



Exploring audience inclusion in Facebook and
Twitter reporting among young university students
in South Africa: The case of #FeesMustFall

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ABSTRACT

Studies have shown how social media, including Facebook and Twitter are reshaping communication, news and Journalism. With the growing popularity of Social media for news sharing, there is a need to explore the audience-inclusion of these social media tools in news reporting. The audience approach expands our theorisation of social media especially for campaigns. In particular, it is important to explore the role social media plays in student protest, campaign or uprising in order to determine to what extent social media allows participation and audience inclusion in political (#FeesMustFall) and other contemporary discussions among students.

This study considered the hashtag (#) FeeMustFall campaign that sprang up in the year 2015 (there are still elements of the campaign as of 2020) as a case for this study. The South African university students used this hashtag on different social media platforms to campaign against corporate education and largely payment of fees in institutions of higher learning across South Africa. This study also looks at the media-audience relationship and explore how audience inclusion in Facebook and Twitter are increasingly changing the 'News' habits of young South Africans students.

The approach used for this study was a qualitative exploratory study with an interpretive approach. Thirteen (13) students were interviewed one-on-one and audio-recorded using a semi-structured interview guide. These students were selected through purposive and convenience sampling and the interviews were transcribed verbatim.

This study identifies the relevance and relationship social media posed for students in including them in public participation. Findings indicate that students find recourse in social media as an avenue for inclusion and participation on social issues surrounding youth especially during the peak of #FeesMustFall. There is also a change in news reporting as a result of the audience inclusion provided by social networks. The outcome of this study can be relevant to communication researchers studying news and social media especially among young people and most importantly students.

Keywords: audience inclusion, Facebook, Twitter, Social Media, Students, FeesMustFall

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DUT Durban University of Technology

SRC Student Representative Council

DECLARATION

I, Anu Christianah Olagunju, hereby declare that the research work presented in this dissertation is my original work and all the materials used are appropriately acknowledged and explicitly referenced. A reference list is attached to the dissertation.

I also confirm that the dissertation has not been submitted in any of its part or entirety for any degree in any other institution of higher learning internationally or locally.

I therefore give permission that my work be available for replication and/or for re-printing, for inter-library loan, and for the title and abstract of my dissertation to be made available to other educational institutions and students that might need it.

22 – 04 - 2021

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DEDICATION

To the source of my inspiration, God, the beginning and the end of all wisdom.

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I indeed received the best guidance from both my Supervisor, Tarryn Frankish and Co-supervisor, Prof. Jean-Phillippe Wade. I cannot thank you enough Tarryn for all those Research Methodology workshops at the initial phase of this work.

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APPROVED FOR FINAL SUBMISSION

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter will define and explain the main concepts in the title of the dissertation. Foremost, the relevance of social media in the 21st century and to the Fees Must Fall campaign will be discussed. This chapter will also situate how Facebook and Twitter are changing news and information experience especially among young people. The relevance of #FeesMustFall to DUT will also be explored. This chapter will state the objectives of this study, present research question and methods. Finally, it will conclude with outline of all the chapters in the thesis.

1.1 Background

Approximately 60% of the world's population are using the internet. (Internet World Stats, 2019). Most importantly is the contribution of the different social media sites to this statistic, about half of the world's population are using various social media platforms. According to Statista (2019), Facebook has over 2 billion monthly active users which makes it the largest social networking sites in the world. The World Economic Forum (WEF 2016) wrote on its Facebook page that "if Facebook were a country, it would be the most populated country in the world", definitely bigger than China. About 500 million tweets are published every day (Twitter, 2019). Various research and studies have established that Facebook and Twitter are very popular social network sites for sharing news (Reuters Institute 2012; Newman et al 2012; PWC 2019)¹.

Africa is not left out in the internet and social media community as South Africa has more than half of its population online and 37% of its population using social media platforms (PWC 2019; Hootsuite, 2020). Both Facebook and Twitter are among the topmost websites with greatest traffic in South Africa, with the highest user of

¹ As the work on this thesis is been finalized, WhatsApp is reported to be gaining momentum as the preferred channel for news distribution and sharing in countries like Malaysia, Brazil, Spain and Turkey (Reuters Institute Digital News Report, 2019:9). Although it is a messenger app, users find it convenient to use WhatsApp for news and information distribution due to the close and personal nature of the app, unlike Facebook which is more public and detached. Most users also reported the large scale of fake news on Facebook. However, regardless of the preference to share news on WhatsApp, Facebook still has the highest number of active users¹ compare to WhatsApp.

Facebook in South Africa within the bracket age of 18-34 (Hootsuite 2019). This is equivalent to the prevalent age in most countries as people within this age are undergraduates or have attained the minimum educational qualification in their respective countries. A report conducted by Pew Centre Research indicated that those with education are more likely to use social media (Silver and Huang 2019). The online world consists of unfiltered views and opinions which may not be present in the traditional media.

It is imperative to understand the gradual shift of viewing news and information from the traditional media to social media platforms. The number of social media views is on the increase as an average internet user spends more than two hours on social media daily (PWC 2019; Hootsuite 2020). The audience might not be using social media to contribute by participating in discussion but they are using Twitter to view public information and news. In 2017, Twitter introduced longer characters for tweets from former 140 to 280 (Twitter 2017). This created additional space for users to discuss issues in tweet.

1.2 Facebook and hashtag (#)

Hashtags were initially symbolically confined to Twitter. However, the use of this hash symbol has spread to other social media platforms especially Facebook and Instagram. Hashtag is a user-generated content that allow other users of a social media platform to view and share posts and messages with a common theme prefix by the # symbol. While most previous studies of the #FeesMustFall event has focused on the role of Twitter in the revolution (Daniels 2016; Bosch 2017), the fact remains that Facebook has the largest number of users in South Africa (Hootsuite 2019; PWC 2019). Therefore, this study will take into cognizance the role of Facebook in the #FeesMustFall alongside Twitter. Bosch (2017) argues that Facebook does not have the same functionalities as Twitter because its data and information are not sequential like Twitter and that makes it difficult to follow posts with the hashtag, but that does not imply that this medium (Facebook) was not used during the #FeesMustFall, and since this study's main focus is on the audience experience of using these social media platforms and not primarily on the content of

tweets or posts collected from these two platforms, it is imperative to consider the role of Facebook in the campaign.

1.3 Fees Must Fall

During the years 2015-2017, there was a shift in the higher educational system of South Africa and most worthy to note is the role of social media especially Facebook and Twitter in this shift. The revolutionary cry among young students for an end to social ills and corporate education was spiraled by the use of hashtags from the #RhodesMustFall and gradually built up to the #FeesMustFall campaign witnessed across the country; the focus of this dissertation. The #FeesMustFall campaign is seen as an offshoot of the #RhodesMustFall (RMF) because news on Twitter allows events to be linked with one another using different and multiple hashtags (#) (Bosch 2017; Taghavi 2017; Luescher et al. 2017). It is impossible to discuss the #FeesMustFall without mentioning the event of #RhodesMustFall which started early 2015 (Mpofu-Walsh 2016). The action of a student who threw faeces on a statue (of Rhodes) at the University of Cape Town culminates in several events that eventually led to the removal of the statue from the campus. To the students' 'revolutionaries', the statue symbolizes the domineering presence of a white colonial master in a post-apartheid South Africa (Mpofu-Walsh 2016; Bosch 2017). The seemingly success of the #RMF campaign united university students across South Africa to initially make a call for an end to yearly increment of tertiary fees and much later a campaign for the total removal of fees in all South African universities. The (hashtag) #FeesMustFall (#FMF) was created to support the removal of fees in South African Universities. #FeesMustFall was recorded to be the most organized and largest protest in the history of South Africa since the end of apartheid (Booyesen *et al.* 2016). Several Social Networking Sites (SNS) were at the centre of the debate through several hashtags raising the awareness of both online and traditional media 'contributors' to the situation (Bosch 2017), thereby facilitating an inclusion role in news distribution. After the initial #RMF saga of March 2015, almost all South African universities began to look out for what must fall in their different institutions with creation of several sub-hashtags peculiar to each institution under the #FeesMustFall umbrella (Bosch 2017; Luescher et al. 2017). The first recorded

tweet on the #FeesMustFall as cited by Daniels (2016) was on October 8, 2015 and from the student body (not from a Journalist). The #FeesMustFall campaign seeks to stand against social ills and corporate education in South Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015).

Many agreed that social media created the avenue for the #FeesMustFall campaign to move from just a local university campaign (UCT) to national and then global, thereby generating political debate even outside South Africa. Several studies have identified the potentials of Facebook and Twitter as a communication tool in debates and campaigns especially among youths (Ghosh et. al. 2012; Kelling et. al. 2013; Castell 2015; Bosch 2017). With the prominence of Twitter and Facebook in South Africa during this campaign, there is a need to understand the role of social media during the #FeeMustFall campaign and explore the role social media plays in the life of students as an engagement tool in the 21st century.

1.4 DUT and FeesMustFall

As earlier mentioned, each university and campus began to look for what must fall in their institution. Durban University of Technology (DUT) with approximately 30,000 students is located in Kwazulu-Natal province of South Africa and will serve as a case consideration for this study. Kwazulu-Natal is also home to four other higher institutions, however the institutions with the larger population is the University of Kwazulu-Natal (UKZN) followed closely by DUT with campuses spread around the city. Durban is one of the largest cities in South Africa and also has “the busiest port in Africa” (Peppas and Ebrahim 2018: 302). This study will seek to understand how DUT students perceive and explore the role of Facebook and Twitter in the campaign of #FeesMustFall on their campus. The central focus of the hashtag at the beginning was for fee reduction and gradually led to calls for ‘free (education) tuition’ for all students. However, each university began to look for other specific things to address in their institutions, therefore, creating different hashtags under the #FeesMustFall protest. Many of the topics discussed under the #FeesMustFall were characterized by hashtags. For example, #SteynMustFall at the University of Free State, #KingGeorgeMustFall at the University of Kwazulu-

Natal (UKZN), and #OpenStellenbosch at the University of Stellenbosch. According to Haffajee (2015), the protest spread to 17 campuses within ten days of its start, basically due to the role of social media. Over 6000 students marched across the city of Durban to the ANC regional headquarters situated in Durban in October 2015 in support of #FeesMustFall (Booyesen *et al.* 2016). This was a month after the burning down of the administration building at UKZN (UKZN 2015). The participation of DUT students was intense in September 2016, when all universities called for no fees i.e free education for all. In addition, DUT Student Representative Council (SRC) wanted answers regarding historical debt and the over 4000 MTU6 groups² of students who qualified for National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) yet had not received funding, leading to the shutdown of the institution for a week (DUT Comms. 2016). Frassinelli (2018) in her report indicated that there is a need for each university to discuss the specifics of the #FeesMustFall campaign as it was relevant to their campus. As discussed above, some universities have looked at the dynamism of #FeesMustFall as it relates to their institutions and the central focus of the research is the social media.

1.5 Objective of the study

The engagement seen on social media during the peak of the #FeesMustFall campaign is akin to the concept of audience inclusion as described by Loosen and Schmidt (2012). As young students tend to move towards the inclusion of social media platforms as news source, it is necessary to understand how these social media platforms encourage audience inclusion in news sharing and dissemination. In understanding this, society will be able to situate the role of emerging social media platforms in news, communications, protests, campaigns and other contemporary subjects in the 21st century. The outcome of this study will be relevant to communication researchers studying news and social media especially among young people and most importantly students. This study will take a look at the role Twitter and Facebook plays in the reporting of the #FeesMustFall campaign. It will explore the role which social media plays in inclusion of young people, especially

² Means Test Unfunded 2016

students to participate in the reporting of #FeesMustFall. Inclusion can take the form of communication channels between the audience and the media (Loosen and Schmidt 2012), where the media provides information to the audience, and the audience in this context is the receiver of such information. A system is established if the audience in turn accept information provided by the media (Loosen and Schmidt 2012).

Audience, “within the theory of Inclusion is used whenever a person benefits or make uses of a social system” (for example Twitter, Facebook) and thereby “becomes a part of that system's relevant environment” (Loosen and Schmidt 2012: 873). This theory provided a framework to both separate and “integrate different aspects of audience inclusion in Journalism”, as a result of the rise of social networks media

1.6 Research Questions

Following the above objectives of this study and to fully explore the role of Social media during the #FeesMustFall campaign, the research questions for the study is as follows:

- How does Facebook and Twitter contribute to the way #FeesMustFall was reported?
- What are the students’ inclusion expectations and motivations for participating in news sharing on Facebook and Twitter during the #FeesMustFall?
- How is the audience-inclusion role understood among students in the reporting of #FeesMustFall on Twitter and Facebook?

1.7 Research methods

This project took an interpretive qualitative approach using thematic analysis for semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview describes an interviewee perspective of his world with the aim of obtaining meaning. This approach is suitable for this study as the purpose is to explore social media role in the #FeesMustFall

campaign and it is most suitable to answer the above research questions. It also gives avenue for students (participants) to describe in depth how they relate the inclusion role of Facebook and Twitter in the campaign. Participants (Journalism students) were solicited from classrooms within DUT through purposive and convenience sampling. The study reached saturation at the thirteenth participants. Thematic Analysis is used to decode data based on key themes from the theory and other prevalent themes that (may) occur during data collection.

1.8 Limitations of the study

Discussions on the Fees Must Fall continued almost all over the social media platforms, Hootsuite (2018) for example listed WhatsApp as having the most active social platform in South Africa in 2017. The study focused on two platforms which are Facebook and Twitter in order to fully explore the audience inclusion role on these two platforms, though there were evidence of discussions recorded on other platforms as described by participants. Others might want to explore the audience inclusion role of other social media platforms, in particular WhatsApp³.

This study however focused on understanding young people participation during the #FeesMustFall, and to explore how young students make use of social media as an inclusion role during the protest. This study explores the lived-experience and the audience inclusion role of young students on social media (Facebook and Twitter) using the #FeesMustFall as a study.

1.9 Importance of the study

With the growing popularity of social media for news sharing, there is a need to explore the audience-inclusion of these social media tools in news reporting. The audience approach expands our theorisation of social media especially for campaigns. It is important to explore the role social media plays in student protest,

³ Study reveals that users find it convenient to use WhatsApp for news and information distribution due to the close and personal nature of the app, unlike Facebook which is more public and detached. However, regardless of the preference to share news on WhatsApp, Facebook still has the highest number of active users compare to WhatsApp.

campaign or uprising in order to determine to what extent Twitter and Facebook allows participation and inclusion in political (#FeesMustFall) and other contemporary discussions among students. The outcome of this study will be relevant to communication researchers studying news and social media especially among young people and most importantly students.

