This shows that perceived image of a political party has a negative impact on voters' attitude towards voting. The more a political party is perceived negatively, the higher the negative attitude towards voting. This implied that H4 was consistent with the study prediction and was supported while H5 was not. Our empirical results were in line with the proposed H6 and H7 and supported the logic that the more positive the political party perception as well as a positive attitude towards voting, the higher the likelihood of vote-customers to exhibit positive voting intentions. PPC to VI, ATV to VI and PI to VI was significant at 0.01 significant level. This indicates that PPC, ATV and PI have a positive impact on VI. To a great extent, this indicates that positive political party perception, positive attitude towards voting as well as positive political party perception positively influence voter decision-making in a significant way. Finally, the coefficient of the perceived image of the political party for voting intention was positively significant (0.363). This was consistent with the study prediction, hence H8 was supported. In assessing the probability value or the P-value, it was observed that five of the hypotheses were significant out of the eight that were stated at a significance level of 0.01 indicated with asterisks (***) and one hypothesis (DMEX $\rightarrow$ ATV) was supported and minimally significant as shown in Table 7.22 . Derived from the findings presented above, Table 7.23 presents the proposed conceptual model.

Table 7.23: Proposed Conceptual model, Research hypothesis and Related Statistics



Note: Research structure model fit
χ^2/df =1.280; GFI=0.886; CFI=0.981; IFI=0.919; TLI= 0.975; RMSEA=0.030
Significance level: ***$p<0.01$*

Source: Calculated from research results (2016)

7.14 TESTING FOR MEDIATION EFFECT AMONG VARIABLES

The conceptual model of this study comprises one independent variable [Digital media exposure – DMEX], three intervening variables [Perceived image of the presidential candidate (PPC), Attitude towards voting (ATV), perceived image of the political party (PI)] and one dependent variable [voting intention (VI)]. The mediation effect between digital media exposure and voting intention was tested using multiple linear regression analysis run in SPSS 24. The regression analysis of the mediating variables is indicated in Table 7.23.

Table 7.24: Regression analysis of mediating variables on voting intention

Independent variables	***Dependent variable: Voting intention***				***Collinearity Statistics***	
	B	SE	t	Significance	Tolerance	VIF
DMEX	.209	.039	4.295	.000	.767	1.304
PPC	.278	.052	5.587	.000	.729	1.371
ATV	.277	.057	5.053	.000	.603	1.658
PI	.281	.063	6.268	.000	.901	1.110

β- *Unstandardised beta; t, t-statistic; VIF- variance inflation factor; R= .680[a]; Adjusted R^2=0.462; F= 63.873*

Source: Statistics from research results

Perceived image of presidential candidate, perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting (adjusted R^2=0.423) explained approximately 42.3% of the variance in voting intention. In terms of appraising the assumptions of multicollinearity if the variance inflation factor (VIF) is greater than 10 then collinearity is a basis of concern (Field, 2005). Multicollinearity submits that several of the independent variables are closely linked in some way, which causes irregular results when attempting to identify how well individual independent variables contribute to an understanding of the dependent variable (Field, 2009). The VIF for the three variables scales were acceptable since they ranged between 1.110 and 1.658. The effect of this value is that it reduces multicollinearity problems. In terms of tolerance, larger tolerance values of more than 0.5 are more desirable as they indicate fewer problems with multicollinearity (Denis, 2011); thus, the tolerance values obtained in the regression analysis are within an acceptable range 0.603 and 0.901. In the regression analysis, factors for the constructs, namely PPC (p =0.000), ATV (p = 0.000) and PI (p =0.000) and PI (p=0.009) were statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ and contributed to 42.9%

of the explained variance in voting intention.

To examine the effect of mediation, the four steps (causal steps) in the Baron and Kenny (1986) approach were carried out by means of the regression equations where the coefficients of DMEX and the mediating variables at each step were estimated. To establish complete mediation, the following four requirements must be met at each step of the process: -

- Step 1: a significant relation of DMEX to PPC, derived from equation (1), is required.
- Step 2: a significant relation of DMEX to the hypothesised mediating variable, derived from equation (2), is required.
- Step 3: the mediating variable must be significantly related to VI when both DMEX and mediating variable are predictors of VI. This is derived from equation (3).
- Step 4: the effect of DMEX on VI controlling for the mediating variable should be zero in order to establish that the mediating variable completely mediates the DMEX and VI relationship. Thus, the coefficient relating DMEX to VI (i.e., c'= direct effect) in the regression model (step 3) with both the DMEX and the mediating variable predicting VI should be zero.

If step 4 is not met, thus, the coefficient of DMEX (c') in step 3 is non-zero, then the mediation is partial (e.g. Baron & Kenny, 1986; Judd & Kenny, 1981; MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007a; Preacher &Hayes, 2004). Discussed hereunder is the effect of each mediator variable on the relationship of DMEX on VI by applying the four- step approach.

7.14.1 The effect of PPC on the relationship between DMEX and VI

Table 7.24 depicts the results derived from the regression equations based on the relationship of DMEX, PPC and VI.

Table 7.25: Regression analysis DMEX, PPC and VI

Steps	Coefficient	Standard error	95% confidence interval		*p*-value	Sig.	Mediation requirement met?
			lower	*upper*			
1:DMEX-->VI	0.452	0.041	0.281	0.444	0.000	Yes	Yes
2:DMEX→PPC	0.246	0.043	0.104	0.273	0.000	Yes	Yes
3:DMEX-->PPC-->VI							
DMEX	0.369	0.040	0.218	0.374	0.000	No	Yes
PPC	0.337	0.052	0.250	0.454	0.000	Yes	Yes
4: Interval of Coefficient of DC in step 3 includes non-zero							Yes

Since the coefficient of DMEX in Steps 1 and 2 as well as that of PPC in step 3 are significant (p-Value< 0.05) at 95% confidence level, the requirements for the mediation were met. In addition, confidence interval of the effect of DMEX on VI controlling for PPC includes non-zero (the coefficient of DMEX in step 3 is 0.369), therefore we conclude that PPC is partially mediating the DMEX->VI relationship.

7.14.2 The effect of ATV on the relationship between DMEX and VI

Table 7.25 depicts the results derived from the regression equations based on the relationship of DMEX, ATV and VI.

Table 7.26: Regression analysis of DMEX, ATV and VI

Steps	Coefficient	Standard error	95% confidence interval		*p*-value	Significance	Mediation requirement met?
			lower	*upper*			
1:DMEX-->VI	0.452	0.041	0.281	0.444	0.000	Yes	Yes
2:DMEX→ATV	0.478	0.039	0.291	0.444	0.000	Yes	Yes
3:DMEX-->ATV-->VI							
DMEX	0.237	0.042	0.107	0.107	0.000	No	Yes
ATV	0.449	0.055	0.360	0.577	0.000	Yes	Yes
4: Interval of Coefficient of DC in step 3 includes non-zero							Yes

Since the coefficient of DMEX and ATV in Steps 1, 2, and 3 are significant (p-Value< 0.05) at 95% confidence level, the requirements for mediation were met. However, the effect of DMEX on VI controlling for ATV is non-zero (the coefficient of DMEX in step 3 is 0.237), therefore we conclude the ATV partially mediates the relationship of DMEX on VI.

7.14.3 The effect of PI on the relationship between DMEX and VI

Table 7.26 depicts the results derived from the regression equations based on the relationship of DMEX, PI and VI.

Table 7.27: Regression analysis of DMEX, PI and VI

Steps	Coefficient	Standard error	95% confidence interval		*p*-value	Sig.	Mediation requirement met?
			lower	*upper*			
1:DMEX-->VI	0.452	0.041	0.281	0.444	0.000	Yes	Yes
2:DMEX→PI	0.150	0.33	0.022	0.150	0.009	Yes	Yes
3:DMEX-->PI-->VI							
DMEX	0.411	0.040	0.251	0.408	0.000	No	Yes
PI	0.271	0.070	0.243	0.519	0.000	Yes	Yes
4: Interval of Coefficient of DC in step 3 includes non-zero							Yes

Since the coefficient of DMEX and PI in Steps 1, 2, and 3 are significant (p-Value< 0.05) at 95% confidence level, the requirements for mediation were met. However, the effect of DMEX on VI controlling for PI is non-zero (the coefficient of DMEX in step 3 is 0.411), therefore we conclude the PI partially mediates the relationship of DMEX on VI.

A further analysis was also done to determine the extent to which perceived image of the presidential candidate (PPC), perceived image of the party (PI and attitude towards voting mediate digital media exposure (DMEX) to voting intention (VI) relationship. The analysis involves determining the indirect effect, the direct effect and the total effect. In order to get the proportion in percentage of the mediating effect, the following formula was used:

Formula:

$$indirect\ effect\ /\ Total\ effect \times 100 = \%\ proportion\ of\ mediating\ effect$$

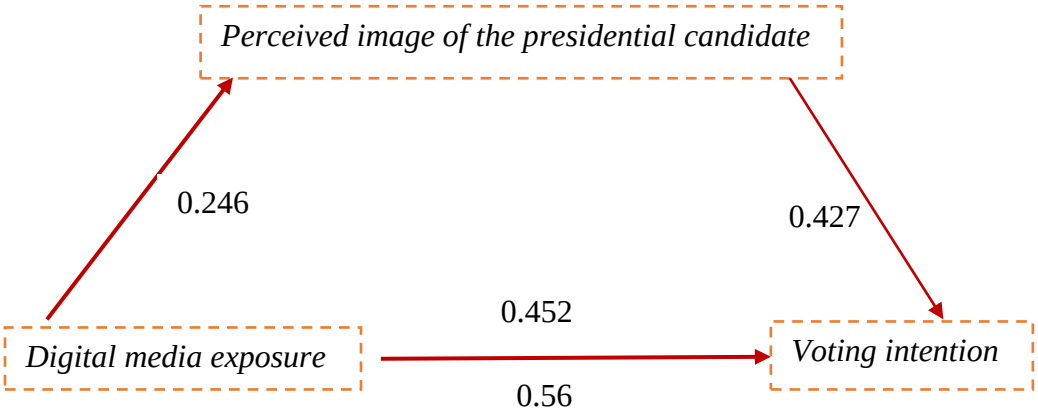
Table 7.27 shows the calculation of the effect of mediators on the dependent and independent variable.

Table 7.28: Proportion of mediating effect

	Step 2	**Step 3**	**Step 4**
Mediating variable	***Indirect Effect***	***Total Effect***	***%proportion of mediation***
DMEX->PPC->VI	(0.246*0.427)=0.11	(0.11+0.452)= 0.56	(0.11/0.56)100=19.6%
DMEX->ATV->VI	(0.478*0.562)= 0.27	(0.27=0.452)= 0.72	(0.27/0.72)100 = 37.5%
DMEX ->PI->VI	(0.15 *0.33) = 0.05	(0.05+0.452)=0.502	(0.05/0.5)100= 10%

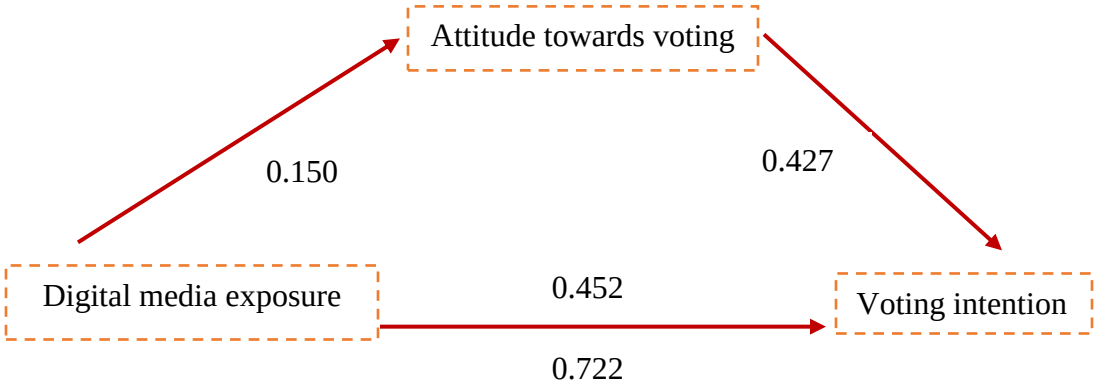
All relationships were significant at 0.05. Figure 7.11 is calculation for mediation on each mediator

Figure 7.11: Perceived image of the presidential candidate as a mediator



Results indicate that digital media exposure was a significant predictor of perceived image of the presidential candidate though moderately β=0.246, SE=0.043, p<0.05 and that perceived image of the presidential candidate was a significant predictor of voting intention β=0.427, SE 0.055, p<0.05. These results support mediation. Digital media exposure indicates that it remains a predictor of voting intention after controlling for a mediator, PPC β=0.452. Based on the calculation, 19.6% was the proportion of the mediating effect of the mediator PPC on digital media exposure and the voting intention relationship. Exposure to digital media is associated with 0.11 points higher scores as mediated by perceived image of the presidential candidate.

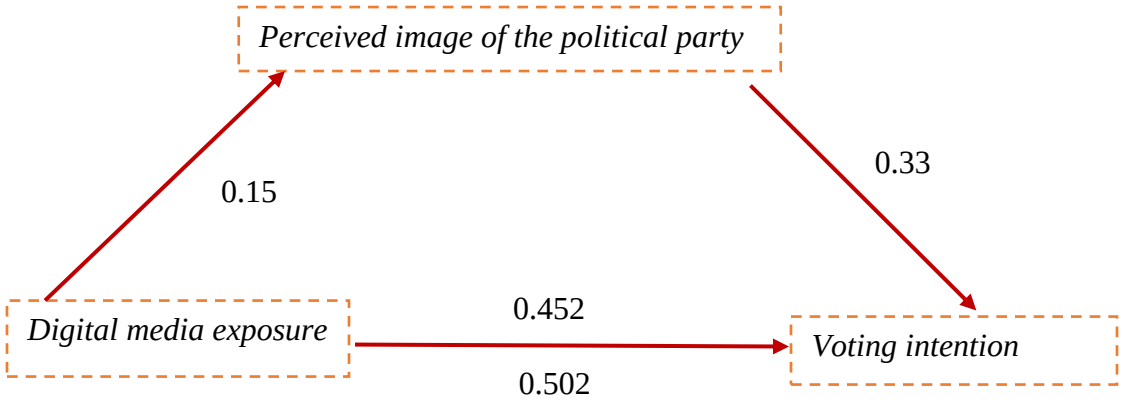
Figure 7.12: Attitude towards voting as a mediator



Results using the indirect effect method indicated that Digital media exposure was a significant predictor of attitude towards voting β=0.478, SE-0.039.p<.05, and that attitude towards voting was a significant predictor of voting intention β=0.562, SE=0.050, p<.05. These results support

mediation. DMEX remained a significant predictor of voting intention after controlling for a mediator, attitude towards voting β=0.452, SE=0.041, p<.05. Based on the calculation, 37.5% was the proportion of the mediating effect, accounting for roughly half of the total effect. Therefore, there was a significant indirect effect of digital media exposure on voting intention through attitude towards voting. Exposure to digital media is associated with 0.27 points higher scores as mediated by attitude towards voting.

Figure 7.13: Perceived image of the political party as a mediator



Results indicate that digital media exposure was significant predictor of political party perception β=0.15, SE 0.033, p<0.05 and that party perception was a predictor of voting intention β=0.333, SE 0.077, p<0.05. These results support moderate mediation. Digital media exposure remains a predictor of voting intention after controlling for the mediator. These results indicated the direct coefficient was significant β=0.05 and total effect 0.502. Ten percent (10%) of the total effect was accounted for by the indirect effect. Therefore there is an indirect effect of digital media exposure on voting intention through political party perception.

7.15 Summary of Hypotheses Results

The summary of the hypothesised relationships was done according to the conceptual model presented in the path diagram analysis in figure 7.11 as well as the outcome from Table 7.22.

7.15.1 Digital media exposure and perceived image of the presidential candidate

H1: There is a positive relationship between digital media exposure and perceived image of the presidential candidate in Zimbabwe.