1.10 Chapter outline

The Thesis will be categorized under the following chapters as summarized below: Chapter two will review selected literature on the role of Social media (Facebook and Twitter) and how the public (especially the youth) utilise these SM tools, especially in the 21st century. Also, this chapter will critically review Habermas's (1991) Public Sphere concept and its interrelation with social media in the 21st century. It will draw attention to the importance of a 'public' space where vital public issues can openly be discussed and debated by members of the public, this participation being as vital for a thriving democratic polity. The Public Sphere concept will be linked to the audience inclusion theory of Loosen & Schmidt (2012) which is the key theoretical framework for this study. The audience inclusion theory will focus on the audience, which explains that with the advent of social media, the interaction of the audience no longer needs interaction with the Journalist, since Facebook and Twitter are 'self' publishing tools.

Chapter three will discuss the interpretive qualitative approach, which is the method adopted for this study. This chapter will not only define and explain the methodological concept, but will discuss in details how the interpretive qualitative approach (using thematic analysis) method is suitable to explore the audience inclusion of social media during the #FeesMustFall. This chapter will also discuss the limitations of these methods (as no method is without limitations), but will justify why this is the best approach to look at this study. Lastly, adequate description of data collection and the various instrument designs of the study will be detailed as well in the chapter. This contains target population, sample size and selection, sampling technique, and the procedures for data collection and analysis.

In Chapter four, results and analysis of the data will be presented. This chapter will present and analyze the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the 13 participants of this study. There will also be a discussion on the data findings. This chapter will answer the key research questions posed in this study.

Chapter five will look at the research objectives vis-a-vis the result analysis and draw conclusions, limitations and recommendations. This chapter will outline the findings vis-a-vis the research questions and objectives of this study. It will also summarize the findings presented in chapter Four and reflect on the 'post' #FeesMustFall. This chapter will end with conclusions, observations and suggestions for future research.

Finally, the references, appendixes and all research approvals will be presented at the end of the chapters.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter gave a background towards this study. It defined the main concept around the Fees Must Fall campaign. It explored the relevance of social media to this campaign. The chapter highlight the importance of exploring young people participation on social media as it relates to campaigns, news and information. The study aims and research objectives were presented. The chapter concluded with an outlook of all the upcoming chapters of this thesis. The following chapter will discuss existing literature on concept and study on social media.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, are reshaping communication, news and journalism (Raacke and Raacke 2008; Newman 2011; Bruns and Highfield 2012; Newman, Dutton, and Blank 2012; Kelling et al. 2013; Hodes 2017). The advent of different social media platforms in the late nineties has created a dimension for information dissemination; news the way we know it has expanded to include a strong internet presence (Jose van Dijck 2013). Various studies have established that Facebook and Twitter are very popular social network sites for sharing news (Reuters Institute 2012; Newman et al 2012).

This chapter will review selected literature on the role of social media (Facebook and Twitter) and how the public (especially the youth) utilise these SM tools, in the 21st century. Also, this chapter will critically review Habermas's (1991) Public Sphere concept and its interrelation with social media in the 21st century. It will draw attention to the importance of a 'public' space where vital public issues can openly be discussed and debated by members of the public, this participation being seen as vital for the thriving of a democratic polity. The Public Sphere concept will be linked to the audience inclusion theory of Loosen & Schmidt (2012) which is the key theoretical framework for this study. The audience inclusion theory will focus on the 'audience' (2012: 875) which explains that with the advent of social media, the interaction of audience no longer needs interaction with the Journalist, since Facebook and Twitter are 'self' publishing tools. In this regard, users of these social networks are addressing their own audience (network circles) on Facebook and followers on Twitter and the online community.

2.2 Social media Age Movement

"I was born in Facebook. Now I am in the street." (Castells and Kumar 2014:94). The above quote was captured from one of the banners displayed at a Belo Horizonte protest in Brazil in 2013. Castells and Kumar (2014) argued that an idea could start on the social media 'network movement' and then move to the street, a

form of 'mass self-communication'. It is not Facebook and Twitter that create the movement, rather, they shape or amplify social movement and protest (Castells and Kumar 2014). In the case of #FeesMustFall movement, Bosch (2017), Taghavi (2017) and Luescher et al. (2017) in their studies argued that social media has a key role in the campaign.

The Internet has been used to promote political participation particularly on the social media; spaces like Twitter and Facebook create an avenue for a discourse on an event (Tolbert & McNeal 2003 and Valenzuela 2009). Twitter allows youth to participate in debate and news which they ordinarily might not have chosen to participate in and therefore has become a platform for public opinion in the 21st century (Kelling et al. 2013; Ang, Dinar and Lucas 2014). Researchers have discovered that in most activism advocacy, social media tools, especially Facebook and Twitter, are most important tools to mobilize people (Castells and Kumar 2014: Fuchs, 2014: Hodes, 2016: Bosch, 2017). While the success of the Arab Spring revolt should be attributed to the people of the country who stood up for the campaign, the importance of social media cannot be over-emphasized (Zhuo, Wellman et al. 2015).

The Arab Spring movement of 2011 was argued to have started from the internet, especially through the use of mobile communication on social media (Rabah 2013; Castells and Kumar 2014; Fuchs 2013, 2014). The internet facilitates "inclusive communication" (Ayyad 2009: 90) for users from all spheres. It was one of the tools used by NGOs in Egypt to share their views on current issues within the public domain due to the free broadband introduced by the government for all citizens between 2002 and 2003, making Egypt at that time the largest internet user in Africa (Ayyad 2009). Most studies ascertain that social media gives the youth a platform to express their view of their society. Youths are likely not to participate in traditional news media due to influence, control and censorship of the state government on mainstream media; however, Twitter and Facebook serve an immediate need to express their opinion (McKee 2005; Heise *et al.* 2014; Bosch 2017). Particularly, during the Arab Spring uprising, one of the bloggers/activists tweeted that the public

should boycott buying the national newspaper due to the underreporting of the protest (Zhuo, Wellman and Yu 2012).

Researchers have found out that in most activism advocacy, social media, especially Facebook and Twitter are most important tools to mobilize people (Shirky 2011; Castells and Kumar 2014; Fuchs 2015; Bosch 2017; Hodes 2017)

2.2.1 Journalism in the Social media days

The end of apartheid in 1994 has seen South Africa transition from one democratically elected government to another. The South African media also experienced transformation in terms of “ownership”, “staffing” and granting of ‘Press Freedom’ (Wasserman 2010:241; Wasserman, Bosch and Chuma 2018).

The role and potential of social media for news reporting among journalists is fast growing. However, Kalyango *et al.* (2017) observed that most journalists in developing countries still focus more on developmental journalism than their political watchdog role. This has created a gap and an avenue for the general public to bypass traditional media and demand for better governance from those in authority. This is demonstrated in the case of #feesmustfall protest where students are seen as the pioneer and championing of this campaign. The students directly (bypassing the traditional media) held the government accountable for the revolution in the education sector. The commercialization (Wasserman 2010; Fuchs 2014) of freedom of expression through the traditional media can make citizens lack an inclusive channel of communication. Maybe as put by Gans (1980: 22) “the news may be too important to leave to the journalists alone”

Wasserman, Bosch and Chuma (2018) argued that the root cause of most protest in post-apartheid South Africa is as a result of the ordinary people being marginalized (not being heard) by the mainstream media, NGOs and governments and not necessarily as a result of service breakdown. If one of the journalistic roles of the media is to serve as an advocate to the public, then their main goal should be to hold government accountable and have an inclusion communication extended to members of the community.

The one domineering party system approach since post-apartheid with no effective opposition is another bane to the media-democracy in South Africa. There are several allegations of corruption charges against the ruling government without anyone being held accountable. The 'subtle' influence from pro-government and other external forces on how news should be reported or covered has made the so-called freedom of press unattainable (Wasserman, Bosch and Chuma 2018: 377). The approval of the controversial Protection of State Information Bill⁴ also referred to as the Secrecy Bill by members of the ANC led parliament – a bill that is acclaimed to limit the media capacity to exposed corruption through protection of 'classified information' which posed a greater risk to democracy (Hadland 2013). All these point out that not all political actors share the encomium of freedom of expression.

Another argument towards the media-democracy state is what Wasserman (2010) and Wasserman, Bosch and Chuma (2018) described as the unequal race and class structure in post-apartheid South Africa. The struggle of students for #FeesMustFall in higher education in South Africa is largely due to the inequality and class structure produced by apartheid. Consequently, journalists are torn between the different class structures and how to 'balance' their news reporting and coverage.

In all, the role abrogated to the media after the apartheid system was to unify the citizens with democratic principles, however in the lack of proper inclusive communicative channels for all, the citizens have to make do with the alternative means that social media provides. Many argued that the structure of democracy in South Africa as was initially structured has become too centralized, marginalized and corrupt. This is described by Wasserman, Bosch and Chuma (2018) and is what culminated in several protests in the country.

Outside Africa, in other developed countries, it seems that journalists are more in favour of the use of social media as an inclusive channel of communication for their audience. A Canadian survey conducted among 1600 participants found out that

⁴ The State Information Bill seeks to regulate the classification and dissemination of some state information by the media. The bill outweighs the interest of the state than shared information or freedom of expression. Although the bill has been approved by the National Assembly in 2013, it is yet to be signed into Law by the President.

students naturally prefer journalist who use social media to share news (Hermida *et al.* 2012). Therefore, the use of social media for news is a pivotal experience for both the journalists and the audience because it forms a rather more 'generous' inclusive medium of communication.

The fluidity (Vis 2013) of social media, in particular Twitter allows for journalists to also live tweet and gives factual reporting of happenings. Vis (2013), described the experience of two influential journalists who picked up the 2011 UK riots on Twitter and immediately followed their instinct as a reporter to the scene of the riot and were able to report live as it happened.

A study analyzed the use of social media by 500 South African journalists and found out that this medium (social media) boosts journalist roles in public debates and effective deliberation relevant to a democratic society (Verweij and Van Noort 2014). The debate should therefore move beyond social media 'displacing' mainstream or traditional media (since both are using social media in different ways) into how this has affected news production (Newman, Dutton and Blank 2012).

2.2.2 Citizen Journalism

Kelling *et al.* (2013) in their investigation of the closure of a state university in South Florida (USFP) found out that social media especially Twitter and Facebook allow for a grass-roots political participation, making users become what they called 'citizen-journalists' or online 'commentariats' thereby shifting "news from organization information flow to interpersonal communication" (Kelling 2013:2658; see also Hodes 2017).

The democratization of journalism as a profession is made possible by the advent of social media (Moyo 2015). This implies that the ability to 'make news' does not solely rest on the 'professional news maker' alone but in the hands of citizens as well. Citizen Journalism who are made possible by the emergence of this new media technologies create what Moyo (2015:141) described as "the disappearance of a single narrative in the Public Sphere..." These social media platforms open up journalism to the marginalized class. However, some scholars have argued about

the ethical constraints of citizen journalism on the profession itself. Perhaps, the ethics of the journalism profession should be reconstructed to acknowledge the new reality of new media technologies which is primarily “to inform and educate” (Moyo 2015:129).

Scholars are divided on social media engagement in student politics. The critics of these social media argue that Twitter and Facebook promote a sense of ‘individualism’ thereby disconnecting young people from the real world and political engagement (Gladwell 2010; Morozov 2017). However, with the uprising in the Middle East (Arab Spring), one cannot question the use of social media especially Twitter and Facebook as a political engagement tool in promoting civic participation. Another example of the interpersonal communication within social media is the case study from Howard *et al.* (2016), where a governorship candidate in Mexico won a major election by entirely boycotting the traditional media and engaging directly with the citizens on social media.

Bosch (2017) in discussing the #RhodesMustFall movement of 2015 in South Africa argued that news on Twitter could facilitate mainstream news inclusion (Bosch 2017). Bosch (2017:227) found out that although the mainstream journalists were also part of the “hashtag clusters” of #RMF, however, those who were at the epicenter and tweeted most about the campaign were the students, thereby initiating an audience-inclusion participation in news dissemination.

2.3 The Public Sphere and the Media

There has been a long debated argument among researchers and authors regarding ‘labeling’ social media as a Public Sphere (McKee 2005; Tomaselli and Teer-Tomaselli 2009; Gladwell 2010; Susen 2011; Fuchs 2013; Rasmussen 2014; Fuchs 2015). The concept of Public Sphere was first developed by Habermas in reference to the 17th and 18th centuries when democracy was emerging among the middle-class citizens of Europe (Deane 2005; McKee 2005; Rasmussen 2014). Habermas identified the Public Sphere as a part of ‘social life’ where citizens or the public could voice their opinions regarding any issues of interest to them without any fear of coercion or intimidation from the state (Habermas and Habermas 1991; Adut 2012).

Habermas conceptualized an idea of a “single public sphere” (McKee 2005:141) where private citizens can become involved in political or state matters without prejudice. Towards the end of the second half of the 18th century, the newspaper became the powerhouse for the conceptualization of public opinion, shifting from just disseminating news to the formation of public opinion. It became an “institution” for the purpose and voice of the citizen (Habermas 1974: 53; McKee 2005). This is before the commercialization of newspapers which weakens the idea of an unbiased Public Sphere for the citizens (Susen 2011). Habermas, in his work has always situated the Public Sphere with the media, he believed that an unbiased media serves the interest of a public sphere (Habermas, Lennox and Lennox 1974; Deane 2005).

The initial Public Sphere concept as described above however came under criticism from different authors for its lack of inclusiveness (Susen 2011). It is not indicative of the entire population as it focuses only on the middle class citizens of the population. This creates a society where decisions which are taken are not representative of the entire population since the working class represents only their interest. Calhoun (1992) and Dahlgren and Sparks (2005) noted that it excludes other classes (lower) and gender in the society, for example the women. Another point of criticism is the idea of a face-to-face public communication by Habermas, which Dahlgren and Sparks (2005) believed is romanticised, most especially due to the gradual shift to the age of electronic communications. They refer to this as the ‘post-bourgeois public sphere’ era (Dahlgren and Sparks 2005:8). Susen (2011) argued that the work of Habermas, though relevant to the study of modern public sphere however, fails to give a full understanding of the dynamic changes experienced in the modern public sphere. He argues that Habermas’ concept of the public sphere is “universalistic” (Susen 2011:55) in nature because it neglects the multiplicity of the different public spheres that exist.