The relationship between the digital media exposure and perceived image of the presidential candidate was assessed and the findings revealed that there was a negative relationship between them, which then rejected the stated hypothesis. *H1* is rejected in the study as digital media exposure did not have an influence on the image of the presidential candidate (standardised co-efficient of -.105; *p*-value of 0.82). The results suggest an insignificant relationship with a standardised regression weight in the negative (-.105) and *p*-value 0.82 at 0.01 level of significance. Based on the results, it is apparent that H1 is rejected and insignificant.

7.15.2 Digital media exposure and attitude towards voting

H2: There is a positive relationship between digital media exposure and attitude towards voting

The findings indicate that there is a positive relationship between digital media exposure and Zimbabwean voters' attitude towards voting although the relationship was not significant. The results of the SEM analysis revealed that the relationship between digital media exposure and attitude towards voting was not significant with a *p*- value 0.002, although the path coefficient value (0.158 at $p < 0.01$) indicates a positive relationship. H2 is thus not significant, but supported the stated hypothesis.

7.15.3 Digital media exposure and perceived image of the political party

H3: There is a positive relationship between digital media exposure and perceived image of the political party

Digital media exposure (DMEX) has a positive influence on perceived image of the political party. Based on the agenda setting theory, perception of a political party is likely to be influenced by the media in both negative and positive ways. The current study's findings showed that the hypothesis DMEX to PI was positive and significant with a p-value of 0.243 at 0.01 confidence level. Therefore, H3 is supported and significant.

7.15.4 Perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting

H4: There is a positive relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting

The study found that the relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting significant. In other words, if voters perceived a candidate positively, they are more likely to exhibit positive attitudes towards voting in elections that the candidate is contesting. On the contrary, if the voters have negative perceptions of the presidential candidate, they are likely to display negative attitudes towards voting. The path coefficient for the relationship is 0.635, thus indicating a significant relationship between perceived image of the political brand and the attitude towards voting. H4 is therefore significant and supported.

7.15.5 Perceived image of the political party (PI) and attitude towards voting (ATV)

H5: There is a positive relationship between perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting.

The relationship between perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting was found to be insignificant. It connotes that the voters' perception of a political party does not influence their attitude towards voting. The weakness of the relationship is reflected by the path coefficient value of -.212 at p value 0.002. Grounded on the results, it is clear that H5 is insignificant, hence rejected.

7.15.6 Perceived image of the presidential candidate and voting intention

H6: There is a positive relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and voting intention

The statistics reveal that H6 is supported, thus indicating that the perceived image of the presidential candidate has a significant influence on voting intentions. Explicitly, this means that a positive perception of the candidate can yield positive voting intentions. Conversely if voters have negative perceptions of the political candidate, they are likely to decide against voting. The statistical correlation indicates a path coefficient value of 0.313 at $p<0.01$ showing a significance between perceived image of the presidential candidate and intention to vote. The results revealed that H6 is significant, hence supported.

7.15.7 Attitude towards voting (ATV) and voting intentions

H7: There is a positive relationship between attitude towards voting and voting intentions

The relationship between attitude towards voting and voting intentions showed the most significance. In other words, voters' intention to vote is a function of their attitude towards voting. This strong relationship is reflected by the path coefficient value 0.696 at $p<0.01$ showing a strong relationship between the two variables. Based on the results, it is apparent that H7 is supported and significant.

7.15.8 Perceived image of the political party (PI) and voting intentions

H8: There is a positive relationship between perceived image of the political and voting intentions

The relationship between perceived image of the political party and voting intentions was found to be significant. The hypothesis proposed that a positive relationship exists between the variables and the findings confirmed that the perceived image of the political party has a significant influence on voting intentions. Therefore, a positive perception of a political candidate will lead to positive voting decision. The path coefficient 0.363 at $p<0.01$ indicates a significant relationship between perceived image of the political party and voting intentions; hence H8 is supported and is significant.

7.16 Summary of the chapter

The singular purpose of Chapter seven (7) was to test the proposed hypothesis for the study that constitutes this thesis using the structural equation modelling (SEM) with AMOS 24 software program. A discussion of the research findings is provided. Of the postulated hypotheses, six were supported and significant, as originally predicted, and two were not supported, hence they were rejected, that is, the relationship between digital media exposure to the perceived image of the presidential candidate and the relationship between the perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting. However the research presented an ad hoc finding, that is , the mediating effecte of perceived image of the presidential candidate , attitude towards voting and perceived image of the political party.The implications of these research findings and the overall conclusion are provided in chapter eight and chapter nine respectively. The mediation results indicated that although digital media exposure was a significant predictor of perceived image of the presidential candidate the effect is moderate. Also the results showed that there is an indirect effect of digital

media exposure on voting intention through political party perception. Discussion of research results is presented on the following chapter eight (8).

8 CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

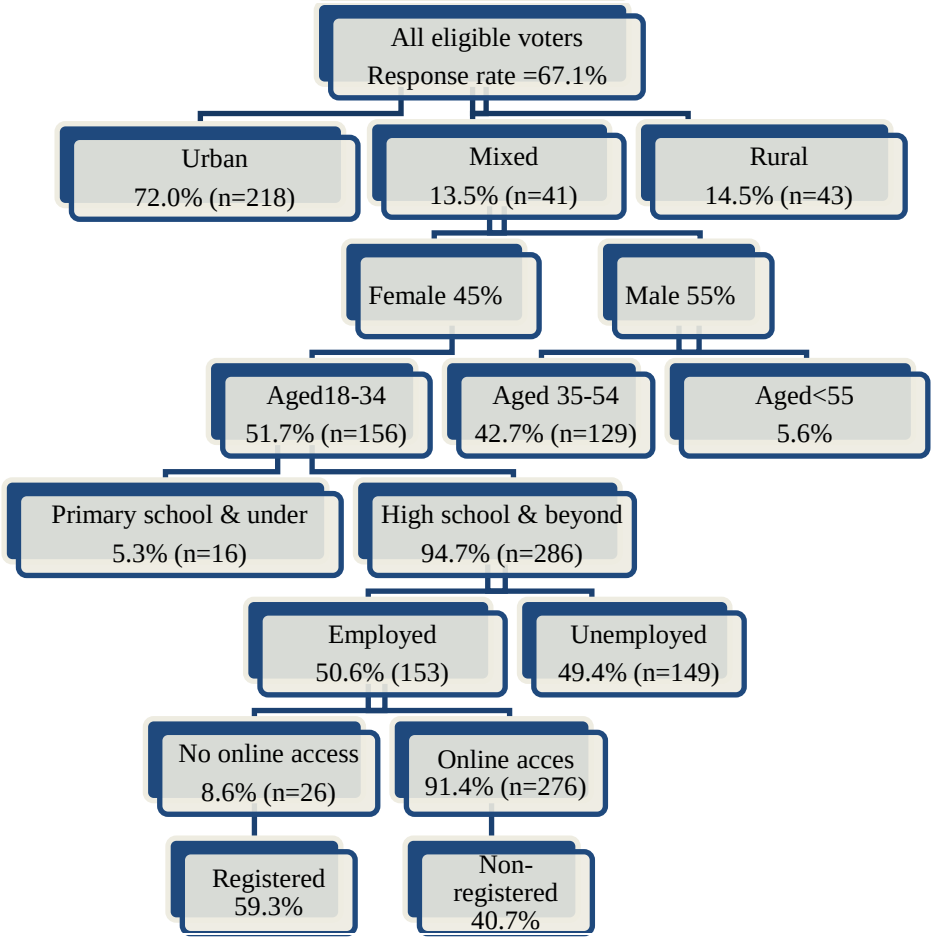
8.1 Introduction

Chapter eight (8) presents a discussion of the research findings in view of extant literature. The following areas are discussed: descriptive statistics with regards to respondents and findings from inferential indicators. The study findings discussed aim to provide clarity and meaning to the results of the study. In doing so, an evaluation of the findings, as well as the implication to marketing practice, is discussed.

8.2 Return rates of the survey for different subsets of voter-consumers

The study built a decision tree diagram showing the return rates of the survey for different subsets of voter-consumers (Van Diepen & Franses, 2006). In the first level, the study indicates the trunk of the decision tree which consists of all voter-consumers and the overall response rate to the survey. Branches were developed using the factors with greatest impact on the likelihood of response (Residential location; age category; educational level; employment status as well as online access). The primary sample consist of eligible voters defined as the adult population who qualify as stipulated by the Zimbabwe statutes, focusing on age (18+), citizenship and residence. The overall population was broken down into groups representing leaves based upon their different values of characteristics as summarised in Figure 8.1.

Figure 8.1: Summary decision tree based on socio-demographic data



Source: Source: Calculated from research results (2016)

8.2.1 Respondents' geographic location

It was evident that the sample was over represented in terms of urban respondents, as 72% of the respondents were urban electorate, 15% rural and 14% were from mixed geographic areas. The rural sector was the principal contributor to the country's vote share (51%) in the 2013 election (ZEC, 2013). Interesting to note from the demographic data is that the majority of the respondents were from the urban areas, yet this does not reflect the same when it comes to actual voting and the population distribution. The actual voting statistics indicate that 67 % of voters are rural based and 33% are urban based (Zimbabwe Statistical Office, 2016). The urban voter segment is the major segment of eligible voters for political strategists to target when promoting political contests. Therefore, a differential focus strategy would be ideal if political strategists are to reach every segment of the electorate. Voter-consumers face tough challenges in establishing precise beliefs

about the electoral prospects of their preferred leader or political party as brands. However, in a political marketing context, voter-consumers tend to perceive the image of the presidential candidate or the political party attributes according to their own expectations. These result from cognitive biases and political and social dynamics associated with homogeneity of political enclaves. According to the theory of planned behaviour, attitude towards voting can be attributed to the beliefs and subject norms inherent in the voter-customers. It specifies the voter-consumer`s perception of the image of the presidential candidate and the image of the political party which then guide the voter in decision-making and drive the same toward conformity (Guo & Feng, 2012). The research found a negative relationship between perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting. It can be inferred that media perhaps has negative information which influence most of the voter-consumers, mostly urban voters, to adopt a negative attitude towards voting.

Within the dictates of political competition, it must therefore be acknowledged that the mobilisation success of a political party towards an election is not dependent on the magnitude of a crowd during political rallies, but the motivational factors that influence the voters' intention to provide favourable response to an election. The political influence on voting intentions is highly dependent on the efficacy of the adopted competitive strategy. However, as Zimbabwean voters increasingly seek to use voting rights to choose and hold political leaders accountable for economic performance, they continue to encounter institutional constraints of party and patronage systems inherited from postcolonial past. However, realisation of comparative advantage is not grounded on resource endowment, but also innovative capacity (Omoijiade, 2014). It is also interesting to present that this institutional impediment could have caused the low response rate in the rural areas. However, an astute political marketing strategist can define geo-demographic clusters into meaningful target markets and ultimately influence the voting intentions. Based on the data gathered, the majority of respondents were from urban areas with a margin of 72% and 96% of urban respondents were aged between 18 to 54 years as shown in Table 8.1.

Figure 8.2: Age * Residential Location Cross tabulation

Age Group	Residential Location				
	Urban	Rural	Mixed	unknown	Total
18 years - 24 years	58	8	6	0	72
25 years - 35 years	64	12	8	0	84
35 years - 44 years	53	8	13	2	76
45 years - 54 years	32	11	10	0	53
55 years & Above	9	4	4	0	17
Total	*216*	*43*	*41*	*2*	*302*

Source: Research results (2016)

This provides insight to political strategies when they use age and geography as a segmentation variable. More promotion should be targeted at the urban electorate since they constitute the majority.

8.2.2 Respondents' educational characteristics

It was shown that respondents with high school, diploma, and degree or post-graduate qualifications constituted the majority with 95% of the respondents while those with primary school and under constituted 5% of the respondents. This indicates that the majority of the respondents were literate. Literacy is a pre-requisite for accessing the media, being mostly print and digital media. Although Putman (2000) found a positive relationship between education and political participation, the level of participation as reflected in the demographic data as well as the level of participation reflected by the respondents is contrary to this assertion. From 60% who are eligible to vote, only 17% indicated that they have been consistent in their voting by participating in all presidential elections since 2002, 8% only participated in two election, 17% participated in only one election and 40% have never voted. It is however, interesting to note that almost two fifths (40%) of the respondents have never voted which is a reflection of a negative attitude towards voting. Nevertheless, this study indicated that apart from Zimbabwe's national context, the characteristics and attitudes of individual voter-consumers probably influence the intention to vote. Interestingly, 92% of all the respondents have access to the Internet which, *ceteris paribus*, is expected to influence the cognitive processes of these consumers. This study presents very interesting insights into the relationship between education and the media. Education and media provide citizens with cognitive abilities that promote critical evaluation of the status quo as well as propaganda, while providing the same society with resources to access information through

contemporary media. Interestingly, the ability to search for information, participation in elections and activities related to elections remains low in Zimbabwe. Similarly Croke, Grossman, Larreguy and Marshall (2014) found that in Zimbabwe, level of education negatively influences political participation.

8.2.3 Gender characteristics

In this study, 45% of the respondents were female and males constituted 55%. However these results present a paradox. As a matter of fact, in Zimbabwe, females seem to engage more in political participation than their male counterparts, particularly the actual voting, as indicated by the voting patterns from 2002 to 2013 (ZEC, 2013). Therefore aspects such as political polarisation though contrary to reality, can explain the gender gap which is specific to Zimbabwean politics. The low participation of the women in the study can be attributed to the prevailing political environment within which data was collected. Zimbabwe was going through a period of succession battles that made eligible voters nervous, hence they refused to participate, particularly in rural areas. However, if this study envisions a direct relationship between gender and intention to vote, many inconsistencies become evident. This study perceives voting as an information processing activity whilst the intention to vote ss the immediate stage prior to actual voting which is often a high involving process. Voter-consumers need to search for information about the political brands (i.e. presidential candidates and the contesting political parties) which they then process and on which they base their evaluation and finally make an outcome decision.

8.2.4 Other socio-demographic characteristics and access to media

The demographic characteristics of the respondents in the studies observed that 52% were among the 18 to 34 age group with the highest response rate (51.7%), followed by the 35-54 age group (43%). 55<years age group contributed to the fewest participants. Cumulatively, the 18-54 age group has the highest response rate with a total percentage of 95%. However, 51% of the respondents are employed and 49% are not employed. Those who indicated not be employed include students, while those who are employed include the formally employed in both rural and urban areas. The theory of planned behaviour postulates that subjective norms relating to significant referents in an individual's social network have a direct influence on intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Accordingly, inferring that in a highly collectivistic Zimbabwe culture,

some social influences that would affect either attitude or intentions to vote would be rational. This inference would also be consistent with the notion that people in Zimbabwe may prefer to obtain information from personal networks that share common beliefs (Andrews & Bianchi, 2013). However, culture is molded by evolving values, beliefs and attitudes within which a social system operates and influences the selection, use and symbolic meaning of technology employed for political purposes (Jankowski, 2007). Accordingly ingenious marketers can actually tailor political products (candidate and party) and the promotional strategies to each segment based on socio-demographic variables.

8.3 Discussion of results from conceptual model

The following subsection presents a discussion of the findings arising from the testing of the study' formulated hypotheses. Table 8.2 presents the main findings of the study as revealed by the hypotheses.

Figure 8.3: Results of the hypothesized relationships

	HYPOTHESIS	**RESULTS**
H1	There is a positive relationship between *digital media exposure* and *perceived image of the presidential candidate*	**Rejected**
H2	There is a positive relationship between *digital media exposure* and *attitude towards voting*	**Supported but not significant**
H3	There is a positive relationship between *digital media exposure* and *perceived image of the party*	**Supported**
H4	There is a positive relationship between *perceived image of the presidential candidate* and *attitude towards voting*	**Supported**
H5	There is a positive relationship between *perceived image of the political party* and *attitude towards voting*	**Rejected**
H6	There is a positive relationship between *perceived image of the presidential candidate* and *voting intentions*	**Supported**
H7	There is a positive relationship between *attitude towards voting* and *voting intentions*	**Supported**
H8	There is a positive relationship between *perceived image of the political party* and *voting intentions*	**Supported**

The following section discusses the results for each of the tested hypotheses.

8.3.1 Digital media exposure and perceived image of the presidential candidate (H1)

Several researchers argue that the impact of different types of digital media may lead to differential effects on voters (Gibson & Ward, 2000; Oates, 2008; Quintelier & Vissers, 2008). In this study, digital media exposure represents exposure to websites, social networks and online news. Analysis of the relationship between digital media exposure and perceived image of the presidential candidate revealed a negative relationship. The study findings indicate that there is no significant influence between DMEX (digital media exposure) and PPC (perceived image of the presidential candidate). It explains that digital media exposure has no effect on the perceived image of the presidential candidate. However, this is contrary to the agenda setting theory which posits that the media builds up public images of the political figures (McCombs, 2013). Several empirical studies have confirmed the relationship between media salience and the strength in attitude of political candidates (Kiousis, 2005; Kiousis & McCombs, 2004). Numerous studies provide evidence of the relationship between media effects and image of the brand (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Conversely the current study found that digital media exposure has no influence on the perception of a prospective presidential candidate. The research findings are contrary to the assumptions of the structural realist model of voter behaviour which assumes a mutual interface between media and cognitive domains, moderated by emotional feelings (Cwalina, Falkowski & Newman, 2010). It can however be assumed that the voting public may develop perceptual blocking due to the polarised nature of the media. A two item, self-reported measure was employed to assess the voter's feeling towards the presidential candidate. The questions used conform to the definition of perceived brand image as outlined in extant literature, that is, the perceptions about the brand as reflected by brand associations held in consumer memory (Keller, 2003). The study found minimal influence of digital media in the form of websites on candidate perception. This finding is supported by Papagiannidis et al. (2012). The minimal influence can be attributed to political parties' failure to utilise the media and maybe their online presentations of the candidates were not designed effectively to elicit the desired responses.

According to Freudian theory, human drives are unconscious and humans are largely unaware of the true reasons for making voting decisions. Based on this theory, when assessing other persons, people compare and contrast their own personality to the personal traits they assign to others. A

voter unconsciously views the presidential candidate as an extension of his/her own personality. If the presidential candidate successfully portrays these traits in the elements of their communication during campaign, then the voter identifies with the brand and these lead to their evoked set of voting consideration. Programmatic reputations based on issue ownership appear to affect voters' perceptions of candidates' personality attributes. A political brand is the underlying attitudes and feelings, impression, relationship or the image the community has towards either a politician or political organisation. It is however, essential for political leadership to build a positive political brand personality. Smith (2009) proposes that brand users, events, personal and group cultural actions, and the media assist in forming an individual or organisational brand personality. However, brand personification develops from the brand's observed behaviours and insinuations from their stated intentions or actions. Political leaders might find their brand personality compromised by their own physical attributes as well. However Jones, Young and Claypool (2011) suggest that followers in freely-formed organisations find leaders more physically attractive as a function of exposure. Physical attractiveness is assumed to be an exogenous characteristic that influences people's feelings, perceptions and behaviour across numerous relationship contexts.

The study proposes that a potential basis of the insignificance of the relationship between digital media exposure and perceived image of the presidential candidate may be the matter of insecurity. The research was carried out during the period when the country is engrossed in succession battles which presented the respondents with discomfort when it came to any issue involving prospective presidential candidates, particularly where there is an indication of a preferred candidate. Zimbabwe has two major political parties, hence respondents assumed the mentioned presidential candidate relate to those associated with the major political parties.When making choices under uncertainty, voters as consumers would naturally try to minimise losses and maximise gains. In so doing, the outcome of a risky decision is usually evaluated in terms of a value function based on a reference point, repulsion and compassion. In addition, it should be noted that generally information layout and language impact the ease of access of digital media sites. Individuals have diverse reading and learning abilities, hence some struggle to comprehend the information.

8.3.2 Digital media exposure and attitude towards voting (H2)

The influence of digital media exposure on attitude towards voting was found to be positive, supporting the hypothesis, nonetheless it was not significant. Our findings confirm previous research which has shown that media has an effect on attitude towards behaviour. However, we acknowledge the need to exercise caution in making inferences about causality based on such surveys. The relationship found in this study, between digital media exposure (DMEX) and attitude towards voting (ATV) warrants further investigation to establish such a relationship as causal. Respondents who had no access to the online media (9%) were not expected to proceed with the questionnaire. It is possible that this may have been a source of selection bias in the study, given that a medium that is not digital in form was not considered as a source of information in this study. The result of the study indicated that there is a positive relationship between digital media exposure and attitude towards voting. However the relationship was moderate and insignificant. Although digital media can claim to have enhanced voters' opportunities to learn and participate in different segments, including politics, ultimately the extent of learning and involvement depends on whether the voters as consumers of politics have the impetus and the capacity to learn. Consequently, the motivation for using different types of digital media may vary, leading to different effects on intention to activate an expected behaviour. While digital media has gradually become an essential medium of communication (Li, 2017), its growth opportunity as a source of political influence in Zimbabwe is an area of debate. Although research claim that digital media have been a pillar of electoral campaigns in the US (Hendricks & Denton, 2010), this study found that the medium has not yet achieved that status in Zimbabwe. Candidates' websites do not provide greater depth in the presentation of ideas on notable display. Rather, the most notable section of these websites is the substantial volume of the soundbite-style information, the countless press releases, and snapshots decorating the homepage and archived on the political party website. This study supports Dimitrova, Shehata, Strömbäck and Nord (2014); Groshek and Dimitrova (2011) who found limited effects of digital media use on political participation. Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer and Bichard (2010) found no significant impact of social media use on political participation. On the contrary, most of the studies in a meta-analysis on Internet effects on political engagement support the proposition that online media have a positive impact on engagement (Boulianne, 2009).

8.3.3 Digital media exposure and perceived image of the political party (H3)

It was evident from the findings that digital media exposure has a positive influence on perceived image of the political party. Therefore, H3 was consistent with the study prediction and was supported. By implication, this finding indicates that Zimbabwean voters' decision-making in relation to political parties is most likely influenced by exposure to digital media. According to the results of this study, exposure to digital media has a significant influence on the way voters perceive a particular political party. This study's findings are consistent with several studies that observed that online access and online exposure to campaign information predicts political knowledge (Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Mossberger, Tolbert & McNeal, 2008) website visits influence political knowledge acquisition (Bimber & Davis 2003); increased exposure and attention to online news influence political awareness (Groshek & Dimitrova, 2011). Conversely, Groshek and Dimitrova (2011) found no significant impact of social media use on political participation. Oates (2008); Quintelier and Vissers (2008) concluded that diverse forms of digital media carrying different primary functions may perhaps lead to differential effects on voters-customers. Empirical literature found that consumers with favourable attitudes towards websites will be inclined to search for information at those sites. It can however, be inferred that political parties that employ the media in their campaigns gain competitive advantage by creating and shaping voter perceptions and positioning the political party with unique propositions that undertake to execute the wishes and expectations of the electorate. However, this finding presents a paradox. While digital media was found not to influence the voter consumer's perception of the presidential candidate, significant influence of digital media exposure on political party perception was found. This may suggest that loyalty to a party may moderate the relationship between digital media exposure and political party perception, nevertheless, further research is required. Therefore, for political strategists or marketers to gain a competitive advantage and influence voting attitudes, strategies that enhance political party perception should be implemented first so the perception in turn, influences attitude towards voting and subsequently, the consumer's decision-making.

However, of all variables influenced by the predictor (digital media exposure), digital media exposure–perceived image of the political party relationship (0.243) has a stronger influence than the relationship between the predictor and attitude towards voting (0.158) and perceived image of the presidential candidate (-.105) respectively. Although digital media exposure's influence on

attitude towards voting is low (0.158), attitude towards voting has the highest influence on voting intention (0.697). Perceived image of the presidential candidate has also a strong influence on attitude towards voting (0.635). What this practically implies is when one wants to influence voter intention, first adopt a strategy that influences perceived image of the political party, and then adopt another strategy that influence attitude towards voting which then will be used to influence voter intention.

8.3.4 Perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting (H4)

The findings of hypothesis (H4) indicated a positive relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting. The agenda setting theory posits that media outline assurances, rhetoric and pledges comprise the information upon which voting decisions are expected to be made. The research finding supports the attraction paradigm assertion that an individual has an opinion of a stranger if he perceives some similarity between the stranger and himself (Bryne, 1997). Assessing an image of the presidential candidate is an idiosyncratic instance of evaluating other individuals. The personality traits function as a measure used by voter-consumers to evaluate political leaders. Since politicians symbolise political parties' attitude towards the candidate are likely to be influenced by opinions about the political party and consequently influence the voter decision-making.

Keller (1993) affirms that marketing literature ascertains important benefits that an organisation may obtain from positive brand personality. Johnson, Soutar and Sweeney (2000) observed that a distinctive brand personality can assist in creating a set of unique and favourable associations in consumer memory thus directing consumer decision-making. Schneider (2004) argues that politics is progressively about image, rather than policy implementation and content. Therefore, politicians can be regarded as actors performing in a purposive way to attain determined party political goals, hence the study has confirmed that the perceived image of the presidential candidate, who is the leader, has an influence on voters' attitude towards the behaviour.

8.3.5 Perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting (H5)

The results of the study indicated that there was no significant relationship between perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting. Existing literature has found an indirect effect of personality traits on attitude towards political party (Schoen & Schumann, 2007; Lee, Choi, Kim & Kim, 2014). Political parties endorse ideologies and values, propose policies and are represented by politicians. Theoretically, values, ideologies and the politicians are the attributes of a political party. According to Fishbein (1965), attitude toward an object is affected by opinions about its attributes. Specifically, attitudes toward politicians, policies, ideologies and values were shown to shape evaluations of political parties (e.g. Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Campbell et al., 1960; Schumann & Schoen, 2003). Conversely these attitudes toward party attributes are shaped by personality traits (Schumann, 2002).

For the majority of voter-consumers, gathering political information is viewed as pricey in terms of effort to assimilate it against the motivation to do so (Downs, 1957). Moreover, the Zimbabwe political parties, in seeking to occupy the extremes, increasingly offer positive valence to the electorate with divergent ends and means. Beckett (2006) posited that the more partisan a voter-consumer, the more positive their political party perception. In developing countries like Zimbabwe, there are complex constructs that underlie the more generic political divide. The decision to vote becomes crucial when the individual voter-consumer knows that the national economic conditions are not of the best and are affecting his or her livelihood. This community interest or individual interest that prevails within the voters becomes a measure of intense purchase decision-making activity, hence the choice whether to vote or not to vote becomes a challenging one.

Political trust appears inherent to constructing political perception and attitudes amongst Zimbabwean voter-consumers due to a political landscape resulting from years of non-delivery and mismanagement of resources (Church & Leaders, 2005). The politicians are infamously known for non-delivery and discrimination in development projects, ordinarily focusing on partisan allegiance. This study therefore supports Das's (2014) assertion that personality directly influences behavioural intention (voting intention), which results from the beliefs, and values, as well as the attitude towards the attitude object. This study therefore proposes that a potential cause for the insignificance of the relation between perceived image of the political party (PI) and attitude

towards voting (ATV) may be the evolvement of collectivism as a central value in the Zimbabwean society. The traditional worldview emphasises "being" and "life forces" (Mbigi, 2009). The traditional leaders are regarded as the custodians of culture, customs and traditions and are the only agencies believed to have the power to reconnect with ancestral spirits (Dodo, 2013). It is the influence of traditional leaders that guide bounded rationality within communities (Felin, Kauffman, Koppl & Longo, 2014; Jones, 1999). Conformity to society, collectivism ["Ubuntu", "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am"] guides decision-making in Zimbabwean communities (Lassiter, 2000). It is then evident that societal influence impacts on voting decision-making in African traditional societies, Zimbabwe included. However, the study acknowledges that political attitudes are also receptive to persuasion. Perhaps in this study the relationship between party perception and attitude towards voting was not significant due to political polarisation (Moyo, 2015). This study supports the realistic paradigm which asserts that cognitive domains can drive voting behaviour (Cwalina et al., 2008). Therefore the fundamental aspects in influencing voting intention are evoking positive emotions towards the party and then providing voter-consumers with justification for such affect. Accordingly, some political attitudes are already biased by emotions. One of the values of Zimbabwe society is respect for authority, hence these voter-consumers are more susceptible to the unconscious power of affect.

8.3.6 Perceived image of the presidential candidate and voting intentions (H6)

It was evident from the findings that perceived image of the presidential candidate has a positive influence on voting intentions (path coefficient 0.313; $p<0.05$). It means that the more favourable the image of the candidate the more positive impact that image has on the electorate voting intention. The hypothesised relationship (PPC/ VI) exhibited a significant relationship. The study findings are consistent with a study by Newman (1995), who observed that candidate image shaped through the media highlighting personality traits reinforces the candidate appeal which consequently influences voting intention. Extant literature suggests that brand images create trust, stability and differentiation (Grace & O'Cass, 2005; Kay, 2006), although contextual variables such as macroeconomic condition (Rule & Tskhay, 2014; Rindell et al., 2011), altruistic behaviour (Farrelly, Lazarus & Roberts, 2007), or relationship status can modify the perception. This implies that social influences may have significant influences on the electorate's relationship with the candidate leader. Aghekyan-Simonian et al. (2012); Erdil (2015) affirmed the findings of the

current study that a favourable brand image has a positive effect on behavioural intention (voting intention). The relationship between digital media exposure and perceived image of the presidential candidate is not supported and is insignificant (path coefficient -0.105, p<0.082). On the contrary, Kiad (2004) found a positive effect between media exposure on candidate image evaluation based on the character, traits and likeability of the candidate. Candidate attributes can be a critical factor in election outcomes and can predict voting support in election (Wu & Coleman, 2014).

8.3.7 Attitude towards voting and voting intentions (H7)

The relationship between attitude towards voting and voting intentions in this study supported the proposed hypothesis and was significant (path coefficient 0.697, p<0.000). The findings were consistent with Meeuse and Quintelier (2014), who observed that there is a link between social attitudes and propensity to vote in adolescence. The study also supports the theory of planned behaviour's assertion that attitudes affect intention (Ajzen, 2006). As much as consumers can discontinue transacting if they become uncertain about the purchase process (Cho, 2004), voter-consumers may avoid participating in an election if they perceive risk in the voting process. In democracies, voters can be called upon to make decisions that have profound and irreversible consequences, yet the environment in which they make these decisions is inherently uncertain and sometimes risky. From the study findings, it is apparent that the political environment in Zimbabwe, in some instances, influences voting attitudes and consequently, the voting intention. The ruling party is sometimes portrayed as all powerful juggernauts, hence sceptical voters prefer to withdraw their participation. It is then anticipated that Zimbabwean voters engage in cost benefit analysis to try and make decisions on whether to vote or not to vote. Past voting experience, same as post purchase, is a key factor in building confidence and subsequently affects future voting behaviour. Several researchers found a significant and positive influence of attitude on behaviour (Alvarez & Campo, 2014; Tonglet et al., 2004). Therefore, this study supports the theory of planned behaviour in that the more favourable the attitudes towards voting combined with subjective norms and greater behavioural control, the stronger the voting intention (Ajzen, 2006). Van Hulst and Posthumus (2016) found that those who intend to perform have a more positive attitude towards mulching practices, experience more social pressure to adopt and perceive a higher degree of capability to perform the practice. In this study, attitude towards voting has the

highest influence on voting intention (0.697*; p*<0.05) followed by perceived image of the presidential candidate on attitude towards voting (0.635; *p*<0.05). This means that if political or marketing strategists want to influence voter intention, they have to adopt a strategy that influences perception of the leader image, then come up with a strategy that influences the attitude towards voting and this will finally have a stronger impact on voter intention than any other possible linkages. This also indicates that the more positive the attitude towards voting, the more likely there will be positive voting intention. Consumers with a positive attitude towards voting are thus more likely to vote.

The study findings are consistent with Park et al. (2006) who found beliefs significant in predicting voters' behaviour though general beliefs were stronger than specific beliefs in affecting intentions to vote. Hansen, Jensen and Solgaard (2004) found consumers' attitude toward online grocery shopping the most important predictor of online purchasing. The study findings support the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behaviour which both predict that attitude toward behaviour is a determinant of behavioural intention. Thompson et al. (1994) found a strong correlation between attitude evaluation and behavioural intention. It is however, interesting to note that although digital media sources provide citizens with more opportunities to access conventional media on demand, as well as supplement mainstream media with alternative selective information, people usually are not excessively discerning when seeking specific content (Prior, 2013).