Deane (2005) claims that the proliferation and commodification of the media as well as change in news content to capture a specific class of audience makes the idea of a public sphere not viable. However, Dahlgren and Sparks (2005:16) argue that the media is relevant for their cultural interpretive role in the society and conclude

that a society devoid of media influence (either internally or externally) is not viable. Curran (2005) further argued that the Newspaper in the early 18th century as described by Habermas is highly 'bourgeois' in nature and speaks solely to the middle class until the rise and increase of other radical newspapers in the beginning of the 19th century.

Habermas later acknowledged that the initial public sphere needs to be revisited to include other people from different class sectors and the gender inequalities (Habermas 1991; 2006). However, he pointed out that this 'inclusivity', which is vital for democracy, might lead to lack of decorum or successful deliberation in the society because of divergent views among different class sectors and gender (Habermas 2006). However, he rejected the idea of the "elitist public sphere" (Calhoun 1992: 3) in which the initial public sphere was founded – the middle class.

One of the main source of arguments amongst academics on the changing Public Sphere, especially in the 21st century is the trivialization (not dealing with what is important) of the Public Sphere. Gladwell (2010) and Fuch (2015) argued that the concept especially in the 21st century is eroded with so much unimportant information that is termed as 'soft news' (Baum 2003; Prior 2003). For example, information on celebrities, fashion and entertainment.

Another source of argument is the fragmented nature of the public sphere (Barber 2003; Habermas 2006). The divisiveness of this sphere makes it impossible to have 'one voice' or opinion about public issues. For example, religion, race, gender, class and so on. As a result of this divisiveness, many citizens have developed apathy towards democracy or governance in their society.

Mckee (2005) argues that the reason youth are not directly engaging with politicians is because they do not speak to or address their needs. Therefore, they find recourse in the internet which gives platform to air their views. Mckee (2005) stated that the government is not the state, hence the youth seek ways to engage in politics through other method rather than directly with politicians. An example of this is the throwing of faeces on the Rhodes statues by a student in early 2015 that launched

the beginning of the Fees Must Fall campaign in South Africa (Bosch 2017; Hodes 2017; Luescher, Loader and Mugume 2017; Taghavi 2017).

Mckee (2005) explains that youths are not apolitical but they just find another means of expressing their views, which is much different from the norms of the dominant society. He defined it as the politics of “new social (media) movement” Mckee (2005:182). He argued with other postmodern thinkers that youth are not apolitical but they just find another ‘cultural’ (e.g social media) way to represent their thoughts and change the way people think about the society.

The commercialization of the media is another source of argument regarding the public sphere (Fuch 2015). The media is interested in profit-making and do not challenge consumers to think hard. Therefore, they disseminate news that lacks credence (Fuch 2015).

Most of the arguments against the concept of Public Sphere have been addressed by different studies and other Researchers and proponents of public sphere (Habermas and Habermas 1991; McKee 2005; Ayyad 2009; Marie-Soleil 2009; Tomaselli and Teer-Tomaselli 2009). However, the interrelationship between the social media and the Public Sphere will be the focal point of review in this chapter.

2.3.1 Public Sphere and the Social media

The Public Sphere theory has been revisited by several authors and even Habermas, especially in light of the development of social media and other mobile communications. The argument has been divided into either the Dystopian or the Utopian. While the latter believed that social media is the best thing that can happen to encourage public discussion of important matters, the former think social media platforms cannot reflect effective public opinion as defined by Habermas (Gladwell 2010; Shirky 2011; Loosen and Schmidt 2012; Fuchs 2013; Castells and Kumar 2014; Fuchs 2015).

The central arguments for these dystopian views are the non-inclusive nature of the social media. They argued that social media does not include the total population and that Twitter in particular is stratified in structure (Barber 2003; Gladwell 2010;

Fuch 2013; 2015). The stratification of some of these social media tools limits a certain class of people (mostly uneducated and the old) in the society. Fuchs (2013:190) in particular argued that this “information inequality” is created by skills needed to use these new media tools and different from the common term referred to as ‘digital divide’ which talks about access only. Therefore, the dystopian academics argued that the limited access to the Internet by all members of the public and the skill required to use these social media tools is a challenge towards becoming a public opinion assessment (Barber 2003; Gladwell 2010; Fuch 2013; 2015; Morozov 2017).

Gladwell (2010) argued that social media, especially Twitter is built around weak ties and do not reflect the realities of the ‘real world’. He argued that it is guided by mere ‘networks’ and not built on traditional ‘hierarchical’ structure where systems are properly structured with defined ‘rules’. He argued that the communication method provided by social media is structured around networks and not answerable to a definite ‘authority’ (Gladwell 2010:10). However, the democratization of information gives everyone equal say. The concept of hierarchy as argued by Gladwell (2010) is opposed to Habermas’ (1991) democratic deliberation. Other scholars argued that the internet actually gives citizens the avenue to develop key knowledge about their democracy (see Benkler 2006) and that social media creates an alternative sphere for those marginalized by the ‘prevailing’ public sphere, thereby including all opinions and views in the public sphere (Gainous, Wagner and Gray 2016; Lee *et al.* 2018).

Fuchs (2013) situated social media within the concept of public sphere theory as originally defined by Habermas, and argued that the public sphere theory itself alone is not sufficient to discuss the emergence of communication and online network community in social media.

Habermas argued that any media owned or controlled by capitalists undermines the public sphere. Therefore, Fuchs (2014) argued that for this reason the ‘contemporary social media’ as it is now cannot be defined as a public sphere due to the incursion of the three antagonisms of the social media space which are; social media capitalism (social media corporation), where the owners of social media sites

control the flow of information by using algorithm to determine which news or information makes it to the public. This also include the proliferation of users' information for commercial purpose by owners of social media spaces. Another antagonism is political in structure, whereby political office holder "criminalised the leaking" of high information about political holders to the public (for example WikiLeaks). The civil society antagonism is the "control of social media" space by the government through censor, strict regulations or outright shutdown of internet (Fuchs 2014:78). All these three antagonism according to Fuchs (2014) are manifested on these social media platforms. He pointed out that for social media to be classified as a public sphere, it should be devoid of "state censorship and private ownership" (Fuchs 2014:60). He argued that during the Arab Spring of 2011, many of the activists' network platforms were subpoenaed or suspended by the state government and that this is antagonism to the rights of the public (civil society) and the concept of the public sphere. Another concern raised is that these social media tools benefits the owner as it is used for commercial purpose like advertisements. The commodification of the profile data of users and stratification of information such as promoted trends and promoted accounts on these social media users is against the model of Habermas public sphere which allows for equal public deliberation and for everyone to be heard. He concluded that although social media has the potentials of a public sphere, however, this is not made possible yet due to the three antagonism explained above. Social needs to be free from both state and corporate control. To address these arguments, one will note that commercialization of social media (for advertisement purpose) does not limit the amount of participation or interaction within these new media platforms or neither does it have an adverse effect on expression of public views and opinions since Twitter in particular does not limit the range of opinion nor censor views. In a Chinese study, Rauchfleisch and Schäfer (2015: 139) revealed that government censorship of Sina Weibo⁵ (a popular social media platform in China) does not deter the public from expressing and

⁵ China has a strict regulation for non-domesticated social media sites. Almost all the domesticated social media platforms in the country are censored (Rauchfleisch and Schafer 2015).

participating in discussions as they continually find ways to encode their message online.

Shirky (2011) critiqued the argument that the internet is trivialized and commercialized. He emphasized that commercialization is common for all kind of media and not just social media and that any kinds of media can be used for all the purposes the critics mentioned above.

One complaint about the idea of new media as a political force is that most people simply use these tools for commerce, social life, or self-distraction, but this is common to all forms of media. Far more people in the 1500s were reading erotic novels than Martin Luther's "Ninety-five Theses," and far more people before the American Revolution were reading Poor Richard's Almanack than the work of the Committees of Correspondence. But those political works still had an enormous political effect. Just as Luther adopted the newly practical printing press to protest (Shirky 2011:32).

Other authors such as (Gladwell 2010; Fuchs 2013, 2015; Morozov 2017) believed that the idea of an 'online' Public Sphere is capitalist and bourgeoisie (serving or advancing a particular class interest). However, (McKee 2005) opined that the relationship between the public sphere and the media is complex. The media is the voice of the public sphere "where we find out about the public" (2005: 5&6). He argued that the media is embedded in the public sphere and that the latter is much bigger than the former. McKee (2005) further argued that the masses do not just accept what is being termed 'hand me downs' by the media. They (the masses) are intellectually capable to interpret, analyze and make decisions on what is being aired in the media. He concluded that this distinction enables popular access (opinions) to the public sphere and on social media.

Habermas (2006) in his revised theory of the Public Sphere repeatedly argued the importance of mediated political deliberation in democracy. He noted that a thriving public sphere must create an avenue for people (with different views) to come together and deliberate on matter of interest. One needs to be an informed citizen before being a knowledgeable citizen (McKee 2005; Habermas 2006). This kind of

deliberation is made possible on social media especially on Twitter due to the functionalities of this medium (Rasmussen 2014).

'Modern thinkers' of the public sphere as described by McKee (2005: 28) believed that social media is too spectacular because it gives things or ready-made information to the masses. Gladwell (2010), Fuch (2015) and Morozov (2017) argue that it encourages 'passivity' in a reader and also claim this kind of communication is irrational. However, proponents of social media as a kind of public sphere believed all forms of communication are as important as the other. Either through visuals, prints or songs, all are as important as other (McKee 2005; Tomaselli and Teer-Tomaselli 2009; Castells and Kumar 2014; Rasmussen 2014). This is further explained in the works of Pough (2015), in her examination of the role played by Hip hop songs and rap music in the United States Public sphere. She identified the contributions of songs (hip-hop) as a form of communication within a public sphere. Also, during the #FeesMustFall protests, freedom songs laced most of the communications during the protests (Hodes 2017; Makalela 2018). However, the fear expressed by the modern thinkers is that if we do allow citizens to communicate on a variety of platforms and styles, it may create confusion and inter-cultural clashes within the society and make the public sphere less universal. This leads to the question of fragmentation in modern societies.

2.3.2 Social media and Fragmentation

Online communications encourage different thoughts and opinion on societal issues (McKee 2005; Papacharissi 2008; Castell 2015). However, some authors argued that this could create a fragmented society (Gladwell 2010; Fuchs 2014).

“Is it a good thing that different cultures have their own public spaces, addressing issues that are supposed to be of interest to them, using their own culture’s forms of communication? Or is it rather another sign of the degeneration of the public sphere?” (McKee 2005:140)

Contemporary critics of the public sphere believed that the emergence of communication technologies such as the internet have served to divide and stratify

the public sphere further (Barber 2003; Fuchs 2013; 2015). There should be one form of communication where everybody could come together to discuss what affects all. However, McKee (2005) argues that having multiple 'smaller units' of the public sphere is actually in fact advantageous to society and democracy, because it gives individuals the accessibility to see and understand what is happening in other public spheres through public debates and interactions which new media technology provides. Papacharissi (2008) identifies these multiple 'spheres' as beneficial to democracy in that it gives equal voice to all. A single public sphere was possible in the eighteenth century because access to the public vote was limited to the educated white males which had a so called 'one universal common goal', however as democracy opened to everyone, different 'public spheres' emerged.

The reasons modern thinkers are against a fragmented public sphere is due to the selfish nature of a fragmented society, that is, people tend to think about what is best for their own social groups and not the society at large (McKee 2005). Another reason is that a fragmented society does not fall under the original concept of public sphere as defined by Habermas (2006). Lastly, that it leads to incoherence in communication within the public sphere (how can different groups communicate in a single public sphere?).

However, the original concept of the public sphere as identified by Habermas (2006) is to create an ideal environment for civic participation and public deliberation. These kinds of communication and participation is exemplified on social media communications especially on Twitter and Facebook (Habermas 2006; Papacharissi 2008). Furthermore, Deane (2005); McKee (2005) and Rasmussen (2014) argued that the 'different public spheres' create a better opportunity for the larger society and the different social groups to view the thought of different groups regarding an issue. The interactive nature of social media allows for cross communication therefore the issue of isolation within a 'sphere' is hardly possible. Similarly, discussions on Twitter are featured on Facebook (and vice versa) and other similar social media platforms. The connectivity nature of these online networks promotes intercultural interaction among different groups (Papacharissi 2008; Rasmussen 2014). This is evident in the case of the #FeesMustFall campaign on social media

platforms, it creates the avenue for the 'network of students' to create a unified voice and position for this cause on Twitter and as well on Facebook (Loosen and Schmidt 2012; Castells and Kumar 2014; Hodes 2017; Luescher, Loader and Mugume 2017). Students were able to interact and communicate on the Fees Must Fall in different universities across the country through the use of different social media platforms. This in return gives avenue for different groups to respect and have an open mind for one another through cross cultural online communications. McKee (2005) said these are helpful in communicating with other people whose language and way of thinking one finds different.

The internet is becoming part of what "constitutes politics" (Mckee 2005:172). The internet offers new ways to do politics and governance. Mckee (2005) argues that the reason why youth are not directly engaging with politicians is because they do not speak to or address their needs. Therefore, they find recourse on the internet which gives platform to air their views. Similarly, Bosch (2017) argues that while young people and students might not be participating in traditional politics through the means of voting, they are making use of these social media platforms to express their opinions. She observed during the analysis of over 1.3 million tweets generated in October 2015 from the #FeesMustFall that the highest (top) number of tweets with relatively high percentage of retweets were not from journalists, political actors nor commentators but from top South African celebrities (Bosch 2017). The youth also protested without engaging with politicians (Hodes 2017). A case is the black students protest against the language policy at the University of Stellenbosch where the clip (#Luister) of the clash between black and white students was posted on Youtube compelling the then Minister of Higher Education and Training to enter into the discussion (Luescher et al. 2017:236).

All these lead to the conclusion that youth are not apolitical (Gladwell 2010 and Morozov 2017) or lack interest in governance (Fuchs 2013; 2015) as indicated by anti-proponent of social media, but they just find another means of expressing their views (through either Facebook and Twitter) which is very different from the traditional political engagement. Mckee (2005) and Castells and Kumar (2014) defined this as the politics of 'new social (media) movement'. They disagreed with

other contemporary thinkers that youth are apolitical by arguing that they just find another 'cultural' (e.g social media) way to represent their thoughts and change the way people think about the society. Therefore, the youth find social media tools as a resource in including their voice in public opinion.