8.3.8 Perceived image of the political party and voting intentions (H8)

It is evident from the findings that there is a positive relationship between perceived image of the political party and voting intentions (H8) is supported with path coefficient 0.363; *p*<0.000). Therefore, the more favourable a party image is, the more it will have influence on voting intentions. The study findings are consistent with O'Baines et al. (2005), who postulated that party image perceptions are better predictors of voting intention than demographics. Zenker and Rutter (2014) discuss brand attitude as a latent, but highly pertinent marketing variable in brand building. Several researchers have proved that brand attitude and past experience impact decision-making (Ladhari & Michaud, 2015; Sommer, 2011). There may be attributes of a political party that can inherently affect voters' perception of a particular political party as a brand. Therefore, being able to identify these attributes in specific contexts is critical in shaping voter-consumer's attitudes positively towards the brand. Social identity theory posits that attitudes and beliefs are affected by

the social group to which one belongs and to a greater extent by one's personal identity (Zeugner-Roth, Žabkar & Diamantopoulos, 2015). The social identity approach proposes that when a person consciously identifies with a group, they take on the known characteristics and beliefs of that group (Hornsey, 2008). When a particular social identity becomes salient, the norms of that identity provide guidance about how to think, feel, and act (ibid). Several researchers have shown that the strength of political identity influences decisions of political in-group and out-group members (Munro, Lasane & Leary, 2010; Choi & Winterich, 2013; Morton et al., 2007). Earlier research in the field of voting behaviour gained insights from cleavage structure (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967), party identification (Campbell et al., 1960), issue ownership (Petrocik, 1996), party brand differentiation (Scammel, 2007), projecting identity (Smith, 2009), brand loyalty (Phillips et al., 2010). Consistent with the current research findings, Nielsen and Larsen (2014) found a strong and significant effect of political brand value on voting behaviour, highlighting the fact that voters who exhibit a high political brand value for a particular party also have a high predisposition to vote for that party. Kirchheimer (1966) advocated for a transformation of political parties from 'mass parties' to 'catch-all' parties that emphasise on marketing leader image and political party image in an effort to influence voting behaviour. Attitude towards voting has the highest direct influence on voting intention (coefficient alpha=0.697), followed by perceived image of the political party (coefficient value=0.363) and finally, perceived image of the presidential candidate (0.313; p<0.000). All relationships are significant at 95% confidence level. Thus the most significant strategy to influence voting intention would be to build capacity on the image of the candidate then formulate another strategy that influences attitude and finally, attitude towards voting will influence the voting intention. It can be concluded that voting intention is relative to the level of perception of the political party. It is essential for political marketing strategists to build a positive image of the party and candidate so as to influence and positively change the attitudes of the voters and shape electoral outcomes.

8.4 Chapter Summary

The current chapter discussed the analysis and interpretation of the data, giving empirically derived observations. The demographic profile of the respondents was examined, followed by an analysis of the five variables that constitute the conceptual framework for the study. Subsequently, the statistical characteristics of the four variables: digital media exposure, perceptual factors and

attitudinal factors were examined. Generally the results of the study indicate that voting behaviour of the Zimbabwean electorate is influenced by the perceptual and attitudinal factors used in the current study. The results indicated significant correlations amongst the variables under study and voting intention. However, it is quite important to note that more frequent exposure to digital media and attention to campaign information is a significant predictor of voting intention among the study sample. Nonetheless, it is essential to provide a more comprehensive discussion of what can be concluded from the findings as well as the implications of the research findings in the next chapter (Chapter 9). Chapter nine is the final chapter presenting the contribution of the study; conclusions; implications; recommendations and suggestions for further research.

9 CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION

9.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the study findings and elaborates on the main results. It further presents the main findings in light of extant literature. The contributions and implications are provided, followed by recommendations, limitations of the study and direction for future research.

9.2 Review of the study

The present thesis was divided into nine chapters. Chapter one introduced the study and provided a brief overview of the study background. Chapter two covered the context while chapter three covered theoretical grounding for the study. Chapter four focused on empirical literature related to the study. In chapter five, the conceptual model and a set of critical hypotheses for the study were formulated for further emipirical examination. In Chapter six, the research methodology employed in the study was discussed. In Chapter seven, the statistical analysis and survey results obtained from the data collected were presented. Chapter eight discusses research findings in view of the extant literature. Chapter nine concludes the study.

9.3 Conclusions based on the theoretical objectives

Conclusions were drawn from the following objectives:

- To review literature on the effect of digital media exposure on the perceived image of a presidential candidate.
- To review literature on the effect of digital media exposure on attitude towards voting.
- To review literature on the effect of digital media exposure on the perceived image of the political party.
- To review literature on the effect of perceived image of the presidential candidate on attitude towards voting.
- To review literature on the effect of attitude towards voting on the perceived image of the political party.
- To review literature on the effect of perceived image of a presidential candidate on voting intention.
- To review literature on how attitudes towards voting influence voting intention.

- To review literature on how perceived image of the political party influence voting intention.

9.3.1 Overall conclusions based on theoretical literature review

The theoretical objectives focused on conducting a literature review on the effect of digital media exposure on the perceived image of a presidential candidate. This literature is discussed in Chapter three. The review acknowledged that voting behaviour, just like consumer behaviour, is fashioned by several factors such as sociological environment (Dickinson & Carsky, 2005), social influence (Aral & Walker, 2014), self-efficacy (Schwarz, 2014), as well as rational expectations (Li, Granados & Netessine, 2014). Thus, several enhancements involving either conceptualisation or the addition of antecedents have been added to strengthen the consumer behaviour narrative. With the proliferation of attitude models, it has become difficult to specify the conditions and processes necessary for the prediction of particular behaviours. However, most literature concurs that the theory of planned behaviour is one of the most effective models for predicting behaviour that is subject to volitional control (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). The overall consensus that emerged from the discourse is that voters' feelings and affect towards a particular party or candidate, evoked by the media in political campaigns, influence their perception of political party and presidential candidate. Therefore, perceived image of the leader has high material value and relevance to behavioural theory and is positively related to behavioural intention. Based on the structural realist approach to voter behaviour, decision-making and human consciousness is formed in the voter's mind on the basis of affect towards the candidate (Cwalina, Falkowski & Newman, 2010). The influence of digital media on voting intentions is a joint function of the background factors, beliefs, attitude towards voting; self-efficacy and perception towards the political players in the competition. It was noted that most of the extant literature posits that attitude towards behaviour is influenced by normative beliefs and attitude towards the attitude object (Ajzen, 2011). Therefore, based on the literature review, it can be concluded that using theory driven models to predict behaviour can provide a general understanding of voting intention as well as a structure for developing and changing voting behaviour. The attitude–behaviour perspective revolves around beliefs, attitude towards target behaviour and considers norms as a standard through which people determine what behaviours are acceptable to perform and which are less acceptable or even

undesirable. It is therefore proposed that attitude towards behaviour is vital in consumer behaviour prediction.

9.3.2 An overview of the study findings based on empirical objectives

This section discusses the conclusions drawn from the following empirical objectives, which were set in the study. These objectives comprised the following:

- To investigate the relationship between digital media exposure and perceived image of a presidential candidate.
- To investigate the relationship between digital media exposure and attitude towards voting.
- To investigate the relationship between digital media exposure and perceived image of the political party.
- To investigate the relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting.
- To investigate the relationship between attitude towards voting and perceived image of a presidential candidate.
- To investigate the relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and voting intention.
- To investigate the relationship between attitude towards voting and voting intention.
- To investigate the relationship between perceived image of the political party and voting intention.

Based on the above specified objectives, the next section presents the extent to which the study's objectives were achieved.

9.3.2.1 Digital media exposure and perceived image of a presidential candidate relationship.

The first empirical objective focused on the influence of digital media exposure on the perceived image of the presidential candidate. Digital media exposure was measured using a 32-item scale that was based on three forms of digital media, website, social networking and online news. Perceived image of the presidential candidate was measured using a 2-item scale measuring perception as reflected by feelings towards the candidate, a 7-item scale measuring the personal characteristics and a 7-item scale measuring the personal traits of the candidate. However, the

study did not support the relationship between digital media exposure and perceived image of the presidential candidate (H1). This is evidenced by the fact that the majority of responses on this relationship were between "Disagree" and "Neutral". Among the three forms of digital exposure, digital media (online news) was better preferred than the other two, namely, websites and social networking. This was reflected by the mean scores attained by items associated with websites, social networking and online news as elements of digital media. As for perceived image of the presidential candidate, all items of the construct registered means below 2 showing that the majority of the respondents were neutral and indifferent. The relationship between these two construct was insignificant and was not supported. However, this finding is inconsistent with the findings derived from previous literature. Previous studies have shown a positive relationship between the leader and media exposure. Conceivably, this finding was influenced by the prevailing political environment during the time of data collection. All political parties are in election mode since presidential election is earmarked to take place in 2018. Within the ruling party, there are also succession battles trying to find a replacement for the incumbent. Most participants in rural areas were not eager to indicate characteristics of the preferred candidate for fear of victimisation although all the necessary assurances were given prior to participation in the survey. Nonetheless, the study findings indicate that digital media exposure does not influence perceived image of the presidential candidate.

9.3.2.2 Digital media exposure and attitude towards voting relationship

The second objective measured the relationship between digital media and attitude towards voting. Attitude towards voting was measured using a 9-item scale adopted from Ajzen (2001). In terms of the general effects of digital media exposure, social network, websites and online news combined, the study results demonstrated that digital media exposure has only limited effects on attitude towards voting. The overall conclusion is thus that the use of the three forms of digital media has little impact on attitude towards voting. Therefore, it can be inferred that what matters for political learning is political interest, prior knowledge and attention to politics in traditional media formats as reflected in Morar, Venter and Chuchu (2015). Therefore, it can be concluded that digital media exposure has limited effects on attitude towards voting. In support of the current study findings, Groshek and Dimitrova (2011) found no effects of digital media use on political knowledge. It should be noted that, in the current study, three forms of digital media, that is, use of online news sites, use of political party websites and social media use, were analysed under

digital media exposure, hence it was impossible to measure the effect of each of them on attitude towards voting. These results suggest that digital media exposure positively affects attitude towards voting and its impact was significant ($p<0.01$). General analysis of the study shows that the majority (68%) of the participants are familiar with online media in the form of social media encompassing Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and the Internet, in general. However, from the research findings, it is evident that it would have been more appropriate to look at these different forms of digital media separately. From a practical point of view, the study findings suggest that different forms of digital media have different rationalities, which is an essential lesson for political parties and candidates trying to use digital media for political purposes. It is however, uncertain whether the differential effects of digital media can be attributed to the different functions and properties or to the various motivations people have for using the different forms of digital media.

9.3.2.3 Digital media exposure and perceived image of the political party relationship

Upon examining the third objective, the findings revealed that digital media exposure has a significant positive influence on perceived image of the political party. This is consistent with previous literature on the relationship between trust and perception (Indartono & Chen, 2011). If a consumer believes that a political party as a brand is trustworthy, they form a positive attitude towards the party and thus create a perception of the same. Trust exists when one party has confidence in another party's reliability and integrity (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Therefore, attitude towards a political brand can be defined as a voter's general evaluative judgment of a political brand based on his brand belief. Structural equation modelling was used to determine the relationship between the two variables and showed that there is a significant correlation between digital media exposure and perceived image of the political party (0.176; $p<0.01$). These findings have support in Dijkmans, Kerkhof and Beukeboom's (2015) work, who found positive associations between organisation social media use and corporate reputation. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between digital media exposure and perceived image of the political party.

9.3.2.4 Perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting

The fourth empirical objective focused on the relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting. Research results show that there is a strong correlation between perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting (0.635; $p<0.01$). In line with these findings, Frank (2012) acknowledges that the candidate's image remains the most important variable that influences voters' behaviour. Consumer behaviour literature found that consumers who have a positive perception of the brand, will be inclined to develop a greater willingness to purchase the product and subsequently actively seek out the product in a store (Thwaites et al., 2012). Thus, it can be concluded that there exists a significant predictive relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting. It was evident from the study that voters have strong preferences about what the personality profile of their ideal presidential candidate should be. For obvious reasons, political leaders usually endeavour to meet potential voters' expectations.

9.3.2.5 Perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting relationship

The results of this study disproved the hypothesis established in literature that the perceived image of a political party has a positive influence on attitude towards voting. Presumably, in this study, the relationship between party perception and attitude towards voting was not significant due to political 'polarisation'. This study supports the realistic paradigm, which asserts that cognitive domains can drive voting behaviour (Cwalina et al., 2008). Therefore, the fundamental aspects in influencing attitude towards voting are evoking positive emotions towards the party and then providing voter-customers with a justification for such an affect. One of the values of Zimbabwean society is respect for authority, hence these voter-customers are more susceptible to the unconscious power of affect. This study found no significant relationship between perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting. The results are quite surprising, considering the findings from extant literature.

9.3.2.6 Perceived image of the presidential candidate and voting intention

Three factors, that is, voter's feelings towards the candidate, candidate personal characteristics and personal traits were collectively represented by perceived image of the presidential candidate. Structural equation modelling was employed to establish the relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and voting intention. The results show that there was a strong

correlation between the two variables with a path coefficient 0.313. In support of these findings, Kaid (1995) found that political information exposure, such as political advertising, shapes audiences' perceptions of targeted candidates' image, informs them about candidates' issues, and influences general political attitudes about political systems and voting choice (Kaid, 1995). According to Smith (2005), most voters assess a political candidate on an aggregate bundled message as held in memory. Therefore, voters develop critical brand perceptions based on prior interface, experience and learning. Subsequently, voters develop a perception for a specific brand in comparison with others, which then influences their decision-making. Several studies have confirmed that voters are more interested in candidate characteristics and make voting decisions on the basis of candidate image (Sheafer, 2008; Hacker, 2004). Thus, it is concluded that there exists a significant positive relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and voting intention.

9.3.2.7 Attitude towards voting and voting intention

The hypothetical condition for this study was that voters' attitude towards voting influence their intention to participate in a presidential election. The study's findings confirm the influence of attitude on intention to vote. The findings of the study supported the hypothesised relationships and were very significant. The relationship between attitude towards voting and voting intention had the greatest impact with path coefficient 0.697; $p<0.001$. It thus explains that the attitude of the electorate in Zimbabwe has had an influence on their potential to vote in presidential elections and the impact has been significant. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (2010), attitude towards behaviour is a determinant of behavioural intention. It was evident from the study the prevailing political environment, as well as voters' past experiences, has influenced the attitude of the electorate towards voting. Those who experienced violence, and those who perceive elections as not free and fair, have developed a negative attitude towards voting. Those who are highly involved in politics have a positive attitude towards voting, hence they positively intend to vote in coming elections. It can be concluded that attitude towards voting has an influence on voting intention.

9.3.2.8 Perceived image of the political party and voting intention

It was evident from the findings that perceived image of the political party has a significant positive influence on voting intention. In the context of this study, this means that the more positive the perception of a political party, the greater the intention to vote. The confirmation of this relationship is in line with previous studies that confirmed a positive relationship between perceived image and behavioural intention, such as voting intention (Kumar et al., 2011). The findings are consistent with a study by Hermanto et al. *(*2014), who found that brand image has a positive direct relationship with brand loyalty and affective commitment. Schofield and Reeves (2015) confirmed that loyalty has a significant influence on voting behaviour. Overall, these studies reveal a consistent pattern of interactions between attitudes and beliefs that the political party can be influential in attaining desired results. A voter who is discontented with the political situation, but perceives a party as an instrumental vehicle for changing aspects of his life, will be more likely to demonstrate positive vote intention. The image of the party is then expected to influence voting intention.

9.4 Implications of the study

The following section discusses the implications of the study based on both significant and insignificant hypotheses.