Despite the criticism, it is interesting to note that many authors have used the concept of the public sphere to analyze social media, most especially as 'alternative spheres' for deliberative and participatory communication (Semaan *et al.* 2014). Papacharissi (2008) pointed out social media with the use of internet holds the future for a thriving Public sphere. Tomaselli and Teer-Tomaselli (2009) observed that the internet has impacted and improved positively the way the public sphere is viewed by serving the interests of its users and audience towards an improved participatory culture. Buttressing this assertion, Hermida *et al.* (2012) argued that the social media is a representation of the evolution of a new public sphere. The public sphere has now emerged into different terminologies such as 'networked public sphere' (Benkler 2006; Hermida *et al.* 2012; Bosch 2017), 'virtual public sphere' (Papacharissi 2002, 2008), and 'online public sphere'. Daniel (2016) observed that during the #FeesMustFall protest, the public sphere has been strengthened to include black female students' voices through the use of social media as against the initial Habermasian concept of a white dominated male middle class. During the 'Occupy Nigeria'⁶ movement of early 2012 in Nigeria, it was found that Facebook was a predominant medium of connecting and communicating among citizens during the unrest and that the public issues deliberated in the 'online public spheres' influenced the offline protesters (Ibrahim 2013).

2.3.3 Why (not) the Public Sphere?

The Public Sphere is an interesting concept to be considered in order to appreciate the inter-relationship between society, media (both traditional media and new media) and democracy (Deane 2005; Gladwell 2010; Adut 2012; Bruns, Highfield and Lind

⁶ Occupy Nigeria was a socio-political protest in Nigeria that arises due to the removal of fuel subsidy by the Nigerian government. It was seen to be an offshoot of the global Occupy Movement. The protest was the most organized civil unrest since the restoration of democracy in Nigeria in 1999 (Chiluwa 2015).

2012; Loosen and Schmidt 2012; Fuchs 2013; Castells and Kumar 2014; Rasmussen 2014; Bosch 2017). It is impossible to explore the inclusion role of social media on the public without understanding and gaining perspective on the key concepts of Public Sphere (Loosen and Schmidt 2012; Heise *et al.* 2014). The focus of this study which is the inclusion role of Facebook and Twitter as a reporting tool allows for social media as an inclusive medium enabling public views and opinions. Social media therefore allows for audience inclusion (voice) in the public sphere. Some authors have classified social media as a 'sphere' itself. Benkler (2006) views public sphere as a 'networked community', Papacharissi (2002; 2008) a virtual sphere and private public sphere, and Castells and Kumar (2014) and Castells (2015) as a network society (movement), a new kind of public sphere. Burgess and Green (2009) identified social media as a cultural public sphere. However, Van Dijck (2012: 160) cautioned against labelling social media as a new kind of public sphere, he opined that social media should not be used as a platform for the rectification of Habermas' Public sphere but rather "as a contested space where private, public and corporate interests compete to produce new norms of sociality and connectivity". This study will not add to the already populated debate of Public Sphere and the social media, however, it will explore and seek to understand the new relationship between social media and the audience. The audience inclusion theory of Loosen and Schmidt (2012); Heise *et al.* (2014) describe adequately this phenomenon. The audience inclusion approach describes what Kidd and McIntosh (2016:789) described as 'techno-ambivalence', which is a middle ground between the dystopian and utopian view of the internet. They (techno-ambivalence) acknowledge the importance of new communication media such as Facebook and Twitter, and strive to understand (with evidence) the input these new media have on the public sphere, democracy and society. Having laid the basics of Public sphere and what constitutes it, the rest of the chapter will focus on the audience inclusion role of social media.

2.3.4 The empowered audience

The "Audience-driven" concept is found on the premises that audience is driving discussions and public issue in the media (Uscinski 2009: 800). The "public plays at least some role in shaping the media" by participating in news dissemination and

what aspect of public issues that make the news (Uscinski 2009:798). Social media enhances this kind of participation and inclusion of the audience in the news process in a way that “directly lead the media to alter its issue agenda” (Uscinski 2009:798; Loosen & Schmidt, 2012).

Loosen and Schmidt (2012: 869) identified three main perspectives in distinguishing the ‘audience’ before the emergence of mobile communication and social media. These include first “Audience as recipients-perspective”. This approach situated the audience as subordinate or at the mercy of media organizations (journalists). Its function is passive because the audience can only receive generated content from the media. Secondly, the audience is also used as a measurement for journalistic input and output. The audience is treated as a product and commodity tool especially by media owners for the purpose of advertising, media sales and other sales promotions (Caraway, 2011).

Both perspectives acknowledge the audience as an important aspect of the newsroom (as information regarding the audience characteristics is taken into account to produce news content), however, audiences should not be seen as mere recipients nor as a media industry’s commodity, but rather “as an empowered digital network” ((Loosen and Schmidt 2012; Lee, Lewis and Powers 2014). This lead to the third perspective, which is the audience as an “empowered network” (Loosen and Schmidt 2012: 871).

The emergence of social media has produced a new kind of audience which is the ‘empowered network’ (Loosen and Schmidt 2012:871). The concept of the empowered audience network (Castells and Kumar 2014) is the audience involved in the active production and spread of information using these social network sites and digital media (Loosen & Schmidt, 2012; Lee et al., 2012; Lewis, 2012; Hermida, 2012). However, Loosen and Schmidt (2012: 871) argue that “technological potential does not necessarily equal actual participation” and in order to avoid both the utopian and dystopian notions on the changing public (sphere) communication especially in the 21st century and in order to accurately ascertain the ‘power’ of the digital network media, they came up with the Audience Inclusion theory. This theory therefore effectively discuss the inclusion of audience in public discourse and

engagement using social media. The audience inclusion theory is apt to discuss the interrelationship between the media, audience and social networks because it critically looked at the relevance of communication technology with perspective from both the audience and the media.

2.4 The Audience Inclusion Theory

The inclusion theory is derived from the systemic theory of Niklas Luhmann (1995), a sociologist who believed that for a modern society to succeed, there is a need for delegation of some function in a systematic way in order for the society not to suffer anarchy (Nassehi 2005; Schirmer and Michailakis 2015). Inclusion theory therefore, is informed by the 'systemic theory' where social structures are put in place to build a strong society. In journalism, such social structure (inclusion) can take the form of communication channels between the audience and the media (Loosen and Schmidt 2012), where the media provides information to the audience, and the audience in this context is the receiver of such information. A system is established if the audience in turn accept information provided by the media (Loosen and Schmidt 2012).

The audience inclusion theory explains the 'new' relationship between journalism and its audiences due to the emerging social network sites and media (Loosen & Schmidt 2012). Audience, "within the theory of Inclusion is used whenever a person benefits or make uses of a social system" (for example Twitter, Facebook) and thereby "becomes a part of that system's relevant environment" (Loosen and Schmidt 2012: 873). This theory provided a framework to both separate and "integrate different aspects of audience inclusion in Journalism", as a result of the rise of social networks media. Schmidt *et al.* (2013: 93) distinguished two major forms of inclusion level. The first suggested that all social systems are a function of either 'performance' (journalist) or audience' (public) 'roles' (Loosen & Schmidt 2012; Schmidt *et al.* 2013). Initially, the inclusion into the social system of journalists by the audience is only realized by accepting communication offers from editors or media agencies, such as, emails to editor. This interaction takes place within the confines of the avenue the media houses provide (Scholl 2004). The aim of these

interactions are not clearly identified as the comments or contributions from the audience might not generate any media content or ideas. This therefore limited the audience inclusion to participate in news content.

However, with the advent of new media and different social media sites and networks which empower the audience with different communication technologies, the relationship and roles of both the audience and Journalism is “changing into a more balanced relationship” (Schmidt et al. 2013:94). Audiences do not need to rely on public communication provided by performance (i.e. Journalist) in order to share their opinion. The mass or traditional media provides an imbalanced communication between the Performance and the Audience as it places the audience as mainly the recipient of news and communication. Inclusion theory allows for the differentiation between the performance and audience roles in the face of the emerging social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Therefore, a second basic distinction emerged which is Inclusion Performance and Expectation.

2.4.1 Inclusion Performance

These communications take place either within or outside the journalistic confine and use technologies and social media to stimulate conversation between the Journalists and the audience. This implies that the audience may choose to interact with journalist on these social media platforms provided by media institutions or rather discuss outside these institutional platforms thereby creating a different sphere than that which the media institution provides. These examples are manifested in #blackTwitter, occupy movement, and #FeesMustFall, thereby drawing journalist to the discussion and into the audience sphere. This conversation can take place within the audience sphere e.g Facebook, Twitter, blogs and other social media sites, and in a way become a focal point for journalism (Loosen & Schmidt 2012; Schmidt et. al. 2013). This is described as ‘the networked audience’ (Loosen and Schmidt 2012; Castells and Kumar 2014; Lee, Lewis and Powers 2014) and the ‘active audience’ (Hermida 2011 and Bolin 2012).

The Inclusion Performance Indicators of Journalism includes “actual features of audience participation journalism provides” (Loosen and Schmidt 2012:874) through

different venues and channels of interaction with journalists or audience interacting with one another, for example E-mails, blogs, Twitter (Hermida, 2011, Loosen & Schmidt 2012). The “manifestation of audience participation in journalistic output or products” (Loosen and Schmidt 2012: 875) for example through “User-Generated Content” (Wyrwoll 2014: 12) Also, the audience response influences the news and stories to be investigated by the newsroom and can also bring dynamism in job functions in a newsroom, for example employing a ‘social media editor’ (Loosen and Schmidt 2012: 875)

Other authors and different studies have made significant contributions to this argument on the inclusion levels and participatory features of audiences in Journalism. Domingo et al. (2008: 328-331) based their study for inclusion and participation of the audience in news reporting on the five (5) ‘components of communication process’ which includes “access to and observation of something that can be communicated; selection and filtering of information; processing and editing that information; distribution; and interpretation” of such information (Domingo et al., 2008:328; Hermida et al. 2012). They describe the communication process as the ‘news production stages’ (Domingo 2008: 331) which can involve participation from both the audience and the journalist. These stages can take place within and outside the confines of a media room. The first four stages has a direct impact on news content (what information or news is shared), while the last stage has to do with commentary.

Domingo et al. (2008) found out in their study of sixteen (16) major online newspapers of six (6) different European Countries that most of these online newspapers has opened up the inclusion of the audience in the interpretation stage of the news production process in the form of comments and debates among their audience on their online platforms. However, other stages described above are relatively still closed to the audience. Most media institutions view audience participation as an avenue for public debate among the audience and not necessarily to impact on news content.

There is no need for struggle over control between journalists and the audience due to the participatory and inclusion role of the audience. Lewis (2012:852) envisioned

“audience integration as a normative goal of a truly digital journalism”, while Peters and Witschge (2015) also agreed that journalism should indeed be participatory and inclusive.

This leads to the next discussion which is the inclusion role and participatory features of the audience as discussed by Loosen and Schmidt (2012). This aspect is important to this study as the focus is on the ‘audience role’ of the performance indicators. Other research has focused on the journalistic input of social media on the #FeesMustFall uprising (Daniels 2016), while some authors conducted analyses of posts and tweets on different social media used during the #FeesMustFall (De Jager 2016; Bosch 2017; Frassinelli 2018). Luescher, Loader and Mugume (2017) did a combined analysis of internal reports generated by a department at the University of Free State (UFS) during the #FeesMustFall (#UFSFeesMustFall), alongside interviewing two SRC students at the university. They situated their work under the network movement of Castells (2015). This study will look at the audience inclusion role of students in the 2015-2017 #FeesMustFall with focus on the role of the ‘audience’ itself, which is in this case DUT students.

There are two kinds of Inclusion Performance Indicators on the side of the audience. The first is the Participatory Practice of Audience and the other is the Degree of Community Orientation. The features of participation are not necessarily confined to the confines of a newsroom; just because emails or letters to editors exist does not mean people will use it, especially “with the emergence of social media” (Loosen and Schmidt 2012:875) which gives avenue for the audience to ‘self-publish’ either through videos or messages to any of the different social media sites.

“And with the emergence of social media, interacting with journalism is not confined to the features of audience participation that institutional media provides” (Loosen and Schmidt 2012: 875)

The #FeesMustFall hashtag was not created by the traditional media but by students. Therefore, hashtags can be set by the audience and not necessarily the journalist. Daniels (2016) maintained that during the Fees Must Fall campaign, the mainstream media were not the creator of hashtag trends but followers of hashtag

trends on social media. Mainstream media were 'hashtag takers' as opposed to 'hashtag setters' (Daniels 2016: 187). The hashtag was used more by the audience than the traditional media given that social media platforms allow each person to be the creator of information and news. Bosch (2017) highlighted in the case of #RhodesMustFall, that Twitter created an avenue for the campaign to go from a local university campaign (UCT) to national and then global, thereby generating political debate even outside South Africa. South African students in their hundreds, gathered outside the South African High commission in London for a solidarity protest on #FeesMustFall in London at the peak of the protest (Mpofu-Walsh 2016). The hashtag (#FeesMustFall) also gathered support from South African students in the United States (Mpofu-Walsh 2016). This is possible as audiences are addressing their own online networks on social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. Although Gladwell (2010); Loosen and Schmidt (2012); Schmidt *et al.* (2013) all argued that exposure to digital or social network sites does not equal the same amount of participation (the fact that these medium are available does not mean it will be used by all). However, Shirky (2011) pointed out that that does not mean that audience who do make use of social networks cannot use it to effect change.

Another level of Inclusion Performance Indicator for audience is the Degree of community orientation (Audience Inclusion, Online public sphere). There is a gradual shift from the mass communication model to a networked audience one. This is commonly seen "when users participate and locate themselves within a group, network or community" (Loosen and Schmidt 2012: 876; see also Castells 2015; Frassinelli 2018). This is exemplified most especially on Twitter with the use of hashtags and in the campaign of the #FeesMustFall. Loosen and Schmidt (2012: 876) refer to this as the "online-based public sphere".

One of the research questions this study seeks to explore is the audience inclusion performance indicators/roles of Facebook and Twitter in the #FeesMustFall campaign among students. The study will base this research question on the two performance indicators (Participatory Practice and degree of community orientation) and identify if this was applicable during the #FeesMustFall campaign. How did Facebook and Twitter contribute to the way #FeesMustFall was reported?