9.4.1 Implications of digital media exposure and perceived image of the candidate

The research findings confirmed that the relationship between digital media exposure and perceived image of the presidential candidate was negative and not significant. This implies that digital media exposure has no effect on the perceived image of the presidential candidate. Extant literature confirms that exposure to campaign spots on media influence viewers' evaluations of the candidates (Kaid, 2004; Moy, Xenos & Hess, 2006). However, the research finding is supported by Dimitrova and Bystrom (2013), who found a negative impact of YouTube on candidate image evaluations. Contrary to this finding, Goldstein and Freedman (2000) found that exposure to candidate campaigns, increases the likelihood of voting for a candidate. The current study findings demonstrate that influence of digital media exposure has no influence on candidate image. Generally, in Zimbabwe, the political party label is more important and pronounced more than the individual. Historically, when the electorate vote they vote focusing on the party. The presidential candidate then personifies the party. Extant literature confirms that charismatic leadership is a

mobilising factor particularly for populist parties (Pedahzur & Brichta, 2002). Since Zimbabwean urbanization is 30%, and the majority is rural and traditional, the most popular media is the radio. It is however, essential to mention that Zimbabwean traditional culture emphasise relationships and the personal touch. Therefore, rallies still offer this personal touch that is characteristic of the Zimbabwe culture. This means that political marketers cannot rely on digital media to market presidential candidates, but rather should use other forms of communication to reach their target market. This highlights the possibility of ordinary citizens influencing political outcomes through the use of digital media by merely creating political messages in the online environment. However, research has found following the candidate on Facebook has a positive effect on evaluations of the candidate's intelligence and his leadership ability (Dimitrova & Bystrom, 2013). Therefore, political practitioners need to invest in digital media so that they are able to interact with their constituency. There is a need for practitioners to popularise digital media and change the motivational factors so as to effect attitude change among the electorate.

9.4.2 Implications of digital media exposure and attitude towards voting

The findings reveal that the relationship was positive (0.158; $p<0.05$) and was significant at 95% level. The results confirm that there is a positive effect on digital media exposure and attitude towards a voting relationship. To practitioners, this implies that appropriate use of digital media can enhance voters' attitude towards voting and consequently, influence voting intention. Although 92% indicated that they have access to digital media, the research results indicate that voter consumers do not use digital media for political information, hence the effect of digital media on attitude towards voting is moderate. Although people use the Internet for news, weather, movie reviews and business information, political enquiries arise infrequently enough to the extent that the consumers do not essentially have a trusted portal they intend to search. Thus, while people are savvy and experienced enough to evaluate the credibility of the general news website, they may have insufficient experience and knowledge with political websites which ordinarily are not used regularly. There is an opportunity for political marketers and practitioners to reach the critical mass for future success in electoral contests. There is a need for politicians to build trust in their brand among voters and instill positive attitudes towards that brand. Delgado-Ballester et al. (2003) found that consumers trust brands which they feel are reliable and secure and believe act in their

best interest. The practitioners should endeavour to instill confidence amongst the electorate so that they are able to effect a change in attitude towards voting, making use of digital media as a communication vehicle. The findings confirm that a fit between political brand and voter-consumers impact voting decisions. Whereas voter-consumers have multiple information sources, it is imperative for political administrators to keep voters engaged and emphasising positive traits and characteristics to enhance the image of the presidential candidate which subsequently influence attitude towards voting.

9.4.3 Implications of digital media exposure and perceived image of the political party

The research findings indicated that digital media exposure influences political party perception in a significant way. However, the research failed to distinguish between different types of digital media exposure. Thus, political parties attempting to use digital media should appreciate that different form of digital media may have different effects. In reality, checking out political websites may not be the same as blogging or connecting with a politician on a social networking site. When voters want to make a political decision relating to a party, such as voting, they use the political brand value associated with the brand name as an heuristic for electoral decision-making. Political parties should appreciate the significance of providing a cohesive brand image to their target market, consequently creating a party image involves knowledge of cognitive and emotional processes in the course of communication between citizens and the party. Keller (1993) defines brand image as a set of associations generally organised in memory, representing perceptions that may or may not reflect objective reality.

9.4.4 Implications of perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting.

The research findings indicate that image of the presidential candidate influences the Zimbabwe voters' attitude towards voting in a significant way (path coefficient 0.635; $p<0.05$). The findings confirm that the more positive the perception of the presidential candidate, the more they are eager to participate in elections. Therefore, the image perception has a significant influence on attitude to perform behaviour. For the practitioners, as well as political administrators, these findings imply that it is possible to change voters' attitude towards voting by presenting a candidate who

the voters perceive as credible, trustworthy, sincere and accountable. The attributes of the candidate can act as motivational factors which can evoke positive emotions and subsequently build positive attitudes towards voting. Although the research findings did not find digital media significantly influencing the leader image perception, political marketers can engage the services of 'spin doctors' to build and hone the image to successfully appeal to the voter-consumers. Extant literature posits that political brands communicate expectations and propositions attached to influence the voter's thought process (Smith, 2005). Accordingly, perceived image of the presidential candidate and trust in it becomes the one of the strongest determinants of a consumer's expectation. In most western countries, a political party is an institution. African politics is more of a personality cult. The presidential candidate is a personification of the party and the party cannot survive without him. Most political parties folded after the death of the leader, for example, Zimbabwe African National Union ZANU (Ndonga) after the death of Ndabaningi Sithole, United African National Congress (UANC) after the death of Abel Muzorewa.

9.4.5 Implications of perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting

The results of the study reveal that there is a statistically significant negative relationship between the two variables. This means that in Zimbabwe, the image of a political party has no influence on the voters' attitude towards voting. When the image of the party is positive, it does not necessarily follow that the attitude towards voting becomes equally positive. For example, a positive image of the party does not lead to positive attitudes towards voting. This negativity can be a result of other factors, such as such as mistrust of the voting process and perceived risk. African politics rely on propaganda and the influence of deification. Typical African political parties thrive on deification of the leader. African nationalism requires personification and deification in order to become real. South African had to release Mandela to personify African Nationalism; Malawi in 1963 invited Kamuzu Banda to be the leader in order to personify African Nationalism; Zimbabwe uses Herbert Chitepo. Therefore, cultism is present in African politics. Strategists in African politics may have to realise that politics in Africa is not yet institutionalised but it is heavily dependent on a particular personality in terms of branding. Practitioners need not spend resources in branding the party; they need to brand the party leader and what he stands for, to gain competitive advantage in elections. Therefore, developing a single branding concept that the leader stands for is essential. For example, ZANU (PF) managed to properly brand their presidential candidate, Robert Mugabe, with a single

branding concept ‘land’. Whether he is successful or not is not a subject of concern for this research, but that the branding concept indeed has worked in ZANU (PF)’s favour in all previous elections. Thus political marketers have to strengthen candidate image and voter‘s attitudes towards voting using the media, so that the image of the political party will not have any adverse effect on the attitude towards voting. According to the results, a positive perception of a political party does not lead to positive attitudes towards voting, though it influences the voting behaviour. To practitioners in the political field, these findings imply that if voters have a positive perception of a political party, that does not mean that the attitude towards voting is also positive and the reverse is also true. Therefore, in Zimbabwe, image of the party cannot be used to influence voters’ attitude towards voting.

9.4.6 Implications of perceived image of the presidential candidate and voting intention

Brand equity of the presidential candidate is critical in influencing voting and winning a presidential election. This means that if the brand equity of the candidate is low, it also affects the party equity which also affects voting behaviour of the voter-consumers. A leader is essential in the transfer of his association to the party brand. Trustworthiness, credibility and intelligence may help frame voters’ trust in the brand and the impact may penetrate down to party preference. On the contrary, Lee (2014) argues that voters are less likely to make evaluations on the basis of personality traits. Conversely, this study found a positive and significant relationship between perceived candidate image and voting intention (path coefficient 0.313; p<0.000). The research finding implies that the strategist may invest in building a positive image of the presidential candidate using other forms of media; Chou (2014) argues that persuasiveness is relative to the political knowledge of voters and the endorsed brand.

9.4.7 Implications of attitude towards voting and voting intention

The results of the study reveal that there is a significant and positive relationship between attitude towards voting and intention to vote. The value of the relationship was 69.7%. This means that attitude towards voting has a strong relationship with voting intention. This is consistent with the findings in literature. Several studies found a direct relationship between attitude and intention (Ajzen, 1991; Jung, Kim & Kim, 2014). Basically, voting intentions create the political reality. Practitioners should focus on the intention of voters as a key determinant of voting behaviour. It

is important for practitioners to establish the voting attitude of voters by investing in attitude surveys. Guided by the results of the survey, political marketers are able to determine the outcome of the elections. Marketers can use survey information to change the potential outcome of elections by influencing attitude change.

9.4.8 Implications of perceived image of the political party and voting intention

The findings revealed that the relationship between perceived image of the party and intention to vote is positive and significant. This means that perceived image of a party has a moderate but significant relationship with voting intention. The study has shown the difference between western politics and African politics as shown in literature. The Western world is concerned with 'for whom should I vote'rather than'what party I should vote for'. African politics is not constituency based, but party based. Most voters are not concerned about which individual represents them but rather which party represents their interest. This is particularly so in the parliamentary elections where individual members represent a particular constituency. It is important for political marketers to identify among the voters what party they intend to vote for rather than which candidate. It is practical to invest in the party brand equity so as to influence the voting behaviour of voters.

9.4.9 Summary of results

There are four possible strategies that practitioners can use to influence voting intention, in order of strength:

- Strategy one (1): a tri-component relationship between perceived image of the candidate, attitude towards voting and voting intention.
- Strategy two (2): three step flow of influence: digital media exposure-perceived image of the political party-voting intention relationship
- Strategy three (3): direct relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and voting intention
- Strategy four (4): digital media exposure-attitude towards voting-voting intention relationship

From the analysis, the relationship between attitude towards voting and voting intention has the strongest relationship. The implication is that if politicians or administrators have to look for a

strategy that will increase voting intention they need to focus more on creating a positive brand image of the presidential candidate which will impart positive attitudes toward voting and eventually influence voting intention. Then, a voter who has a positive perception of the presidential candidate will inherently promote a positive attitude towards voting which will influence voting decision. This is supported by Hermanto et al. *(*2014); Marshall (2010); Strandberg et al. (2015), who found that brand image has a positive direct relationship with brand loyalty and affective commitment. Although perceived image of the presidential candidate has a direct and significant relationship with voting intention, it is however stronger when it is used through attitude towards voting and through to voting intention. Based on the study, if politicians or political administrators have to look for strategy that maximises voter intention, they need to emphasis more on strategy one (1) than the other strategies.

9.5 Conclusions of main findings

The study's first empirical objective was to examine the influence of digital media on the perceived image of the presidential candidate. The findings revealed a negative and insignificant influence between the relationships. It can therefore be concluded that digital media exposure has no significant influence on how voters perceive the presidential candidate. This negative influence can be attributed to voters' attitude towards the media. In the Zimbabwean context, political parties utilise rallies and rituals during campaigns. In African politics, the electorate prefers to meet face-to-face with the individual in order to gain the personal touch. Personal relationships still count in politics. Charisma is an important element in African politics.

The study's second empirical objective was to examine the influence of digital media exposure on attitude towards voting. The findings revealed a positive relationship of 15.8% but digital media does not have a significant influence on attitude towards voting. Therefore digital media exposure can enhance attitude towards voting though the influence is negligible. However, most of the participants were from the generation Y cohort whose interest in political information is minimal. Those from the rural areas get political information from mainstream media which they attribute as propaganda, hence it shapes their attitude towards voting. Extant literature demonstrates the linkage between media usage and voting intention (Serek & Umemura, 2015). Prior to an election, citizens experience high exposure to stimuli that induce them to vote for specific parties. In the context of Zimbabwe, this is done through the media or through rallies. If the individual has the

propensity to vote, he or she changes attitudes towards voting and selectively expose themselves to media they believe is relevant and use the information to direct them towards voting (Hansen & Jensen, 2007). Research has also established that involvement in political dialogues enhances an individual's intention to participate in voting (Ekstrom & Ostman, 2013). The third empirical objective was to examine the influence of digital media on perceived image of the political party. The findings revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between digital media exposure and perceived image of the political party (H3). Thus, marketing efforts through digital media seem to have played a major role in influencing the image of the political parties. The study then concludes that digital media has a moderate influence on perceived image of a political party. Politically active individuals are mostly below 40 years and this group relies more on digital media than other forms of traditional media. However, it should be noted that exposure does not necessarily imply voting.

The fourth empirical objective was to ascertain the influence of perceived image of the presidential candidate on attitude towards voting. The findings revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting. Leadership evaluations should be predictors of party support since the leader symbolises the party. This study concludes that the perceived image of the presidential candidate has a strong influence on attitude towards voting. Therefore, it can be concluded that perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting are robust predictors of voting intentions. The more favourable the image of the presidential candidate is, the more positive the attitude towards voting. In the political marketing context, voter-consumers perceive political brands such as presidential candidates according to their own expectations. The positioning of the candidate in the political market has an influence on citizens' attitude towards voting. Positioning of the leader influences the attitude towards the leader which ultimately influences attitude towards voting. In Africa, political parties have not developed to an institutional level. They are still movements that are heavily dependent on a particular leader. Positive perception of political candidates can be attributed to their responsiveness in implementing pledged programmes. Failure to meet expectation may lead to frustration which then affects voters' attitudes towards voting in future elections. This may be true in the Zimbabwe context. Of the two major political parties in Zimbabwe, ZANU (PF) has been in power for 35 years and had an opportunity to showcase their performance over the years while the MDC has never been in power. Voters' perception and

expectations in view of the two political parties can impact on the attitude towards voting. Inconsistent promises and implementation may give rise to negative perceptions of the presidential candidate and ultimately, influence attitude towards voting.

The study's fifth empirical objective was to determine the influence of perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting. The findings revealed that there is a negative relationship between perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting (-.212; $p<0.002$). Accordingly, perceptions that the party is viewed favourably by voters do not seem to influence voting attitudes. Although digital media appears to be a robust predictor of perceived image of the party, the effect of the perception on attitude towards voting appears to be statistically insignificant. The sixth empirical objective in the study was to determine the influence of perceived image of the presidential candidate and voting intention. The findings reveal that there is a strong significant relationship between the variables (0.313; $p<0.000$). The study then concludes that leadership evaluations are significant predictors of voting intention. The brand equity of the presidential candidate is critical in winning a presidential election. If the brand equity is low, then the party will not be expected to win.

The study's seventh empirical objective was to ascertain the influence of attitude towards voting on voting intention. The hypothesised effect appears to be a statistically significant and robust predictor of voting intentions. The study model assumes that demographic variables influence the goals and values of voters, which in turn, explain their attitudes and perception of the party and candidate. These attitudes and perceptions in turn, determine their voting behaviour and normative pressures from other individuals and reference groups also influence voting decision-making. The study then concludes that attitude towards voting and perceived image of the presidential candidate appear to be robust predictors of the voting intentions of the Zimbabwean electorate. The study's eighth empirical objective was to determine the influence of perceived image of the political party and voting intentions. The finding revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between the variable (coefficient 0.363; $p<0.000$). The study concludes that perceived image of the party has a strong influence on voting intention. The voters who are partisan are more likely to vote that those who are not partisan. Therefore, party branding is of critical importance in influencing electoral outcome.

9.6 Overall conclusions

The current research is primarily concerned with investigating the influence of digital media exposure on candidate persona, political party perception, attitude towards voting and voting decision-making among the Zimbabwean electorate. Of the eight hypotheses, six are significant and two were not supported. This study concludes that digital media exposure has a significant positive influence on attitude towards voting and percived image of the political party, which subsequently influences voting intention. Furthermore, according to data analysis, it can be concluded that digital media is more influential on the perceived image of the political party than attitude towards voting. However, data analysis reveal that digital media exposure does not influence the voters' perception of the presidential candidate. This indicates that there are other elments that can influence perception of the leader candidate beside exposure to digital media. However, such a result is possible given that Zimbabwean communities are collective communites whose values are anchored on: respect for authority, traditional institutions, submission to authority and leadership, achievement and excellence. From the findings, it is evident that the strongest relationship exists between attitude towards voting and voting intention - H7 (path coefficient 0.697; p<0.000). Secondly, the findings indicate that perceived image of the presidential candidate has a significant positive influence on attitute towards voting which in turn, has the strongest influence on voting intentions. However, the relationship between digital media exposure and perceived image of the presidential candidate is rejected, as well as the relationship between perceived image of the political party and attitude towards voting. It is however, surprising that digital media exposure has a significant relationship with the image of the leader but has a negative relationship with the image of the political party. The findings also reveal that there is a significant positive relationship between perceived image of the presidential candidate and voting intention. Perceived image of the party has a significant positive relationship with voting intention. However, the strength of each of the relationships varies. Based on these research findings, managerial implications are discussed and future research directions are suggested. Structural equation modelling was used to test the predictive validity of the model.

Research has found that personality traits affect attitude towards the political party indirectly (Kaid, 2004; Fridkin & Patrick, 2011). This proposition is built on the argument values, ideologies, policies and the politicians are attributes of a political party. Previous research showed that attitudes towards an object are affected by opinions about its attributes (Fishbein, 1965). In

particular, attitude towards politicians, policies, ideologies and values were shown to shape evaluations of political parties and these attitudes towards party attributes are in turn, shaped by personality traits (Schumann & Schoen, 2003). It then suggests that finding a relationship between perceived image of the political party and voting intentions has a predisposition to enrich the existing literature on the brand image-voting intentions relationship in emerging democracies, such as Zimbabwe.

Finally, the descriptive statistics revealed that significant improvement can be made with regards to attitude towards voting which subsequently influence voting intentions. At least 40 % of the respondents indicated they have never voted in any election. However, it is noted that 24% of those who indicated that they have never voted, could have been below the age of majority in the last election in 2013. Only 17% voted in all three elections and 8% voted only once. The descriptive statistics highlight that attitude and perception is the main determinant of voting behaviour. It is therefore quite important to note that exposure to digital media, specifically, online news, social media and websites was a significant predictor of attitude towards voting and perceived image of the political party. The fact that digital media exposure and perceived image of the political party was a positive statistically significant predictor of voting intention is relatively remarkable and signifies that the use of online media may well contribute to knowledge acquisition. On the contrary, the negative relationship between digital media exposure and perceived image of the presidential candidate indicates a greater need for the study of user-generated media content, and studies on the knowledge gap among less familiar and older populations.

9.7 Recommendations

For political marketing specialists, some noteworthy points emerge from the research outcomes. Firstly, effective political campaigns should aim at building political credibility. Secondly, before designing political campaigns it is imperative to assess voter-consumers' perception of the party and potential candidate. This would moderate the inconsistency between information imparted through political communication and the existing information level of the targeted voters. Thirdly, the projection of the presidential candidate in the media should depend on the ground realities. If the voters' perception of the presidential candidate is negative, other positive aspects, such as party image, may be highlighted in the campaigns. However, the strength of digital media use presents enormous strengths and opportunities for political organisations. In order to optimise the strength of different forms of digital media, the following is recommended:

9.7.1 Resource allocation and implementing integrated marketing communication

The study found a positive and significant relationship between digital media exposure and perceived image of the party. It is imperative for political entities to commit both human and financial resources towards the implementation of a comprehensive and highly focused digital media strategy. In the 2008 election campaign, Obama succeeded by using social media and technology as an integral part of his campaign (Chang, 2010).

There is a need for political parties to brand and coordinate marketing communication efforts by designing and implementing integrated marketing communication to drive consistency of messages, using traditional and contemporary marketing channels. Luxton, Reid and Mavondo (2015) found that IMC capability directly influences campaign effectiveness and the market performance of brands, irrespective of size.

9.7.2 Political party positioning

For political parties that desire to appeal and attract voter-consumers from different age segments and location, it is critical to segment the political market and understand these segments so as to leverage on digital platforms that are appropriate for each segment.

9.7.3 Political engagement

The study found a positive and significant relationship between digital media exposure and attitude towards voting. Zimbabwe has a total mobile penetration rate of 94.3% (Potraz, 2016). Mobile technology has the significant advantage of speed and transmission of real time information**.** Using mobile digital technology, political entities have great opportunity of reaching extensive audience. Smart phones can enable parties to spread their reach and embrace a large audience in the political dialogue.

9.7.4 Managing political reputation

It is vital for political parties to implement online reputation management to track, assess and monitor online media. Although reputation is intangible, it is one of the essential assets of an organization. Building long term political reputation requires tremendous effort and demands detailed strategy. Due to the speed of digital media in transmitting information, retracting damaged or bad reputations becomes challenging. A good reputation results in voters trusting the political

candidate or party and can lead to electoral achievements. According to the exchange theory (Kotler, 1975), voting is an exchange process based on the promises made by the politician. When the exchange process fails, cognitive dissonance sets in, negatively affecting the consumer's voting intention in future elections.

9.7.5 Enhancing impact of digital platforms

Invest in graphic designing that attracts exchange, sharing and continuous engagement. Political parties are fighting for audience attention, thus explanatory graphics induce attention and have the potential of being shared.

9.7.6 Develop digital media listening strategy

Political organisations are encouraged to develop a media listening strategy to assist the political leaders to remain well-informed about current issues and able to measure the pulse of the audience and gain insight into what is important to them at that particular time.

9.8 Contribution of the study

The contextual contribution and theoretical contributions are grounded on what the study adds to the existing body of knowledge. Practical contribution and managerial implications are based on the insights for marketers and political practitioners.

9.8.1 Conceptual contribution

The conceptualisation of this study offers an original insight for studies in marketing on the effect of digital media on perception, attitudes and intentions. This study was conducted amongst eligible voters within Zimbabwe. Precisely, it studied the significance and influence of digital media exposure on voting intentions. Prior studies on voting intentions have explored this phenomenon in a general, global context whereas this study investigates voting behaviour and attitudinal constructs within a specifically Zimbabwean context. By exploring the influence of digital media exposure on consumer behaviour, this study adds to contextual knowledge on media exposure and voter decision-making factors that influence behavioural intentions. Furthermore, perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting and perceived image of the political party have not been used previously as an holistic framework to measure the impact of digital media exposure on voting intention.

9.8.2 Theoretical contribution

The research contributes to marketing literature, brand management, consumer behaviour and political marketing and other related fields in numerous ways. The first evident contribution of this research is the examination of the digital media exposure construct within a political marketing setting. This research contributes to the theory of political marketing by providing a *validated theoretical framework,* which explains the relationship between the constructs of digital media exposure and voting intention. Although similar research has been conducted across a range of settings, few have explored voter decision-making in a Zimbabwean context. Secondly, the present research contributes to academic literature as it demonstrates *evidence of digital media exposure as a predictor of voting intention.* Furthermore, the research also argues that perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting and perceived image of the political party are predictors of voting intention, and attitude towards voting is the strongest variable that influences voting intention. Furthermore, due to limited research on digital media exposure in the present context, this study provides a validated conceptual framework, which identifies constructs that have a relationship with the voter-consumer behaviour context in Zimbabwe. This research presents descriptive findings from factors influencing voting intention. From the findings, the present study provides support that the digital media exposure influences voting intention. As a growing body of literature is exploring the use of digital media in marketing or campaigning to create a competitive advantage, this study provides researchers with an in-depth understanding of voter-consumer responses to digital media exposure in political marketing settings. In examining the influence of digital media, perceived image of the political party, perceived image of the presidential candidate and attitude towards voting in a single study as a universal framework brings a new contribution to the academic literature and knowledge. Previous studies have researched only the direct effects of attitude and perception on behavioural intention (Ajzen, 2010). However, further analysis of the relationships between variables revealed that perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting and perceived image of the political party fully mediate the relationship between digital media exposure and voting intention. Within the field of political marketing, researchers will have access to current literature on digital media exposure and behavioural aspects influencing voting decision-making. Furthermore, the theoretical model proposed is firmly grounded in theory and its assessment is founded on well-developed scales.

Lastly, the application of structural equation modelling in the political decision-making context is a significant contribution of this study.

9.8.3 Managerial contribution

The study aims to examine the relationship between constructs, digital media exposure, perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting, perceived image of the political party and voting intention in a political marketing perspective. By investigating digital media exposure and its impact on consumers' voting intention, the findings can provide marketing practitioners and political practitioners with a better understanding of strategies that may be employed to influence consumers' voting behaviour using digital media communication. The study confirms that digital media exposure influences voting intentions through attitude towards voting and perceived image of the political party. The study confirms that digital media exposure, perceived image of the presidential candidate, attitude towards voting, perceived image of the political party predict voting intention. Therefore, digital media should not be used as an extension of the offline message to the electorate, but should be used to deepen relationships with the voters through continuous, interactive communication, and interpersonal connectivity which enhances voter perceptions, attitudes and decision-making.

9.9 Limitations

The research endeavoured to gain a better understanding of the concept of digital media exposure and its effect on voting intention. Although the study has made a significant contribution to literature and the implications for marketing practitioners, it has some limitations. It is noted that 95% of the respondents were educated with a minimum qualification of high school and for this reason, they may have more political knowledge (Hindman, 2009). Notwithstanding the demonstrated relationship of selected digital media tools and voting intention, the range is extensive compared to regular digital networks, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube (Schmitt-Beck & Mackenrodt, 2010). The conceptual model places three different types of variables on one level such that individual level and mediating variables are all tied together. Each of them clearly have effects on attitude formation and voting behaviour, however, each of these types of factors come into the equation at different stages of attitude formation. The conceptual model presented in the study fails to sufficiently address this intricate interplay. Finally, if one focuses on the role of information sources in influencing voting intention, it appears evident that the political information

coming from digital media is only a part of a broader context in which interpersonal communication also plays a significant role (Campus, Pasquino & Vaccari, 2008).

9.10 Suggestions for Future Research

The results of the study contribute to literature on brand management, consumer behaviour and political marketing. By providing a critical analysis of digital media exposure and its effect on consumer voting behaviour, politicians are able to engage with the voters by providing valuable content that meets user needs for information, expediency, and motivates content sharing and 'pulls' in consumers. Although the influence of digital media exposure or online media in the political spectrum seems conceivable, the scope of its effects is still uncertain. Further research on digital politics is necessary to validate its future role in political marketing. As stated by Panagopoulos (2009), technology is transforming the character and designs of campaigns and elections. Modern technologies, such as digital media, present new opportunities in political marketing. However, adapting and applying these instruments effectively is fundamental. Identifying the dynamics that are significant for positive execution is thus necessary.

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APPENDIX 1:



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Good day,
My name is Rejoice Tobias-Mamina, student number 1405608, and I am currently studying for a Doctor of Philosophy (Marketing) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

My current research is entitled "Digital media exposure, political attitudes and perceptions as antecedents of voting intention: A Zimbabwe perspective". The objective of the study is to investigate the influence of digital media exposure on voting intention among Zimbabwean citizens. The findings of this study add to existing literature on political parties and political candidates as brands and factors that influence the electorate's voting intentions.

You are invited to participate in the current research study on the influence of digital media on voting intention. Your selection into this research was based on the fact that you are an eligible voter and therefore a potential voter in Zimbabwe general elections. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any stage. If you wish to leave out any questions, there will be no negative consequences or implications/penalties. Completing the questionnaire should take no more than 20 minutes of your time.

By being a participant in this research you will not receive payment in any form and the information you disclose will only be used for academic purposes. Should you require a summary of the research; the researcher can make this available to you. If you have any further questions or queries you are welcome to contact the researcher or the supervisor, or HREC at any time at the contact details provided below:

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Digital media exposure, political attitudes and perceptions as antecedents of voting intentions: A Zimbabwe perspective.

Please answer the following questions according to the guidelines below. The questionnaire is strictly for research purposes only.

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

This section is asking about your background information. Please indicate your answer by ticking (X) in the appropriate box.

A1. Gender

Male		Female	

A2. Age Category

<18-24		25-34		35- 44		45-54		55<	

A3. Residential Location

Urban		Rural		Mixed	

A4. Educational Level

Primary School		High School		Diploma		Degree		Post graduate degree	

A5.Employment Status

Student		Employed		Self employed		Unemployed	

A6. Are you a registered voter?

Yes		No		Prefer not to say	

If you answered 'NO' to this question, please skip to question A8

A7. If you answered 'YES' to question 6, please indicate the presidential elections you participated in: (You may tick more than one box)

2002		2008		2013	

A8. Do you have access to the Internet or World Wide Web?

Yes		No	

A9. How have you been getting most of your information about current affairs?

Social media		Internet		Radio		TV		Other sources, specify	

SECTION B: DIGITAL MEDIA EXPOSURE

Below are statements about digital media exposure. Please indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with each statement by ticking the appropriate block with the corresponding number in the 7-point scale below.

	Website Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
B1	I have visited and read political party websites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B2	I often visit and read my preferred political party website	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B3	I often visit other opposition party websites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B4	I feel convinced by these political party websites to vote for a particular political party.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B5	I often feel positively about these party websites that I have read online	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B7	I generally grant full attention to these political party websites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

B8	I find political party websites to be more engaging than other online sources of information	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Social Networking Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
B9	I have read and watched political party programs on Twitter and YouTube	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B10	I feel convinced by these political party programs to vote for a particular political party	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B11	I often feel positively about these party programs that I see on Twitter and YouTube	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B12	I generally grant full attention to these political party downloads	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B13	I find political party downloads on Twitter and YouTube more engaging than other online sources of information	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B14	I often ‘follow’ or ‘like’ a political figure on Twitter (clicking ‘like’ or ‘follow’)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B15	I often ‘follow’ or ‘like’ a political figure on YouTube	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B16	I often ‘follow’ a politician or a political party on Facebook	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B17	I have read a blog about politics and current affairs on the Internet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

B18	I have often commented or discussed politics or current affairs on the Internet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B19	I have often written texts on a personal blog about politics or current affairs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B20	I have often watched and read presidential candidate speeches on YouTube	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B21	I have often used my cell-phone as a main point of access for news	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B22	I have often accessed the Internet on tablets	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B23	I have often accessed the Internet on other mobile devices	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B24	I often engage in online political discussion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	On-line news	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
B25	I watch, read or listen to news on the Internet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B26	I have read a local tabloid on the Internet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B27	I 'follow' Zimbabwe political news on YouTube	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B28	I 'follow' local news closely online when something important is happening.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B29	I feel convinced by online news to vote in the general election	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B30	I often feel positively about online news	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B31	I generally grant full attention to online news	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

B32	I find online news more appealing than other sources of information	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

SECTION C: PERCEIVED IMAGE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

Below are statements about feelings and perceived characteristics of presidential candidates for the 2 major parties in Zimbabwe. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement by ticking the appropriate block with the corresponding number in the 7-point scale below.

	Perceptions **Statement**	Most unfavourable	Unfavourable	Slightly unfavourable	Neutral	Slightly favourable	Favourable	Most favourable
C1	Indicate your overall feeling towards your preferred political party presidential candidate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C2	Indicate your feelings towards the other political party`s presidential candidates	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements regarding your preferred political mparty presidential candidate.

	Personal characteristics **Statement**	Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
C3	My preferred political party`s presidential candidate is sincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C4	My preferred political party presidential candidate is competent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C5	My preferred political party presidential candidate is diplomatic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C6	My preferred political party presidential candidate is corrupt	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

C7	My preferred political party presidential candidate is accountable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C8	My preferred political party presidential candidate is arrogant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C9	My preferred political party presidential candidate is modest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Personal Traits **Statement**	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
C10	My preferred political party presidential candidate has morals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C11	My preferred political party presidential candidate provides strong leadership.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C12	My preferred political party presidential candidate really cares about people like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C13	My preferred political party presidential candidate is knowledgeable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C14	My preferred political party presidential candidate is intelligent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C15	My preferred political party presidential candidate is honest.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C16	My preferred political party presidential candidate is optimistic.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

SECTION D: ATTITUDE TOWARDS VOTING

Below are statements about attitude towards voting. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement by ticking the appropriate block with the corresponding number in the 7-point scale below.

	Attitudes Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
D1	Voting for a political party will match my political attitude	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D2	I am convinced that voting for a political party will be beneficial to Zimbabwe	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D3	If I have to vote in the next election I would have a hard time to justify why	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D4	It makes no difference to my life who wins the election	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D5	For me voting in elections regularly is extremely valuable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D6	Most of my friends and acquaintances think that voting is a good idea	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D7	Politicians are only interested in peoples' votes not their opinion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D8	Voting can make a difference	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D9	Online media influenced my attitude towards voting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

SECTION E: PERCEIVED IMAGE OF THE POLITICAL PARTY

Below are statements about political party personality. Please indicate to what extent agree or disagree with each statement by ticking the appropriate block with the corresponding number in the 7-point scale below.