2.4.2 Inclusion expectations Indicators

The audience expectations as identified by Loosen and Schmidt (2012) dwelt on the motivation for participation and the outcome this participation has either individually or collectively on Journalism at large. (Schmidt et al. 2013). Firstly, the inclusion expectation is manifested as Journalistic role conceptions within Journalism, for example, “should journalism encourage the audience to participate, in order to channel public opinion” (Loosen and Schmidt 2012: 876) or to serve as an advocator for the interest of the public? The ‘grand’ role of the journalist as a watchdog (Peters and Witschge 2015) for the public leaves the entire role of ‘making news’ in the hands of the journalist. So, the question is to what extent is the audience allowed to participate in the journalistic role as a watchdog or channel of public opinion? Peters and Witschge (2015) argue that most of the role accorded to journalists are now being performed by audiences. Another rationale or argument is if audience participation is an instrument for better journalistic output (within the media organization). Can this inclusion result in quality journalism with the use of different social media engagement tools? Will inclusion and participation of the audience bring additional cost that is legal risks, libel, copyright or cost reduction to media organizations (for example relying on citizen reporters for information) (Bruns, Highfield and Lind 2012; Lewis 2012; Lee, Lewis and Powers 2014).

Godsell *et al.* (2016) argued that social media gives room for students and fellow supporters of #FeesMustFall to establish new methods of reporting stories thereby pushing against the traditional method of news reporting held on to by journalists.

On the other hand, the Inclusion Expectations Indicator for the audience are motivations for audience participation and the assessment of audience contribution. The key questions under the inclusion expectations are what are the motivations for the audience wanting to participate and what are the assessment of audience contributions? Other studies have highlighted motives for audience participation in news and other public opinions as to express “one's opinion; take part in discourse & deliberation; ask for additional information & orientation; wanting to contribute expert knowledge; and sharing personal experiences or affirming individual and social identity” (Leung 2009; Ekdale *et al.* 2010; Loosen and Schmidt 2012: 877).

Social media gives room for students and fellow supporters of #FeesMustFall to share their personal story, thereby bringing a human angle to the protest. Therefore, Facebook and Twitter allows for community cohesion among students (Godsell *et al.* 2016).

The second question of this study is how is the audience-inclusion role understood among students in the reporting of #FeesMustFall on Twitter and Facebook?

The study will therefore explore the inclusion expectations and motivations of students for participating in news sharing on Facebook and Twitter during the #FeesMustFall campaign among students.

2.5 Summary of the audience-inclusion theory - the inclusion power of the audience

Loosen & Schmidt (2012) argued that social media allows users to comment, like, tweet, retweet and distribute information from various sources. These social media platforms provide potential for increased participation for the people referred to as the audience. Therefore, they described audience inclusion theory as performance and expectations indicators on both journalism and the audience. Inclusion performance is an interaction and deliberation that takes place within or outside the confines of media organizations. This audience inclusion is now part of what constitute professional roles for journalists against their initial grand role as 'voice of the public'. When this inclusion role is exhibited outside the confines of social media tools or technologies provided by media outlets, it is described as the networked audience. The inclusion expectation on the side of the journalist affects their idea of their professional roles, while for the audience it is based on the motivation for assessment and participation.

This study will focus on the 'audience side of the model' which explains that with the emergence of social media platforms, the interaction of audiences no longer needs interaction with the journalist since these tools (e.g Facebook and Twitter) are 'self' publishing tools. In this regard, users of these social networks platforms are directly

engaging their audience on these network circles on Facebook and with followers on Twitter or generally the online community.

2.5.1 Why Audience Inclusion?

Loosen and Schmidt (2012) extensively discussed various aspect of social networks usage as it pertain to both audience and the media. They presented a framework that situate the relationship between journalism and the audience in a contemporary society. The audience inclusion model is an improvement on existing theories on society and the media.

“Thus, in order to accurately assess these alleged participatory potentials of networked digital media and to avoid utopian or cyber optimistic fallacies, it seems necessary to first develop analytical models which help us understand the journalism/audience relationship and advance existing theories in light of the changing conditions of (public) communication” (Loosen and Schmidt 2012: 872)

Audience-inclusion theory provides a ‘balanced’ approach towards researching the relationship of news and public opinion. This theory is contrary to the agenda-setting theory (Wu & Coleman, 2009) which explains that the media dictates the news the public viewed (Papadouka et al. 2016). De Jager (2016) explained that only 5% of the average 1000 daily posts on the #FeesMustFall were from the traditional media, which means that the gatekeeping role and agenda role no longer reside with the traditional media but rather they have the role of investigating and making sense of public opinion. The active audience theory (Loosen & Schmidt, 2012; Lee et al., 2012; Lewis, 2012; Hermida, 2012) simply gives the power of news content to the public. The audience inclusion theory acknowledges the inclusion role of social media in the light of different hashtags in participation and engaging in public debate.

This work is situated under the audience-inclusion theory of Loosen and Schmidt (2012); Schmidt *et al.* (2013) for the following reasons:

Both authors discussed in detail the Public Sphere in their model and they find a way to understand how the audience inclusion model fits into the entire 'online public sphere' as explained above.

These authors neither have a Dystopian (social media platform is not equivalent to or cannot be referred to as a public sphere) or Utopian (social media is the best thing that can happen to democracy) view about social media. They presented a way of analyzing the audience voices using social and online media platforms which aligns with the aims and objectives for this study which is to explore the audience inclusion role of students in the #FeesMustFall campaign. The question is, were students able to bypass the traditional media to give voice to their demands during #FeesMustFall?

This study will not add to the already populated debate on whether social media should be referred to as a Public Sphere or the 'flaws' in the Public Sphere theory itself (Barber 2003; Curran 2005; McKee 2005; Habermas 2006; Papacharissi 2008; Tomaselli and Teer-Tomaselli 2009; Gladwell 2010; Shirky 2011; Susen 2011; Fuchs 2013; Castells 2015; Fuchs 2015; Morozov 2017), rather it will concentrate on understanding and exploring the audience inclusion role of these social media tools in the #FeesMustFall campaign among the students' 'public sphere'. Therefore, situating this in the South African context of the #FeesMustFall, the social media is understood to give a voice to the #FeesMustFall revolution of 2015 (Loosen and Schmidt 2012; Daniels 2016)

2.6 Conclusion

The above literature has attempted to discuss the role of Facebook and Twitter in protest among young people in South Africa, taking examples from #RhodesMustFall and the #FeesMustFall and also included some examples from around the globe. The chapter established social media as the new form of public communication especially in the 21st century. The function of the mainstream media in the audience inclusion of the public in news reporting was discussed.

The theoretical framework that has guided this study was also explained. The audience inclusion framework is guided by inclusion expectations and inclusion performance in the sense that since social media allows for inclusion and self-publishing, the interaction between journalist and the audience is balanced. Amongst the other motivations for audience participation and inclusion in news reporting is community cohesion. Twitter and Facebook provide the platform for community cohesion among students during the #FeesMustFall protest.

The following chapter will discuss the methods used to explore the audience inclusion role of Twitter and Facebook by DUT Students in the #FeesMustFall campaign.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we grounded the study within a theoretical framework and provided a justification and argument for the audience-inclusion theory. This chapter will discuss the interpretive qualitative approach (thematic analysis), which is the method adopted for this study.

This chapter will not only define and explain the methodological concept but will discuss in details how the interpretive qualitative approach (using thematic analysis) method is suitable to explore the audience inclusion of social media during the #FeesMustFall. This chapter will also discuss the limitations of these methods (as no methods is without limitations), but will justify why this is the best approach to look at this study. Adequate description of data processes and collection will be detailed as well. In conclusion, a reflection on the pilot study conducted will be discussed.

3.2 Research Objectives

The aim of this study was to explore and understand the audience inclusion role of Facebook and Twitter in news reporting among young South African students. The study seeks to understand how these social media tools encourage audience inclusion in news sharing and dissemination. This study aims to look at the role Twitter and Facebook play in the reporting of the #FeesMustFall campaign.

Key Research Objectives

- To explore the way communications and views were spread among students on Facebook and Twitter during the #FeesMustFall campaign and how active students debated on these two platforms.
- To explore the audience inclusion role of Facebook and Twitter and how it contributes to News reporting

- To understand the inclusion role of Facebook and Twitter as tools for receiving news in the case of #FeesMustFall

Key Research Questions

- How does Facebook and Twitter contribute to the way #FeesMustFall was reported?
- What are the students' inclusion expectations and motivations for participating in news sharing on Facebook and Twitter during the #FeesMustFall?
- How is the audience-inclusion role understood among students in the reporting of #FeesMustFall on Twitter and Facebook?

3.3 Defining the Interpretive qualitative approach

In analyzing the events surrounding the #FeesMustFall, selected studies (see as outlined in [1.2](#) and [1.3](#) under the Introduction) have looked at both the content and contextual analyses of the tweets and posts from Twitter and Facebook. However, content analysis alone is not sufficient on its own to fully understand the “political contingencies and dynamics at work in contemporary protest and demonstration reporting” especially that which involves the social media platforms (Cottle 2008: 858). This study therefore explored the in-depth meanings and views of students who were at the center of the campaign by conducting interviews through the qualitative method. This method therefore gave room for the primary participants of the #FeesMustFall protest to reflect on their responses and their uses of these social media tools to channel their voice.

Interpretation is at the core of a quality qualitative research because it deals with meaning and the process that leads to formulation of meaning (Willig 2017). The Interpretative method as explained by Willig (2017) seeks to unravel either the social or the psychological meaning in qualitative data. A qualitative study focus on participants' ‘recollection’ and interpretation of lived experiences to create meaning (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2019: 149). Since this is an exploratory study, the

researcher delved into the meaning of how students (who had lived or are living the experience of various protests on campus) explore Facebook and Twitter in reporting of the #FeesMustFall protest. This study explores the meaning students derived from events pertaining to the reporting of the #FeesMustFall on different social networks.

The diagram below shows an overview of the methodological approach of the study.

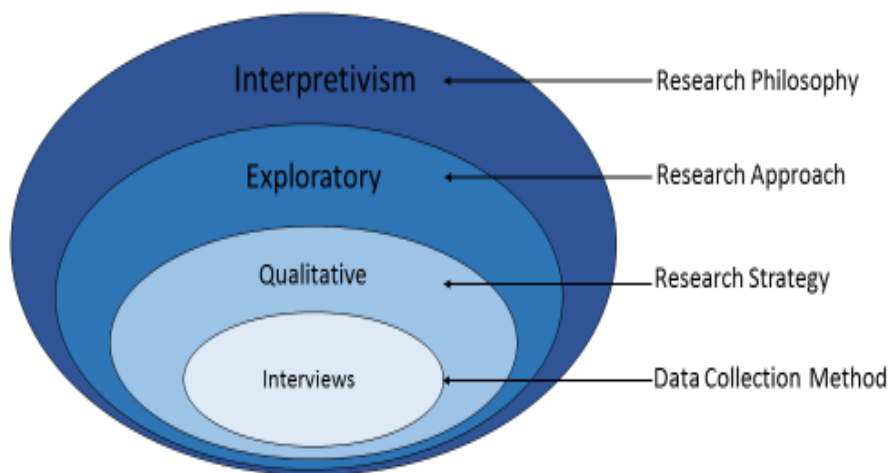


Figure 1 Research Onions adapted - Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012)

The interpretive approach focus on how audience view and give meaning to their world. Much emphasis on this philosophy is based on 'lived experience' of participants. Therefore, the above diagram mirrored the research paradigm of this study as would be explained in the following sections.

3.4 Process of Sampling and Selection

Purposive Sampling

Marvasti (2004) defines purposive sampling as the “selection of participants or sources of data to be used in a study, based on their anticipated richness and relevance of information in relation to the study’s research questions. Richness and relevance include sources whose data are presumed to challenge and not just

support a researcher's thinking about the research questions and therefore should be part of the sample" (2004: 311).

It is in the nature of qualitative research not to depend upon random sampling; this study employed the use of purposive sampling to determine the selection of respondents to be interviewed, which means selecting those that "obtain the broadest range of information and perspectives on the subject of study" (Kuzel, 1992: 37). Lincoln and Guba (1995) suggest that sample selection should be "to the point of redundancy...In purposeful sampling, the size of the sample is determined by informational considerations. If the purpose is to maximize information, the sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming from new sampled units; thus redundancy is the primary criterion" (Lincoln & Guba 1995: 43). However, this study employed the process of saturation (similar to redundancy), which is "when the collection of new data does not reveal" (Mason 2010: 2) a new or further theme about the subject of study (Guest et al. 2006). The study tagged the number of participants at 15 due to the chances of saturation of data occurring after the first twelve interviews (Guest et al. 2006; Brinkmann & Kvale 2018). However, due to Saturation, the researcher did interview 13 participants.

3.5 Interviews

As stated previously, this study made use of a qualitative approach - interviews to meet the research aims and answer the research questions posed above. Qualitative research interviews explore in-depth ways to understand people "on their own terms and how they make meaning of their own lives, experiences, and cognitive processes" (Brenner 2006: 357). It gives people the leverage to talk first-hand about their experience or understanding of their world. Two people are able to discuss a particular issue of similar interest through conversation (Brinkmann & Kvale 2018). Interviews may differ "in terms of depth, focus, scope and degree of structure" (Meyer 2008:70). Conducting interviews provide a rich and solid in-depth understanding of human translation of experience and the meaning these experiences bring to their world. Through interactions (interviews), human beings are given the power to explain the meaning they attribute to their life-world rather

than just supplying information. Therefore, interview is a process where meaning is assigned to life experiences (Meyer 2008).

3.5.1 Semi-Structured Interview

There are different ways of conducting an interview. This is because interviews vary in structure. “The humanistic or qualitative researcher values the unstructured or semi-structured type because it gives access to people's meaning-endowing capacities and produces rich, deep data” (Brewer 2000: 66). Therefore, a semi-structured interview was conducted for the purpose of this study. This type of interview has three distinct attributes. First, the questions are not pre-determined or rigid (not strictly formal as in the case of a questionnaire). “The researcher will have a mental framework of study questions, but the specifically verbalized questions as posed to any given participant will differ according to the context and setting of the interview” (Yin 2011:134). In addition, there is no ‘uniform behaviour’ for all interviews. The researcher or interviewer rely on a ‘conversational mode’, while conducting the interview and this “lead to a social relationship of sorts, with the quality of the relationship individualized to every participant”. Lastly, the interviewer uses “open rather than closed-ended questions” to elicit in-depth answers (Yin 2011: 135).