	Political Party Personality Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
E1	My preferred political party is a betrayer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
E2	My preferred political party is boastful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
E3	My preferred political party is democratic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
E4	My preferred political party is peaceful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
E5	My preferred political party is violent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
E6	My preferred political party is not associated with any philosophy, policies and programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
E7	My preferred political party is tribal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
E8	My preferred political party is sincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
E9	I feel a specific relationship with any of the political parties in Zimbabwe	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
E10	Party image portrayed on political party platforms is the opposite of reality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

SECTION F: VOTING INTENTION

Please indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements regarding your intention to voting in future elections.

	Voting Intention Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
F1	I intend to vote in the forth coming general elections	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
F2	I will try to vote in the forth coming election	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
F3	I plan to vote in the forth coming election	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
F4	For me voting in the forthcoming election is worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
F5	The people in my life whose opinion I value would approve of my voting in the forth coming election	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
F6	It is expected of me that I vote in the forthcoming election	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
F7	I am convinced that I will vote in the next presidential election	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
F8	I do not believe that voting in presidential elections would make much difference	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
F9	Most of my online friends think that voting is a good idea	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
F10	What I read on Internet makes me more likely to vote	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

If you have any comments please share them in the space provided below.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX 2: CRONBACH'S COEFFICIENT ALPHA

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
.897	.894	16

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
DMEXSN1	3.31	2.143	302
DMEXSN2	3.11	1.973	302
DMEXSN3	3.68	2.059	302
DMEXSN4	2.80	1.753	302
DMEXSN5	2.85	1.737	302
DMEXSN6	2.80	1.838	302
DMEXSN7	3.52	2.127	302
DMEXSN8	3.71	2.161	302
DMEXSN9	4.40	2.163	302
DMEXSN10	3.30	2.116	302
DMEXSN11	2.31	1.470	302
DMEXSN12	4.57	2.123	302
DMEXSN13	4.83	2.127	302
DMEXSN14	4.26	2.212	302
DMEXSN15	4.86	2.053	302
DMEXSN16	2.41	1.650	302

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
DMEXSN1	53.42	356.796	.458	.566	.894
DMEXSN2	53.62	358.436	.484	.697	.893
DMEXSN3	53.05	345.565	.636	.664	.887
DMEXSN4	53.93	360.353	.527	.636	.892
DMEXSN5	53.88	364.823	.462	.538	.894
DMEXSN6	53.93	357.909	.535	.618	.891
DMEXSN7	53.21	344.458	.627	.746	.888

DMEXSN8	53.02	339.594	.681	.788	.886
DMEXSN9	52.33	336.768	.719	.662	.884
DMEXSN10	53.43	349.808	.559	.639	.890
DMEXSN11	54.42	376.338	.351	.444	.897
DMEXSN12	52.17	342.544	.655	.677	.887
DMEXSN13	51.90	346.714	.597	.587	.889
DMEXSN14	52.47	345.353	.587	.620	.889
DMEXSN15	51.87	346.392	.627	.639	.888
DMEXSN16	54.32	370.842	.393	.476	.896

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
56.73	398.509	19.963	16

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.907	.913	7

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
DMEXweb1	3.80	2.246	302
DMEXweb2	3.01	1.977	302
DMEXweb3	2.84	1.883	302
DMEXweb4	2.83	1.925	302
DMEXweb5	2.65	1.740	302
DMEXweb6	2.64	1.763	302
DMEXweb7	2.69	1.838	302

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
DMEXweb1	16.66	91.582	.444	.272	.929
DMEXweb2	17.44	82.739	.808	.702	.884
DMEXweb3	17.62	87.472	.701	.581	.896
DMEXweb4	17.63	83.709	.803	.705	.885
DMEXweb5	17.81	87.385	.778	.690	.888
DMEXweb6	17.81	85.620	.827	.795	.883
DMEXweb7	17.77	85.758	.781	.735	.887

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
20.46	115.711	10.757	7

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.845	.847	8

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
DMEXOLN1	4.98	2.081	302
DMEXOLN2	4.59	2.068	302
DMEXONL3	4.00	2.157	302
DMEXOLN4	4.25	2.209	302
DMEXOLN5	4.04	2.113	302
DMEXOLN6	3.50	1.942	302
DMEXOLN7	3.31	1.995	302
DMEXOLN8	3.47	2.021	302

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
DMEXOLN1	27.15	100.116	.669	.654	.816
DMEXOLN2	27.55	101.119	.647	.687	.819
DMEXONL3	28.14	104.251	.531	.524	.833
DMEXOLN4	27.89	101.821	.574	.635	.828
DMEXOLN5	28.09	111.041	.377	.414	.852
DMEXOLN6	28.64	102.877	.651	.644	.819
DMEXOLN7	28.83	102.595	.636	.590	.820
DMEXOLN8	28.67	104.362	.578	.612	.827

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
32.14	132.290	11.502	8

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha[a]	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items[a]	N of Items
-1.070	-1.071	2

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PPCPer1	5.26	1.659	302
PPCPer2	2.74	1.609	302

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PPCPer1	2.74	2.587	-.349	.122	.[a]
PPCPer2	5.26	2.752	-.349	.122	.[a]

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
8.00	3.478	1.865	2

PPC pc

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.601	.594	7

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PPCpc1	5.17	1.664	302
PPCpc2	5.27	1.569	302
PPCpc3	5.24	1.524	302
PPCpc4	2.79	1.580	302
PPCpc5	5.01	1.574	302
PPCpc6	2.77	1.510	302
PPCpc7	5.04	1.572	302

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PPCpc1	26.12	22.750	.636	.748	.435
PPCpc2	26.02	22.468	.718	.795	.409
PPCpc3	26.05	23.672	.649	.652	.442
PPCpc4	28.50	40.583	-.371	.491	.763
PPCpc5	26.28	24.390	.563	.549	.472
PPCpc6	28.52	37.759	-.238	.424	.723
PPCpc7	26.25	23.737	.614	.500	.451

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
31.29	35.616	5.968	7

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.929	.931	7

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PPCpt1	5.15	1.611	302
PPCpt2	5.37	1.479	302
PPCpt3	5.05	1.717	302
PPCpt4	5.39	1.405	302
PPCpt5	5.48	1.420	302
PPCpt6	5.01	1.623	302
PPCpt7	5.12	1.481	302

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PPCpt1	31.42	60.491	.728	.593	.923
PPCpt2	31.21	60.325	.819	.696	.914
PPCpt3	31.52	57.998	.779	.649	.919
PPCpt4	31.18	61.312	.819	.779	.915
PPCpt5	31.10	62.143	.766	.730	.919
PPCpt6	31.57	58.951	.792	.674	.917
PPCpt7	31.45	61.903	.739	.577	.922

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
36.58	81.315	9.017	7

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.514	.557	9

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N

ATV1	4.95	1.945	302
ATV2	5.25	1.850	302
ATV3	3.39	2.088	302
ATV4	2.84	2.045	302
ATV5	5.10	1.905	302
ATV6	5.24	1.756	302
ATV7	4.36	2.348	302
ATV8	5.56	1.730	302
ATV9	4.20	2.080	302

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
ATV1	35.94	49.731	.417	.531	.419
ATV2	35.64	49.846	.448	.555	.412
ATV3	37.49	65.181	-.136	.395	.601
ATV4	38.05	65.719	-.149	.405	.602
ATV5	35.78	50.302	.408	.471	.423
ATV6	35.65	48.912	.528	.498	.390
ATV7	36.53	58.662	.022	.268	.563
ATV8	35.33	50.148	.483	.494	.407
ATV9	36.69	51.539	.305	.266	.456

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
40.89	64.964	8.060	9

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.372	.371	10

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PP1	2.53	1.638	302
PP2	2.72	1.721	302
PP3	4.96	1.712	302
PP4	5.15	1.672	302
PP5	2.53	1.520	302
PP6	2.93	1.591	302
PP7	2.62	1.632	302
PP8	4.94	1.720	302
PP9	3.39	1.823	302
PP10	3.94	2.051	302

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PP1	33.18	35.567	.301	.603	.281
PP2	32.99	34.704	.319	.553	.269
PP3	30.75	47.463	-.265	.396	.499
PP4	30.56	48.992	-.327	.562	.515
PP5	33.18	35.051	.376	.611	.257
PP6	32.78	35.289	.334	.209	.270
PP7	33.09	34.942	.338	.437	.265
PP8	30.77	44.145	-.130	.277	.452
PP9	32.32	35.002	.269	.218	.288
PP10	31.76	31.277	.377	.236	.220

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
35.71	44.134	6.643	10

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.681	.717	10

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
VI1	5.58	1.742	302
VI2	5.61	1.692	302
VI3	5.62	1.617	302
VI4	2.62	1.899	302
VI5	5.39	1.750	302
VI6	5.61	1.618	302
VI7	5.63	1.667	302
VI8	2.95	2.005	302
VI9	4.14	2.164	302
VI10	3.74	2.117	302

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
VI1	41.30	66.389	.626	.799	.604
VI2	41.26	66.287	.655	.790	.601
VI3	41.25	67.657	.636	.765	.607
VI4	44.25	95.081	-.310	.385	.768
VI5	41.49	67.865	.564	.630	.616
VI6	41.26	68.169	.614	.665	.611
VI7	41.25	66.453	.661	.695	.600
VI8	43.92	92.981	-.254	.328	.765
VI9	42.74	71.735	.294	.487	.669
VI10	43.14	68.692	.400	.503	.645

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
46.87	87.193	9.338	10

APPENDIX 3: *p*-VALUES

Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
PPC	<---	DMEX	-.158	.091	-1.738	.082	par_38
PI	<---	DMEX	.457	.122	3.758	***	par_41
ATV	<---	PPC	.684	.082	8.323	***	par_39
ATV	<---	DMEX	.255	.082	3.127	.002	par_42
ATV	<---	PI	-.182	.059	-3.103	.002	par_45
VI	<---	PPC	.445	.095	4.695	***	par_40
VI	<---	ATV	.921	.101	9.146	***	par_43
VI	<---	PI	.413	.061	6.731	***	par_44
PPC16	<---	PPC	1.000				
PPC15	<---	PPC	1.276	.071	17.994	***	par_1
PPC14	<---	PPC	.924	.071	12.995	***	par_2
PPC12	<---	PPC	1.312	.086	15.276	***	par_3
PPC10	<---	PPC	1.082	.078	13.851	***	par_4
PPC9	<---	PPC	1.051	.082	12.780	***	par_5
PPC7	<---	PPC	.936	.078	12.054	***	par_6
PPC5	<---	PPC	.983	.075	13.123	***	par_7
PPC4	<---	PPC	1.138	.069	16.461	***	par_8
PPC3	<---	PPC	1.234	.080	15.447	***	par_9
PPC1	<---	PPC	1.068	.084	12.718	***	par_10
DMEX3	<---	DMEX	1.941	.250	7.779	***	par_11
DMEX4	<---	DMEX	2.008	.251	7.992	***	par_12
DMEX5	<---	DMEX	1.656	.226	7.324	***	par_13
DMEX6	<---	DMEX	2.026	.249	8.127	***	par_14
DMEX8	<---	DMEX	2.219	.282	7.872	***	par_15
DMEX9	<---	DMEX	2.314	.295	7.841	***	par_16
DMEX11	<---	DMEX	1.781	.199	8.949	***	par_17
DMEX23	<---	DMEX	1.000				
DMEX27	<---	DMEX	1.715	.243	7.046	***	par_18
DMEX28	<---	DMEX	.492	.162	3.044	.002	par_19
DMEX29	<---	DMEX	1.486	.214	6.939	***	par_20
DMEX30	<---	DMEX	1.790	.239	7.499	***	par_21

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
DMEX31	<---	DMEX	1.421	.212	6.708	***	par_22
ATV9	<---	ATV	1.000				
ATV8	<---	ATV	.974	.078	12.425	***	par_23
ATV6	<---	ATV	1.030	.079	13.023	***	par_24
ATV5	<---	ATV	1.049	.088	11.873	***	par_25
ATV2	<---	ATV	1.000				
ATV1	<---	ATV	1.338	.088	15.279	***	par_26
VI1	<---	VI	1.000				
VI2	<---	VI	.989	.036	27.192	***	par_27
VI3	<---	VI	.951	.040	23.728	***	par_28
VI5	<---	VI	.947	.059	16.039	***	par_29
VI6	<---	VI	.751	.044	16.957	***	par_30
VI7	<---	VI	.854	.041	20.755	***	par_31
PI1	<---	PI	1.000				
PI2	<---	PI	1.059	.061	17.320	***	par_32
PI5	<---	PI	.929	.055	16.827	***	par_33
PI7	<---	PI	.695	.066	10.609	***	par_34
DMEX2	<---	DMEX	1.993	.254	7.852	***	par_35
DMEX13	<---	DMEX	1.572	.194	8.123	***	par_36
PPC13	<---	PPC	.972	.070	13.916	***	par_37

Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate
PPC	<---	DMEX	-.105
PI	<---	DMEX	.243
ATV	<---	PPC	.635
ATV	<---	DMEX	.158
ATV	<---	PI	-.212
VI	<---	PPC	.313
VI	<---	ATV	.697
VI	<---	PI	.363
PPC16	<---	PPC	.739
PPC15	<---	PPC	.857
PPC14	<---	PPC	.722
PPC12	<---	PPC	.826
PPC10	<---	PPC	.736
PPC9	<---	PPC	.728
PPC7	<---	PPC	.660
PPC5	<---	PPC	.715
PPC4	<---	PPC	.815

PPC3	<---	PPC	.814
PPC1	<---	PPC	.711
DMEX3	<---	DMEX	.742
DMEX4	<---	DMEX	.771
DMEX5	<---	DMEX	.698
DMEX6	<---	DMEX	.833
DMEX8	<---	DMEX	.779
DMEX9	<---	DMEX	.855
DMEX11	<---	DMEX	.750
DMEX23	<---	DMEX	.441
DMEX27	<---	DMEX	.581
DMEX28	<---	DMEX	.173
DMEX29	<---	DMEX	.557
DMEX30	<---	DMEX	.645
DMEX31	<---	DMEX	.509
ATV9	<---	ATV	.557
ATV8	<---	ATV	.667
ATV6	<---	ATV	.707
ATV5	<---	ATV	.650
ATV2	<---	ATV	.660
ATV1	<---	ATV	.824
VI1	<---	VI	.912
VI2	<---	VI	.924
VI3	<---	VI	.931
VI5	<---	VI	.867
VI6	<---	VI	.740
VI7	<---	VI	.816
PI1	<---	PI	.828
PI2	<---	PI	.821
PI5	<---	PI	.825
PI7	<---	PI	.583
DMEX2	<---	DMEX	.739
DMEX13	<---	DMEX	.619
PPC13	<---	PPC	.765

Covariances: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
e75	<-->	e76	-.893	.112	-8.010	***	par_48
e3	<-->	e4	.563	.063	9.011	***	par_46
e43	<-->	e45	1.609	.182	8.849	***	par_47
e46	<-->	e47	1.505	.172	8.738	***	par_49
e61	<-->	e62	.492	.075	6.548	***	par_50