A semi-structured interview is a “life-world interview” and describes an interviewee perspective of his world with the aim of obtaining meaning for the “described phenomena” and it also creates avenues for follow-up questions (Brinkmann and Kvale 2018: 9). This approach is suitable as the purpose of this study is to explore social media role in the #FeesMustFall campaign and it is best suitable to answer the research questions posed in Chapter one. This research instrument gave opportunities for students (Interviewee) to describe in-depth how they relate the inclusion role of Facebook and Twitter in the #FeesMustFall campaign. Interview questions were derived from the audience inclusion theory as explained in the Literature review, however, there were avenues for follow-up questions on the participant’s answers to explore and seek further meaning participants attached to their life experiences . Questions asked were flexible in order to accommodate a

lengthy interaction and discussion from the participants and to avoid a monosyllabic response (Yin 2011).

3.5.2 Recruiting Process

The target population for the study is Durban University of Technology students in Durban Central. Interviews were conducted with undergraduate students of DUT. “University students are suitable for exploring patterns of news sharing in social media because they represent the overall online community who access or share news and reflect trends in social media usage” (Ma et al. 2014: 604). Data were collected from 13 students in form of interviews, all of whom had adopted Twitter and Facebook within the past two years but who varied widely in terms of their levels of usage of the two media platforms and their areas of specialization. Respondents consist of adults (male and female) ages 18 to 28. Studies have indicated the prevalent age of 18-35 years among young adults who source for news on Twitter (Hermida et al 2012). A simple biographical sheet which contains information on age, gender, race and social media platforms used accompanied the Informed Consent Form given to all participants before the commencement of interview.

Participants/Students were solicited from the department of Journalism within DUT through purposive “(with the criteria being ‘age’ and ‘interest in news’)” (Qayyum et al 2010:182) and convenience sampling. “For the interest in news criterion, students who actively read, listened to, or viewed news reports in any media or format were solicited” (Qayyum et al 2010:182). Journalism students are expected to have these criteria because of their line of profession. Therefore, the researcher approached third year National Diploma Journalism students in the classroom and call for participation in the study. Another reason for opting for Journalism students is because of their media background and since this is a media related research, the students are suitable for the study. The study also opted for 3rd year students because the #FeesMustFall campaign was from the year 2015-2017 and considering the year (2019) the interview was conducted, the third year students who were then in their 1st year level in 2017 were suitable for the study. It is noteworthy that the declaration for free education by the former President of South

Africa, Mr. Jacob Zuma was in December 2017 (effective January 2018) to all students with the combined annual household income of R350,000.00 or less.

The researcher spoke with one of the subject lecturers for the 3rd year Journalism students (who is also the researcher's supervisor) asking for permission to speak with the students during one of her classes with them. A date in the timetable was reached and the researcher was present at the beginning of the class on the agreed date and was introduced to the students by the Lecturer. The researcher discussed in detail the purpose of the study with the students and why they are the suitable participants for the study and added that there will be no harm or direct benefits to those who participated in the study. The students were informed that all information will be treated with confidentiality. The researcher therefore asked if there are any further clarifications from the class regarding the interview process. After attending to the questions and comments from the students regarding the interview process, the researcher indicated that a list will be passed around for students who are interested to put down their names and phone contacts and they will be contacted. The students were informed that writing their names does not mean they have entirely committed to the interview, as this is just the first stage of the process and they have the right to withdraw during any stage of the interview process. Eighteen (18) students indicated interest and wrote out their names and contact details. They were contacted via WhatsApp messages, SMS and phone calls for interviews until the required number of participants were completed. As mentioned above, the study initially targeted fifteen (15) participants due to the chances of Saturation of data occurring after the first twelve interviews (Guest et al. 2006; Brinkmann & Kvale 2018). Terry *et al.* (2017) also recommended between 6 – 15 interviews for a masters' study. However, ultimately saturation provided the basis for data samples as data collection stopped after the 13th interview was conducted.

3.6 Demographic Profile of Participants

The study reached saturation at the 12th interview; however, one more interview was conducted to ascertain this claim. Therefore, the total number of interviews were 13. The demographic data of the participants collected include age, race, type

of social media. Out of the 13 participants, three (3) were former executives of Students' Representatives Council (SRC), while two (2) had work with the online radio of the institution called 'Radio DUT'. There were nine (9) females and four (4) males. Below is the tabular representation of the demographics of all participants:

Table 3-1 Demographic of Participants

Names of Participants ⁷	Gender		Types of Social media Use ⁸					Student ExcOs (SRC)	Online ⁹ Radio DUT
	M	F	F	T	WH	IN	Others		
SNE		X		X	X				
XOLILE		X	X					X	X
DIME		X	X						
LIZZY		X	X	X	X	X			
LINAH		X	X		X				
CYNTHIA		X	X	X		X			X
NOTHULA		X	X		X		X	X	
THANDO	X		X	X		X	X		
THOLANI	X			X				X	
MTHUNZI	X		X	X		X	X		
MANGI	X			X					
HANNAH		X	X	X	X	X	X		
NQOBILE		X	X	X		X			

Gender: M – male, F – female

⁷ All names are Pseudonyms

⁸ Table 4-1 shows participants using either Facebook or Twitter. At least Facebook or Twitter was listed as social platforms used by students

⁹ Participants of this study are all students in the journalism programme. Two (2) work with the online radio of DUT and three (3) were member of the Student representative

3.7 Pilot Study Reflection

Pilot interviews are essential to a successful qualitative research (Yin 2011). Jacob and Furgerson (2012) further discussed the importance of conducting a test interview with either the study of population or those that share close affinity with the population study. This will ensure that the questions are sufficient enough to get the relevant and adequate data you need and will give you opportunity to modify the questions for the study (Turner III 2010). The researcher conducted a Pilot test with a B. Tech student of Library & Information Studies. Although not specifically in the population for this study, it shared a close affinity with the Journalism student as the participant is experienced in communication and information study and was also a student when the #FeesMustFall campaign started in 2015. After the pilot interview was conducted, the researcher made some changes in terms of how the questions were arranged and which question should be asked first (In the pilot interview conducted, the initial question was directly about the #FeesMustFall which makes the interviewee think she must answer all other subsequent questions around the #FeesMustFall campaign). Yin (2011) identified three ways to group questions during actual interview, which are that the first question should talk about participant's life history, more specifically a general question should be asked, then a second set of questions should reflect the events surrounding the theme of study and then the third set of questions should reflect their meaning and interpretation of what they make out of the event. Therefore, the questions for the actual study were regrouped under these headings.

3.8 Data Collection Process

All interviews were conducted face-to-face with the initial interview conducted on March 05 2019 at the DUT City campus library, using one of the library rooms and this process lasted for two months. The last interview was conducted in May 30, 2019. The Researcher conducted all the interviews and the interviews took place within the school campus where the research participants attended classes and lectures. The venue for the interviews were mostly in the library rooms and quiet and

undisturbed places within the campus. The reason for opting for these venues was because of its privacy and the students are used to this environment thereby finding it easier to talk freely (Yin 2011; Do and Yamagata-Lynch 2017; King, Horrocks and Brooks 2019)

Each student was interviewed one-on-one and interviews were audio-recorded with a cellphone after permission had been obtained from the participants and these were later transcribed. The reason for making use of a cellphone was because it gives the students the ability to talk freely without the formality of an audio-tape recorder. Participants were more open to share their experiences using this device (King, Horrocks and Brooks 2019). However, in order to maintain the non-disclosure and confidentiality ethics of conducting an interview as explained by Harding (2019), each interview was transferred immediately to the researcher's computer and assigned a password. The minimum duration for each interview was 30 minutes while the maximum was an hour.

The researcher did the transcription of all the thirteen (13) interviews. This was quite helpful as it gives the researcher a fuller perspective of the data collected and the ability to write down her first thoughts on the data during the process even before the actual analyses began as recommended by Nowell *et al.* (2017). Also, it is worthy to note that all interviews were transcribed with all the 'nuances' as explained by (Harding 2019) which are pauses, expressions of emotions, these were included for a richer subjectivity in interpretation. However, repeated words from interviewees were removed from the data set.

The researcher initially transcribed the first two interviews, analyzed them, and discussed the narratives with both her Supervisors before commencing on the analyses of the remaining data.

3.8.1 How the Informed consent was obtained

Participations were voluntary and carried out with courtesy. A letter of information and consent accompanied all interviews. The researcher handed over the letter of information and consent to participants before the commencement of interviews and

gave the interviewee time to read the information details about the study and to sign the consent form. A simple biographic sheet also accompanied the letter of information and consent as detailed in the research proposal to obtain demographic details. It comprises background information such as age, name, gender and type of social media used by the interviewee. Gatekeeping permission was obtained through the DUT Research Office. Participants also consented independently.

The interview guide for this study was derived from the themes from the research questions as posed in this study. However, in order to elicit in-depth responses, the researcher followed-up with questions where relevant. The research questions were derived from the audience inclusion theory as explained in chapter two. The evolving themes around this theory as explained earlier were:

- Participatory practice of students on Facebook and Twitter
- Degree of Community Orientation among students
- Motivation for participating on circulation and distribution of information on these two social media platforms during #FeesMustFall
- Assessment of Audience contributions

The study explored the inclusion expectations and motivations of students for participating in news sharing on Facebook and Twitter during the #FeesMustFall campaign among students using the above themes from the theory. However, as this is an interpretative qualitative method, the researcher also did welcome other key themes that are identified during the interviews. As mentioned earlier, a pilot study was conducted few months prior to the formal collection of data. Some of the questions in the interview guide were modified to make allowance for the observations during the pilot study analysis ([see 3.7](#)). Some of the interview questions/guide also changed in the course of data collection. King, Horrocks and Brooks (2019) mentioned that this is appropriate in a qualitative interview as the aim is to get the individual lived experience of all participants on the subject. However, after the first two interviewees, the interview guide mostly remained unchanged except for further probing questions.

Generally, the first questions posed to many of the participants was “could you tell me about yourself or (who is....name of participant)?” The researcher found out that this question relaxed the participants thereby creating an environment to talk freely (Jacob and Furgerson 2012; Castillo-Montoya 2016)

During the data analysis process of the data collected, when deemed necessary, the researcher followed up with some few participants for clarity regarding their initial response. This method is encouraged in a qualitative research method.

3.8.2 Ethic Clearance procedure

The research was granted ethical clearance from the University, the ethics protocol number is IREC 189/18. Please see Appendix III for the ethics certificate.

3.9 Data Analytic Process

The analyses of the data collected were done by the researcher with input from the main and co-supervisors of the research. The first two interviews conducted were analyzed and coded and thereafter presented to the researcher’s supervisors for discussion on how the themes for the two interviews were determined and to discuss on further observations in the analysis process. Afterwards, the researcher proceeds to analyze the interviews (data). This study adopted the research process and thematic data analyses of Braun and Clarke (2006). This will be discussed in details in the following sections.

3.9.1 Thematic Analysis/Method of Analysis

As the nature of the study is exploratory, the researcher did an inductive analysis of the data, as analysis and ‘identification of themes’ (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006:82) were more data driven than relying on existing code or themes. However, the researcher took cognizance of the theoretical aspects of this study as described in the key themes within the audience-inclusion theory as well as the research questions as no data is coded in an ‘epistemological vacuum’ (Braun and Clarke 2006: 12; Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006). As indicated by Braun and Clarke (2006), the researcher judgement is required when it comes to identifying key

themes in a data set. The relevance of themes in a qualitative research is not determined by the numbers of times it appears in a data set but as much as it speaks to the research questions. However, they argued that there is no right or wrong method for determining prevalence as long as one is consistent with a particular approach. One of the reasons for opting for this type of analyses in this study is that thematic analysis is quite 'flexible' as it allows determination of themes in both ways (inductively and deductively) (Braun and Clarke 2006).

Thematic Analysis is the careful reading and studying of data by simply looking out for patterns to analyze in a qualitative data. Essentially, it focuses on finding, "analyzing and reporting 'repeated patterns' (themes, meanings) in a data set" (Braun and Clarke 2006: 6; Clarke and Braun 2013). Clarke and Braun identified Thematic Analysis as an "analytic method" (2013: 120) and not as a 'process' for doing qualitative research per se in contrast with other authors (Guest, MacQueen and Namey 2014).

3.9.2 Thematic Interpretative Analyses

An interpretative approach to doing thematic analysis brings a balance between participants' subjectivity and researcher's reflexivity. This approach as described by Willig (2017) creates credibility for the findings generated from the interpretation of data. The interpretation of accounts (data) belongs to the researcher, however, this account emerges from participant's accounts of their reality. As previously established, as the focus of this study is exploratory, the researcher also paid attention to themes that were identified outside the main research questions. Interpretation process as described by Willig (2012, 2017) allows the researcher to give meaning to the data being interpreted. Therefore, to maintain data integrity, the strategy employed during the data-transformation process of this study was identification of meaning units from the raw data into different codes and then further development into themes. This strategy as discussed by Braun and Clarke (2006); Terry *et al.* (2017) and emphasized by Willig (2017: 274-288) helped identify "the relationship between the data, and the claims that are made in the interpretation of it"

3.9.3 Why Thematic Analysis

Since the aim of this study and process of data collection is to find patterns in both the theoretical approach and from the data collected in this study, thematic analysis is suitable for themes identification when using both data and theory driven approach.

The flexibility of Thematic Analysis makes it simple and easy to “be used within different theoretical framework” (Braun and Clarke 2006:9). Therefore, since the participants of this study are the students who are at the central focus of the #FeesMustFall, thematic analysis is a useful approach to better understand the meanings they attached in using Facebook and Twitter during the protest. Although the audience inclusion theory serves as a basis for generating the main research questions, the study also explored and identified other themes from the data on the role Facebook and Twitter provided for students during the #FeesMustFall and if they really do consider them as reporting tools.

Thematic analysis is also useful in generating themes that are not anticipated within a data (Braun and Clarke 2006).