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
e13	<-->	e14	.453	.056	8.094	***	par_51
e19	<-->	e18	.543	.109	4.975	***	par_52
e22	<-->	e24	-.681	.098	-6.919	***	par_53
e44	<-->	e75	.855	.135	6.335	***	par_54
e44	<-->	e48	1.219	.184	6.615	***	par_55
e21	<-->	e18	.597	.083	7.185	***	par_56
e44	<-->	e77	.434	.096	4.521	***	par_57
e5	<-->	e68	-.185	.067	-2.751	.006	par_58
e8	<-->	e10	.264	.074	3.570	***	par_59
e27	<-->	e39	.476	.099	4.820	***	par_60
e12	<-->	e13	.402	.056	7.189	***	par_61
e3	<-->	e59	-.110	.031	-3.559	***	par_62
e21	<-->	e22	.501	.086	5.802	***	par_63
e20	<-->	e22	.413	.096	4.303	***	par_64
e20	<-->	e21	.682	.103	6.651	***	par_65
e25	<-->	e44	.459	.106	4.338	***	par_66
e45	<-->	e47	1.658	.184	9.021	***	par_67
e43	<-->	e47	1.615	.190	8.509	***	par_68
e45	<-->	e46	1.190	.156	7.639	***	par_69
e43	<-->	e46	1.219	.165	7.372	***	par_70
e49	<-->	e52	.494	.114	4.326	***	par_71
e12	<-->	e14	.328	.061	5.421	***	par_72
e10	<-->	e12	.361	.062	5.789	***	par_73
e10	<-->	e61	.195	.061	3.188	.001	par_74
e19	<-->	e25	-.585	.089	-6.547	***	par_75
e5	<-->	e57	.172	.047	3.675	***	par_76
e27	<-->	e57	-.100	.045	-2.188	.029	par_77
e47	<-->	e74	-.356	.074	-4.801	***	par_78
e58	<-->	e61	-.175	.045	-3.929	***	par_79
e7	<-->	e63	-.261	.060	-4.327	***	par_80
e7	<-->	e39	-.357	.081	-4.426	***	par_81
e7	<-->	e16	-.303	.072	-4.206	***	par_82
e27	<-->	e48	.375	.102	3.661	***	par_83
e21	<-->	e67	-.149	.053	-2.816	.005	par_84
e58	<-->	e68	-.171	.047	-3.622	***	par_85
e1	<-->	e2	.190	.055	3.450	***	par_86
e44	<-->	e46	.417	.108	3.870	***	par_87
e44	<-->	e76	-.763	.152	-5.005	***	par_88
e56	<-->	e76	.445	.085	5.241	***	par_89
e43	<-->	e76	-.230	.081	-2.850	.004	par_90
e13	<-->	e56	.175	.045	3.861	***	par_91

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
e22	<-->	e56	.190	.066	2.899	.004	par_92
e2	<-->	e55	-.190	.061	-3.104	.002	par_93
e48	<-->	e55	-.540	.111	-4.871	***	par_94
e14	<-->	e20	-.108	.048	-2.264	.024	par_95
e19	<-->	e51	-.355	.083	-4.255	***	par_96
e13	<-->	e19	-.165	.046	-3.633	***	par_97
e13	<-->	e39	-.162	.049	-3.295	***	par_98
e25	<-->	e39	-.273	.088	-3.085	.002	par_99
e10	<-->	e51	.251	.070	3.590	***	par_100
e19	<-->	e24	-.438	.109	-4.025	***	par_101
e22	<-->	e43	-.191	.072	-2.635	.008	par_102
e20	<-->	e18	.307	.080	3.851	***	par_103
e24	<-->	e43	.362	.107	3.384	***	par_104
e12	<-->	e68	.161	.062	2.602	.009	par_105
e47	<-->	e63	.109	.061	1.768	.077	par_106
e49	<-->	e68	.280	.076	3.678	***	par_107
e14	<-->	e67	-.321	.061	-5.300	***	par_108
e62	<-->	e63	.172	.053	3.207	.001	par_109
e22	<-->	e71	.163	.049	3.351	***	par_110
e1	<-->	e76	.147	.058	2.547	.011	par_111
e16	<-->	e76	.277	.074	3.745	***	par_112
e27	<-->	e76	-.096	.063	-1.526	.127	par_113
e29	<-->	e76	-.312	.087	-3.595	***	par_114
e10	<-->	e13	.229	.044	5.223	***	par_115
e13	<-->	e61	.147	.039	3.745	***	par_116
e59	<-->	e74	-.062	.052	-1.199	.231	par_117
e10	<-->	e63	-.168	.053	-3.205	.001	par_118
e61	<-->	e74	-.367	.083	-4.398	***	par_119
e27	<-->	e63	-.184	.055	-3.327	***	par_120
e58	<-->	e59	-.018	.040	-.464	.642	par_121
e13	<-->	e59	.097	.027	3.535	***	par_122
e22	<-->	e25	-.273	.068	-4.032	***	par_123
e1	<-->	e13	.139	.036	3.887	***	par_124
e71	<-->	e73	.216	.081	2.646	.008	par_125
e46	<-->	e67	.288	.074	3.918	***	par_126
e1	<-->	e24	.205	.073	2.799	.005	par_127
e16	<-->	e46	.243	.080	3.045	.002	par_128
e14	<-->	e49	.194	.054	3.603	***	par_129
e19	<-->	e48	-.333	.111	-3.007	.003	par_130
e4	<-->	e7	.125	.042	2.931	.003	par_131
e4	<-->	e63	-.086	.037	-2.337	.019	par_132

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
e2	<-->	e8	-.288	.059	-4.922	***	par_133
e47	<-->	e67	.283	.076	3.725	***	par_134
e47	<-->	e51	-.348	.089	-3.890	***	par_135
e5	<-->	e8	-.258	.066	-3.913	***	par_136
e21	<-->	e57	-.131	.041	-3.160	.002	par_137
e44	<-->	e73	-.334	.110	-3.038	.002	par_138
e49	<-->	e73	.252	.089	2.842	.004	par_139
e20	<-->	e46	-.252	.072	-3.500	***	par_140
e20	<-->	e24	-.659	.104	-6.314	***	par_141
e21	<-->	e24	-.524	.094	-5.573	***	par_142
e7	<-->	e24	-.207	.077	-2.672	.008	par_143
e21	<-->	e39	-.224	.072	-3.087	.002	par_144
e44	<-->	e59	-.212	.064	-3.305	***	par_145
e55	<-->	e77	.258	.063	4.094	***	par_146
e51	<-->	e74	.240	.077	3.133	.002	par_147
e7	<-->	e74	-.115	.056	-2.048	.041	par_148
e20	<-->	e77	-.153	.054	-2.856	.004	par_149
e29	<-->	e39	.407	.120	3.407	***	par_150
e5	<-->	e29	-.219	.082	-2.687	.007	par_151
e19	<-->	e59	-.120	.050	-2.408	.016	par_152
e20	<-->	e68	-.201	.063	-3.166	.002	par_153
e55	<-->	e59	-.177	.051	-3.447	***	par_154
e43	<-->	e59	.154	.054	2.850	.004	par_155
e1	<-->	e19	-.210	.065	-3.223	.001	par_156
e1	<-->	e22	-.167	.047	-3.524	***	par_157
e22	<-->	e74	-.146	.050	-2.952	.003	par_158
e3	<-->	e55	.189	.053	3.574	***	par_159
e4	<-->	e62	.116	.036	3.219	.001	par_160
e10	<-->	e45	.237	.070	3.393	***	par_161
e10	<-->	e46	.222	.068	3.261	.001	par_162
e12	<-->	e45	.165	.060	2.740	.006	par_163
e19	<-->	e74	-.226	.068	-3.341	***	par_164
e27	<-->	e29	.184	.094	1.966	.049	par_165
e49	<-->	e63	.152	.062	2.463	.014	par_166
e43	<-->	e44	-.381	.121	-3.156	.002	par_167
e45	<-->	e48	.374	.107	3.504	***	par_168
e1	<-->	e43	.161	.071	2.257	.024	par_169
e3	<-->	e73	.162	.053	3.049	.002	par_170
e4	<-->	e12	.100	.033	3.038	.002	par_171
e4	<-->	e8	-.330	.060	-5.482	***	par_172
e3	<-->	e56	.122	.048	2.533	.011	par_173

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
e59	<-->	e73	-.137	.055	-2.499	.012	par_174
e8	<-->	e16	-.372	.081	-4.582	***	par_175
e10	<-->	e73	-.151	.072	-2.081	.037	par_176
e3	<-->	e8	-.303	.065	-4.676	***	par_177
e13	<-->	e68	-.007	.045	-.150	.881	par_178
e13	<-->	e67	-.189	.053	-3.564	***	par_179
e12	<-->	e67	-.181	.063	-2.879	.004	par_180
e4	<-->	e51	-.102	.043	-2.350	.019	par_181
e8	<-->	e49	.185	.076	2.440	.015	par_182
e24	<-->	e49	.282	.097	2.898	.004	par_183
e24	<-->	e52	.274	.115	2.381	.017	par_184
e20	<-->	e56	-.031	.082	-.379	.704	par_185
e20	<-->	e55	.210	.072	2.915	.004	par_186
e20	<-->	e58	.104	.042	2.474	.013	par_187
e2	<-->	e68	-.029	.054	-.533	.594	par_188
e14	<-->	e22	.110	.042	2.621	.009	par_189
e20	<-->	e43	-.269	.086	-3.130	.002	par_190
e7	<-->	e76	-.169	.063	-2.674	.007	par_191
e7	<-->	e58	.109	.045	2.430	.015	par_192
e16	<-->	e62	.135	.063	2.145	.032	par_193
e20	<-->	e45	-.194	.073	-2.658	.008	par_194
e29	<-->	e45	-.286	.091	-3.139	.002	par_195
e29	<-->	e44	.335	.122	2.754	.006	par_196
e29	<-->	e55	.216	.093	2.333	.020	par_197
e19	<-->	e45	-.216	.082	-2.638	.008	par_198
e4	<-->	e21	-.073	.033	-2.167	.030	par_199

Correlations: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate
e75	<-->	e76	-.615
e3	<-->	e4	.646
e43	<-->	e45	.567
e46	<-->	e47	.554
e61	<-->	e62	.388
e13	<-->	e14	.529
e19	<-->	e18	.320
e22	<-->	e24	-.530
e44	<-->	e75	.384
e44	<-->	e48	.340
e21	<-->	e18	.363

	Estimate
e44 <--> e77	.286
e5 <--> e68	-.186
e8 <--> e10	.208
e27 <--> e39	.280
e12 <--> e13	.431
e3 <--> e59	-.168
e21 <--> e22	.410
e20 <--> e22	.347
e20 <--> e21	.454
e25 <--> e44	.220
e45 <--> e47	.585
e43 <--> e47	.525
e45 <--> e46	.476
e43 <--> e46	.449
e49 <--> e52	.266
e12 <--> e14	.323
e10 <--> e12	.294
e10 <--> e61	.140
e19 <--> e25	-.446
e5 <--> e57	.249
e27 <--> e57	-.124
e47 <--> e74	-.210
e58 <--> e61	-.231
e7 <--> e63	-.253
e7 <--> e39	-.220
e7 <--> e16	-.239
e27 <--> e48	.186
e21 <--> e67	-.129
e58 <--> e68	-.265
e1 <--> e2	.226
e44 <--> e46	.132
e44 <--> e76	-.281
e56 <--> e76	.283
e43 <--> e76	-.099
e13 <--> e56	.167
e22 <--> e56	.163
e2 <--> e55	-.199
e48 <--> e55	-.271
e14 <--> e20	-.092
e19 <--> e51	-.228
e13 <--> e19	-.146

	Estimate
e13 <--> e39	-.123
e25 <--> e39	-.179
e10 <--> e51	.177
e19 <--> e24	-.262
e22 <--> e43	-.111
e20 <--> e18	.192
e24 <--> e43	.158
e12 <--> e68	.152
e47 <--> e63	.066
e49 <--> e68	.216
e14 <--> e67	-.358
e62 <--> e63	.170
e22 <--> e71	.189
e1 <--> e76	.110
e16 <--> e76	.180
e27 <--> e76	-.063
e29 <--> e76	-.161
e10 <--> e13	.221
e13 <--> e61	.139
e59 <--> e74	-.095
e10 <--> e63	-.153
e61 <--> e74	-.319
e27 <--> e63	-.170
e58 <--> e59	-.043
e13 <--> e59	.161
e22 <--> e25	-.271
e1 <--> e13	.157
e71 <--> e73	.185
e46 <--> e67	.200
e1 <--> e24	.157
e16 <--> e46	.136
e14 <--> e49	.157
e19 <--> e48	-.148
e4 <--> e7	.127
e4 <--> e63	-.102
e2 <--> e8	-.316
e47 <--> e67	.174
e47 <--> e51	-.163
e5 <--> e8	-.242
e21 <--> e57	-.151
e44 <--> e73	-.123

	Estimate
e49 <--> e73	.148
e20 <--> e46	-.135
e20 <--> e24	-.417
e21 <--> e24	-.323
e7 <--> e24	-.145
e21 <--> e39	-.121
e44 <--> e59	-.154
e55 <--> e77	.306
e51 <--> e74	.204
e7 <--> e74	-.109
e20 <--> e77	-.170
e29 <--> e39	.188
e5 <--> e29	-.153
e19 <--> e59	-.139
e20 <--> e68	-.164
e55 <--> e59	-.231
e43 <--> e59	.130
e1 <--> e19	-.164
e1 <--> e22	-.170
e22 <--> e74	-.154
e3 <--> e55	.171
e4 <--> e62	.121
e10 <--> e45	.125
e10 <--> e46	.123
e12 <--> e45	.097
e19 <--> e74	-.182
e27 <--> e29	.110
e49 <--> e63	.126
e43 <--> e44	-.107
e45 <--> e48	.132
e1 <--> e43	.092
e3 <--> e73	.125
e4 <--> e12	.106
e4 <--> e8	-.339
e3 <--> e56	.106
e59 <--> e73	-.152
e8 <--> e16	-.296
e10 <--> e73	-.097
e3 <--> e8	-.288
e13 <--> e68	-.008
e13 <--> e67	-.230

			Estimate
e12	<-->	e67	-.185
e4	<-->	e51	-.094
e8	<-->	e49	.133
e24	<-->	e49	.168
e24	<-->	e52	.145
e20	<-->	e56	-.022
e20	<-->	e55	.153
e20	<-->	e58	.134
e2	<-->	e68	-.034
e14	<-->	e22	.116
e20	<-->	e43	-.127
e7	<-->	e76	-.116
e7	<-->	e58	.157
e16	<-->	e62	.109
e20	<-->	e45	-.099
e29	<-->	e45	-.122
e29	<-->	e44	.113
e29	<-->	e55	.131
e19	<-->	e45	-.105
e4	<-->	e21	-.065

Variances: (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
DMEX	.533	.131	4.079	***	par_200
e75	1.190	.157	7.592	***	par_201
e76	1.772	.197	8.986	***	par_202
e77	.553	.088	6.252	***	par_203
e74	.935	.107	8.740	***	par_204
e1	.999	.085	11.712	***	par_205
e2	.709	.071	9.995	***	par_206
e3	.946	.081	11.723	***	par_207
e4	.803	.069	11.581	***	par_208
e5	.966	.091	10.607	***	par_209
e7	1.193	.103	11.631	***	par_210
e8	1.175	.110	10.647	***	par_211
e10	1.362	.112	12.186	***	par_212
e12	1.109	.092	12.105	***	par_213
e13	.786	.064	12.300	***	par_214
e14	.933	.081	11.497	***	par_215
e16	1.344	.119	11.280	***	par_216

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
e19	1.641	.155	10.565	***	par_217
e20	1.465	.134	10.935	***	par_218
e21	1.539	.128	12.006	***	par_219
e22	.968	.110	8.781	***	par_220
e24	1.705	.168	10.129	***	par_221
e25	1.049	.111	9.435	***	par_222
e27	1.312	.110	11.974	***	par_223
e29	2.126	.174	12.196	***	par_224
e39	2.205	.179	12.300	***	par_225
e43	3.078	.246	12.538	***	par_226
e44	4.166	.316	13.185	***	par_227
e45	2.612	.211	12.363	***	par_228
e46	2.395	.191	12.522	***	par_229
e47	3.078	.244	12.600	***	par_230
e48	3.091	.262	11.802	***	par_231
e49	1.651	.141	11.690	***	par_232
e55	1.286	.128	10.016	***	par_233
e56	1.400	.135	10.366	***	par_234
e57	.492	.055	8.934	***	par_235
e58	.409	.054	7.526	***	par_236
e59	.456	.056	8.125	***	par_237
e61	1.415	.128	11.065	***	par_238
e62	1.137	.096	11.817	***	par_239
e63	.890	.079	11.297	***	par_240
e67	.864	.095	9.055	***	par_241
e68	1.019	.113	9.035	***	par_242
e71	.763	.085	9.019	***	par_243
e73	1.770	.155	11.416	***	par_244
e18	1.758	.147	11.983	***	par_245
e52	2.094	.180	11.618	***	par_246
e51	1.476	.133	11.135	***	par_247