3.9.4 Coding

“Coding involves attaching one or more keywords to a text segment in order to permit later identification of a statement” (Brinkmann and Kvale 2018:121). Code according to Terry *et al.* (2017) is a process whereby data are reduced to a meaningful patterns that explain the full content of a dataset. This is done either determined in advance through “pre-existing theory” or “familiarization with the data”. However, Braun and Clarke (2006) and Terry *et al.* (2017) cautioned that the determination of codes in thematic analysis should not be tended toward a positivist approach by which codes are derived from a ‘pre-existed codebook’ (see Guest, MacQueen and Namey 2011) but rather as an intense and in-depth familiarization of data as “the subjectivity of the researcher is seen as” (Terry et al. 2017:14) a vital process of the data analysis. The researcher as a Masters student during the #FeesMustFall and a social media journalist brings subjectivity into this study based

on her disciplinary knowledge, however, data analysis of this study is also impacted by the data collected through the interview guide during the study, thereby ruling out the voice of the researcher overshadowing the data as reiterated by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Terry *et al.* (2017).

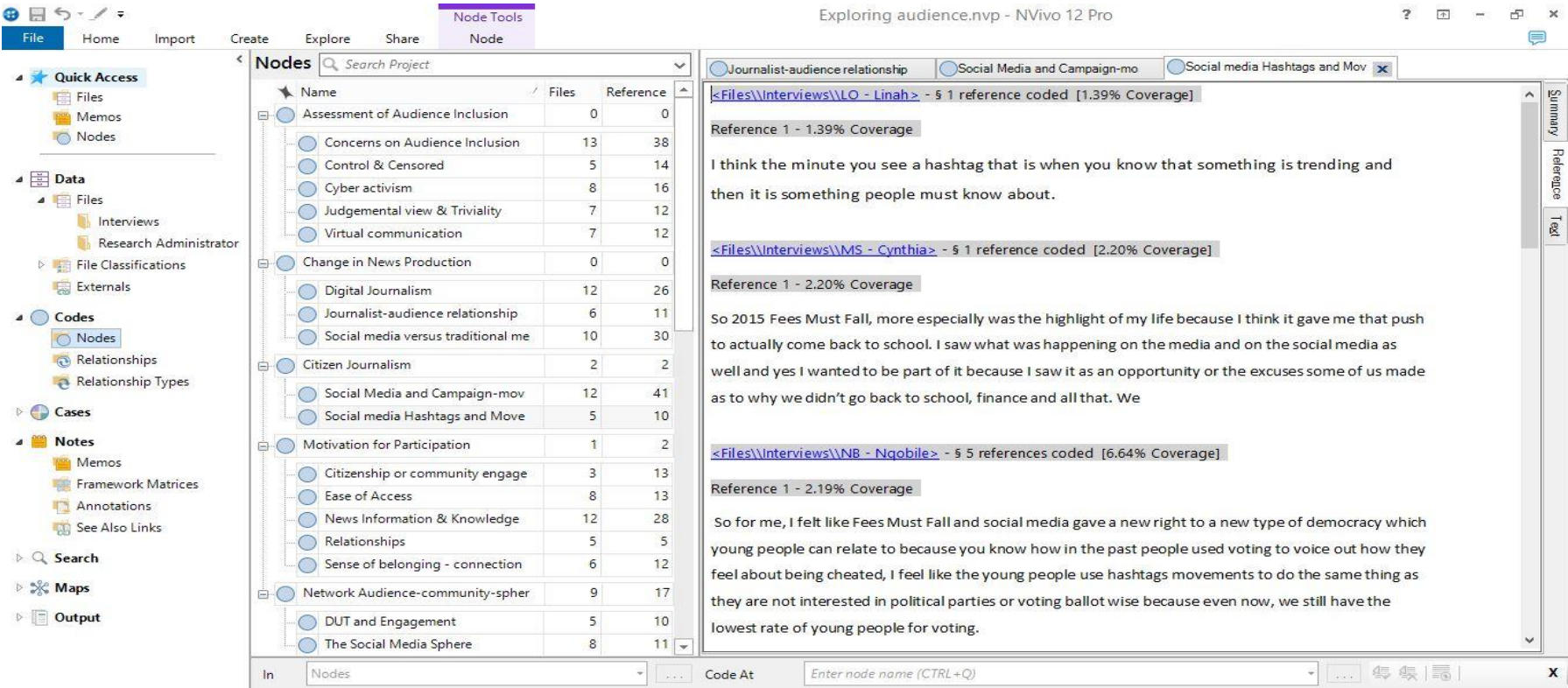
The research employed both data and a concept driven approach as explained by (Brinkmann and Kvale 2018). This implies that while the process of coding was derived from the theoretical framework of this study (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006), the researcher also paid attention to other codes driven by the underlying theory in the Literature review chapter (Braun and Clarke 2006; Terry *et al.* 2017). Ultimately all codes arrived at were determined by familiarization with the data as the codes from the analysis of these data were not pre-determined but rather an outcome of an interpretative analytic process.

3.9.5 Nvivo as a Data Analytic Tool

Nvivo is a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis System (CAQDAS). CAQDAS are tools to support the process of a qualitative data analysis; they do not analyze data itself (Uwe 2014; Nowell *et al.* 2017; Harding 2019). While Nvivo software is becoming a popular tool (see Nowell *et al.* 2017), there are however different schools of thought on the use of this approach in a qualitative data; one of the prevalent arguments is that it could impact upon the researcher's analytical thinking. However, Uwe (2014) argued that the larger part of it rests upon the researcher's ability to bring his/her reflexivity to play while using CAQDAS. This tool was employed in this research process primarily because of its flexibility in the organization of data. Nvivo helps to visualize large data at once. Auld *et al.* (2007) suggests that once the coding process of a data exceeds twenty-four hours, it is better to consider the use of Nvivo. Looking at the number of interviews conducted for this research with the average of 40 minutes each, the researcher considers it best to make use of this tool (Nvivo 12). It also gives one the ability to understand the data first-hand before introducing the human element and subjectivity a qualitative research requires. Another reason for using the Nvivo tool is the ability for it to generate new themes which is in line with the purpose of this thesis, as raw data were classified into themes, using nodes which is the classification category

used in Nvivo. Lastly, Nvivo supported the coding process and analytical method of Braun and Clarke (2006) adopted in this research.

Figure 2 Data coded using Nvivo 12



The above figure shows how data collected were coded using Nvivo12. The right side of the screen shot shows data extract coded into the left nodes

3.9.6 Writing up Report

The actual research process and data analyses will follow Braun and Clarke (2006) and Clarke and Braun's (2013) 'six phases' model, which can be summarized as: Familiarization with the data, which is going through the data over and over again to identify patterns. This was accomplished as the researcher after conducting the interviews, did all the transcription of the 13 interviews manually, thereby familiarizing herself with the data through the process of listening and reading the transcribed interviews thereby noting and observing relevant patterns in the data during this process.

The second phase is the initial coding of the data following the research questions. The tool (not method) of analysis used to capture this was the Nvivo 12 software used in qualitative analysis. Nvivo helps with initial coding and thematising of each interview (data item) and supports the coding process of Braun and Clarke (2006). An illustration of this is reflected in figure 2 where these data extracts on the right of the page are captured under different codes (these are refer to as nodes in Nvivo). Both "semantic and conceptual reading of the data" were captured. (Clarke & Braun, 2013:121). The researcher also paid attention to relevant categories in the data that was not necessarily captured in the research questions.

The third phase checked out the codes/nodes and constructed themes based on the codes. After all data items have been coded using Nvivo, the researcher re-arranged the different nodes under sub-themes and themes. The fourth phase of the model reviewed the themes identified in phase three, as themes should tell a story about the dataset. The study achieved this by further review of the themes constructed in the third phase and gradually build a narrative for each theme. In doing so, some themes were collapsed and new themes emerged. This will be discussed further in the following chapter.

The next stage, phase five defines and name themes according to how the particular themes fit into the overall story that is been told by the data. The researcher gradually build up a story regarding each theme and how it relates to the overall audience inclusion theory. The last (sixth) phase writes up a report about the results.

The study met this criterion by using relevant data extracts to support a narrative that a particular theme is telling and the relationship with the general research paradigm of this study. This is reflected as well in the subsequent chapters where findings and reports are presented in the last two chapters of this thesis.

3.10 Reflexivity

The role of a researcher is significant in a qualitative study especially in the analysis of data (Terry *et al.* 2017). As a post-graduate student and a social media journalist researching (exploring) the role of social media in the reporting of #FeesMustFall, the researcher bears in mind the role this could play in the analysis and interpretation of data. However, the researcher ensures that her social position or disciplinary knowledge did not overshadow the voice of the participants by allowing the data to do the interpretation (Roulston 2014). The steps taking by the researcher to ensure this is first reviewing the interview guide with both her Supervisors before the commencement of data gathering (interviews). As a post-graduate student during the #FeesMustFall, this step is crucial to this study as it eliminates any preconception towards the study on the part of the researcher. Likewise, conducting a pilot study helped with the coordination of the questions on the interview guide. The researcher had initially created the first question on the interview guide directly linking to the #FeesMustFall. It was obvious that this question was leading as it made the participant answer the remaining questions around the #FeesMustFall.

Also, following the six model of Braun and Clarke's analytical method as explained above ensure that all due research process were adhered to by the researcher. It is important to state here that the guiding principles during the data analysis were guided by the research questions (theoretical framework), disciplinary knowledge of the researcher and most importantly the meaning derived from the data collected itself as suggested by Harkfield and Braun Clarke (2017). As stated in the Literature Review chapter, in order to avoid either cyber optimistic or pessimistic view of the social media, the researcher decided to use the audience inclusion theory and not the 'popular debated' Herbamasian theory of the public sphere. However, even with the listed guiding principles, data are ultimately given interpretation and analyzed by

the researcher as mentioned by Clarke and Braun (2013) and Willig (2017). The researcher however worked with her supervisors with the first two interviews to analyse the meaning derived from the transcripts. This exercise gave a fresh and broader perspective to the interviews and ultimately in the interpretation of the data. It gives different angle or meaning to what the researcher might have overlooked or dismissed in the course of the analysis.

The nature of the data collection (semi-structured interview) for this study as well ensure that participants are able to 'talk freely' and narrate their own lived experience on Facebook and Twitter and the #FeesMustFall with limited or no influence from the researcher. The researcher had initially planned not to interview any SRC student to avoid any political ideology; however, some of the volunteered participants (Journalism students) were coincidentally members of the SRC. They brought a new perspective and experience of the campaign on social media that is quite different from the regular students. These compositions of experiences from both SRC and regular students on the #FeesMustFall made an impression on the researcher and this led to a 'co-construction' of meaning and interpretation of the data. This is discussed in the following chapter.

Data collection for this study started in the week school resumed from almost a month long strike due to lack of accommodation and registration fees for students. A number of the respondents/students were affected and referred to this incidence and experience during the interviews. The researcher, an 'empathetic' postgraduate student of the same university, and directly unaffected by the strike acknowledges her privilege position and ensure that the 'helplessness' of the participants experience was not overly emphasised in the interpretation of the data.

3.11 Summary

This chapter has discussed the methodological approach used in this study. The research is purely qualitative in nature, and the data analytic process is the interpretive analysis. The process for analysis was exploratory and interpretive. A review of the pilot study was included in the chapter. Semi-structured interviews were conducted among students as the source of data. Nvivo 12 software was used

as a tool for data analysis. The thematic analysis process followed the Braun and Clarke's research model. This chapter has discussed how data were collected and analyzed. A reflexivity exercise was also carried out in the concluding part of the chapter. The following chapter will detail the analyses and present findings from the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discussed in details the methodological framework for this study. This chapter will present and analyze the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the 13 participants of this study. There will also be a discussion on the data findings. Out of the 13 participants, three (3) were former executives of Students' Representatives Council (SRC), while two (2) had work with the online radio of the institution called 'Radio DUT'. There were nine (9) females and four (4) males students in all. Facebook or Twitter was listed as social platforms used by all participants.

The aim of this study was to explore and understand the audience inclusion role of Facebook and Twitter in news reporting among young South African students. The study seeks to understand how these social media tools encourage audience inclusion in news sharing and dissemination. This study aims to look at the role Twitter and Facebook played in the reporting of the #FeesMustFall campaign.

This chapter will answer the key research questions posed in Chapter one and Two which are: (1) How does Facebook and Twitter contribute to the way #FeesMustFall was reported? (2) What are the students' inclusion expectations and motivations for participating in news sharing on Facebook and Twitter? (3) How is the audience-inclusion role understood among students in the reporting of #FeesMustFall on Twitter and Facebook?

4.2 Themes

The following are the themes discovered within the data set during the data analysis: Citizen Journalism; Network Audience (sphere); Change in News Production; Motivation for Participation and Assessment of Audience Inclusion.

Table 4-1 Themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Citizen Journalism	Social media and Movement Social media and Hashtags (#)
Network Audience-community-sphere	DUT and Engagement The Social media Sphere
Change in News Production	Digital Journalism Journalist-Audience Relationship Social media Versus Traditional Media
Motivation for Participation	Citizen/Community Engagement Ease of Access News Information and knowledge Sense of Connectedness and Belonging
Assessment of Audience Inclusion	Cyber Activism Concerns on Audience Inclusion Virtual Communication Control & Censor Judgmental View & Triviality

4.2.1 Themes Overview

Discussion will centre around the different themes and its categories. Participants' verbatim responses are presented to show evidence around each theme. The first three themes - Citizen Journalism; Network Sphere and Change in News Production -addressed the dynamics and audience inclusion social media provides in information sharing and news reporting especially during the Fees Must Fall. These themes answer the research question on how Facebook and Twitter contribute to the way #FeesMustFall was reported.

Under the theme Motivation for Participation, participants relived their inclusion expectations and motivations for sharing news on social media and it answers the second research question on inclusion expectations and motivations for participating in news sharing on Facebook and Twitter, while the research question on how student understood the audience inclusion role in the reporting of Fees Must Fall was addressed by the last theme, Assessment of Audience Inclusion. This theme speaks to Loosen & Schmidt's (2012) theory of inclusion among audience as a result of access to various social media platforms made available through technology.

4.3 Citizen Journalism

Moyo (2015: 126) suggested that the advent of social media has 'democratized' the journalism profession by opening up information dissemination to all citizens. This theme will discuss participants' experience on how they share information and news on their social media page during the #FeesMustFall campaign. The concept of citizen journalism as explained in chapter two identifies the need for collaboration of news sharing between the audience and journalists. A form of 'co-creation' between both players (Lewis 2012:847). This is similar to Habermas' concept of public sphere and the network movement theory of Castells whereby citizens are empowered by the public space created by social media platforms to air their views. The following categories under this theme explained participants' experience on the Fees Must Fall Movement and how social media is creating a kind of 'new movement' through

the use of hashtags. Hashtags has become a popular phenomenon in any leading campaign (see (Kelling, Kelling and Lennon 2013)

4.3.1 Social media and Movement

This category discusses the interrelationship between online and physical activism especially during the #FeesMustFall. In this category, we will discover the relationship between Social media and student protests. One of the prevailing discussions of the social media is if it is indeed 'public sphere'. Gladwell's (2010) argument was that online activism does not necessarily translate to physical activism. However, Susen (2011) and Zhuo, Wellman and Yu (2012) pointed out that the role of social media in the 21st century movements is crucial to some of the success recorded. Participants in this study believed that social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter aided the popularity of the movement. It enabled the students to converge in a 'public space' and tell their stories themselves. The participants suggested that the social media platforms provided a space to first converge and discuss the issues of fees before protesting. In the data extract below, Lizzy indicated she participated on Twitter and then later joined the movement physically.

“Yes, I did campaign because I honestly felt that why should one not go to school because they cannot afford, so I actually went to Twitter and put in my campaign Fees Must Fall...there is one instance I went to UKZN to march...I actually joined the march so that our voices can be heard.” – Lizzy (Transcript 2, page 3)

This indicates that there is a relationship between the online and physical representation of protest. In the case of the #RhodesMustFall at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 2015, Bosch (2017) discovered that Twitter created an avenue for the campaign to go from a local university campaign to national and then global, thereby generating political debate even outside South Africa. The same was also recorded in the case of #FeesMustFall, one of the participants believed that the social media created that avenue for the movement to be popular.

*“Yoo! It was a storm; it was literally a social media storm that took a life of its own.”
– Cynthia (Transcript 5, page 3)*

“I think we definitely live in the age where protesting is changing like this, it is not just going to the streets and just dancing and chanting, so it’s (social media) a new way of bringing attention and so because it is easy as well, it is easy to go to social media and round people up and say we are doing this, it has more outreach, a lot of people can get in touch with a lot of people in a short space of time and you can get your ideas across more quickly” – Sne (Transcript 9, page 3)

Sne and Cynthia indicated that the use of social media platforms changed the Fees Must Fall campaign. This is possible through the ease it provides to garner support for the campaign. Castells (2015) discussed the inter-relationship between physical and social movements. A lot of what happens during physical protest translates to what is streamed online. This is also manifested in the Twitter-based ‘Bring Back Our Girls Campaign’ (Maxfield 2016) in Western Africa, and the Arab Spring that took place in Northern Africa between 2011-2012 (see Zhuo, Wellman and Yu 2012) where proceeds of meetings, rallies and gatherings were tweeted.

While many of the participants agreed that Facebook and Twitter created an avenue for the #FeesMustFall to be popular, two participants, one of whom belongs to the student leadership (SRC) mentioned that these social media tools could be abused and it sometimes created an armchair activists/ participation because the number of views, likes, retweets and comments on these platforms do not necessarily represent the number of students that are physically available during protests.

“So people are quick to follow and like and add their reply or comment but when it comes to actually doing something they lack with that.” – Cynthia (Transcript 5, page 1)

“Student’s leader will pick an initiative to actually say let us go voice our opinion to management, lets us invite everyone to meet wherever, through social media and people will not come but when we look at Facebook and the page everyone is making a noise, everyone is saying we are hungry, but they were not there...People

are not found there, but they are found on social media saying Fees Must Fall, we do not have enough money to pay for our fee, but when it comes to protesting for Fees Must Fall, they are not there....So there is a bit of lack in hard work that social media creates.” – Xolile (Transcript 10, page 3)

Gladwell (2010) and Morozov (2017) also agree about the ‘slackitivism’ (a term used for people who only participate online) of online protest participation, however, Shirky (2011) insisted that this does not mean successes are not recorded with the use of these social media platforms.

Howbeit, the role of social media in protest is not only to mobilize physical support; social media is important even during protest as it captures events and stories as it is happening. Cynthia further pointed out that the social media enables students to capture all aspects of the FeesMustFall movement.

“With FeesMustFall the video of students beating by police wouldn’t have made it to normal main stream media but with social media, people could see those videos” – Cynthia (Transcript 5, page 4)

“I even went to Pretoria in 2016 January, I saw student protesting and all that. They were carrying like placards written FeesMustFall, and then all of a sudden you saw all those video trending everywhere on social media, like everyone, almost everyone knows about the #FeesMustFall campaign. Even there where Facebook campaign, Twitter, Instagram, everywhere there was Fees Must Fall.” – Mthunzi (Transcript 13, page 4)

Mthunzi and Cynthia’s experience of the fees must fall is the live tweet and coverage it gave the campaign. Since there is no time lag in Facebook and Twitter, this makes it possible for events happening physically to be covered live Shirky (2011:39). mentioned that one of the advantages of social media in protest is “the ability to coordinate in real time and broadcast documentation of an event”

“It’s the social media obviously, it is the social media because if we didn’t use it as a tool like for people to know about it, it won’t be so popular, people wouldn’t have

known about it, they will only think that it was like a protest.” – Linah (Transcript 3, page 3)

“Yeah...I did participate on social media and I think most of the time it was to defend the act on the students. Because a lot of people were actually criticizing students without understanding what was going on, what was the purpose of the Fees Must Fall movement...” – Tholani (Transcript 12, page 3)

While physical protest was also relevant to the ‘success’ of the movement, the statement above by Linah and Tholani suggested that social media paved the way for students to deliberate and participate in discussion regarding the protest thereby creating a kind of citizen reporting as described by Bruns, Highfield and Lind (2012). Another interesting angle to this is that while institutions can sanction protest among students, they cannot on the other hand control statements or participation on social media. Cynthia, one of the participants who works with the online radio of DUT shared her experience in the extract below.

“I remembered there was one time where we want to cover a Res, we are shooting for 11am and DUT will not allow us to go in there, but because of social media, students were actually able to record certain videos and post certain images on their own social media page without fear of being expelled or fear of being told to take those down.” – Cynthia (Transcript 5, page 4)

Therefore, social media provided a platform for students to mobilise and participate in live coverage events during the Fees Must Fall campaign. Although there have been attempts to shut down social media platforms or control the flow of information on these platforms by various governments across the globe in the past, however, this effort has proven abortive as these measures and approach are not permanent but rather open up further debate regarding the country or government concerned (see Shirky 2011).

4.3.2 Social media and Hashtags (#)

“The minute you see a hashtag that is when you know that something is trending and then it is something people must know about.”- Linah (Transcript 3, page 3)

The use of hashtag to share information within common themes is becoming popular all over social media network platforms. It is interesting to note that hashtags are used in any campaign and movement on social media. Hashtags play a role in the awareness of any campaign as it plays a central role where both the audience and journalists can converge and have a pool of conversation regarding an issue. In the discussion in the Literature Review chapter, Loosen and Schmidt (2012); Castells (2015) and Frassinelli (2018) mentioned that hashtags create a convergence for a network community to feel a sense of inclusion in a particular discussion or topic. The participants in this study believed that the use of hashtags was instrumental to the popularity of the Fees Must Fall movement.

“...just scrolling my news feed, you will see like #FeesMustFall #FeesMustFall and surely even if you are not a student, even if you don't know what #FeesMustFall means, you will see that there is something happening in SA and then you will try and get the intel about the Fees Must Fall campaign.” – Mthunzi (Transcript 13, page 5)

The use of hashtags in conversation on Facebook and in particular on Twitter created a means for students to have an understanding of what the #FeesMustFall campaign is about. Hashtags are symbolic to a lot of social media movements and campaigns in the 21st century #BringBackOurGirls (Maxfield 2016); #BlackLivesMatter; #NotInMyName; #UmbrellaMovement (Lee and Chau 2018) many of which were successful. Also, participants of this study mentioned that the hashtag was significant to the popularity the campaign gained both within and outside of the country.

“The moment you just say hashtag #FeesMustFall2019 if you go online, like it is always adjusted if you just say #FeesMustFall 2019, 5000 people are twitting about that and you get interested that so many people are on this, let me check it out, then you check it out and you like let me retweet it” – Thando (Transcript 11, page 5)

What makes hashtags an interesting phenomenon is that it can be created by any member of the public. In the case of #FeesMustFall, Daniels (2016) found out that the first tweet recorded on the hashtag was from a student body. Therefore, these

hashtags serve as an inclusion for a new kind of participatory political culture among students during the campaign as seen in the response of one of our participants.

“...So for me, I felt like Fees Must Fall and social media gave a new right to a new type of democracy which I as a young person can relate to. Because you know people used voting to voice out how they feel about being cheated, I feel like the young people use hashtags movements to do the same thing, as we are not interested in political parties or voting ballot. Why? Because even now, we still have the lowest rate of young people for voting. So, the hashtag #FeesMustFall actually create a spark of a new movement and a movement that I as a young person can take part in because most young people have cell phones. So I think Fees Must Fall and the hashtag is a movement that still going to grow and change the face of politics. Can you imagine if young people were given a chance to like vote through hashtags? You know that would even give the government a much more clearer picture of what is on our mind and what we are thinking of because we know exactly of the issue that are affecting us. And the most important thing about using hashtag for movements is that the sharing option that you are getting on social media enables it to travel much more faster, because if a person with much followers shares that, the shares would keep on growing until everyone has noticed the hashtag.” – Nqobile (Transcript 6, page 6)

In the review of different literatures on what constitutes a public sphere in chapter two (see: [2.3.1](#); [2.3.2](#)), different authors mentioned that the internet is redefining the face of politics as a tool to a wider participatory democracy. This is evident in the case of #FeesMustFall where students used the hashtag on social media platforms to solicit the support of members of the public and get the attention of the government towards ensuring that fees fall in South African higher institutions. The above participant shares her experience during the #FeesMustFall and especially among her followers on her Facebook platform. The hashtag serves as an inclusive channel used to communicate their thoughts and feelings on Facebook and Twitter during the campaign.

4.4 Network Audience Sphere

The discussion under this theme will center on Durban University of Technology, which is the context of this study and the Fees Must Fall campaign. Audience, (as pointed out in chapter two) within the theory of Inclusion, is a term used whenever a person benefits or make uses of a social system (for example social media platforms) and thereby becomes 'a part of that system's relevant environment' (Loosen and Schmidt 2012: 873). The emergence of new media and different social media sites and networks has empowered the audience to create a network 'sphere'. Audiences do not need to rely on public communication provided by journalists in order to share their opinion. The participants in this study believed that the campaign created a network convergence for students to have a conversation and inclusion on the debate around FeesMustFall.

“So...students came together, we united, we use platform like social media, so we can get backup and then we can do our campaign.” – Lizzy (Transcript 2, page 3)

“So I think for the Fees Must Fall campaign, it is one campaign that I see did not speak to student formation but it speaks to fight for students and we were all united with one voice and I think that is how the media also reported on it that it is united all student, they don't report it in the sense of saying SASCO or EFFSC but they talked about the students because all students were united” – Xolile (Transcript 10, page 4)

Lizzy and Xolile above shared their experience of the #FeesMustFall which fits the inclusion social media model as explained by Loosen and Schmidt (2012). The social network sites provided a united network audience for students to harmonize their demands for free education.

“The Fees Must Fall, the experience of it all for me it's just like the evidence of democracy. I felt like as a young person, I finally have a democracy which I can relate to, you know. It is finally knowing how to take part in democracy, because big people think young people cannot relate to political parties, we do not relate to voting you know but with social media we understand each other better, and the Fees Must

Fall actually shows that we all had a common problem which was our fees, it was high and we wanted to study...” – Nqobile (Transcript 6, page 5)

Habermas described the public sphere as a ‘space’ where the audience can easily discuss public issues without any fear or coercion. Nqobile shared her experience that the social media empowered the students by giving a sense of free participation seen in a democratic sphere as Habermas argued. Many of the participants mentioned the freedom social media gave them in expressing their views and opinions. In answering the first research question of this study, social media gives an inclusion for students to report live events during the #FeesMustFall and then provides an avenue for participation among the student network.

One of the reasons Facebook and Twitter serve as a convergence for students during the high points of the campaign was according to Ma, Sian Lee and Hoe-Lian Goh (2014) said that students and most especially youth are mostly active on these platforms. The Fees Must Fall was mostly a student campaign and these platforms provided the inclusion university students needed to air their views regarding fees in the university. Therefore, Facebook and Twitter are becoming the sphere for youth convergence to discuss pertinent issues as experienced by Sne and Dime in the extract below.

“Student in the university were obviously on social media because they expect that age group to be on social media so...that is why it became popular” – Sne (Transcript 9, page 3)

“Because I have been using Facebook forever, since I was in grade 11 and some people I don’t have their numbers, I just catch up with them on Facebook via inboxing. Yeah...So I feel if I will be leaving Facebook, I will be leaving like everything...” – Dime (Transcript 1, page 1)

One of our participants, Mthunzi, is also involved in the community development in the township he came from and mentioned how Facebook gives inclusion for youth to participate in the development of the community.

“There is a Facebook group for Wadri, where I came from. We created a Facebook page of the youth, like my neighborhood and that’s how we come up with an organization to do something that is useful to our youth... Yes...and that is where we actually lay our complaints to the councilor. I can contribute while I am here in Durban. I don’t have to go back home and do all those kind of things. So it (Facebook) brings people together.” – Mthunzi (Transcript 13, page 1)

Loosen and Schmidt mentioned the inclusion ability of social networking sites for communities. This is similar to Mthunzi’s experience working with the youth community in his neighbourhood and how helpful Facebook was in reaching those in authorities. Although Gladwell (2010) argued that social media cannot be referred to as a ‘sphere’, however evidence from the experiences of participants indicate that young people see it as a community where they can air their views and concerns.

“I just feel more comfortable posting on social media, it is like a community.” – Hannah (Transcript 7, page 2)

Participants agreed that the #FeesMustFall movement was the combination of a unified student movement to achieve the fall of fees in South African higher institutions. It is interesting to note that songs shared on social media were also instrumental in the campaign, one of the participants mentioned that the songs united students of different political affiliations and institutions. This particular song referenced by our participants has over a million views on YouTube channel.¹⁰

“...oh and there was also this video of a guy at WITS you know the song “Nobody wanna see us together” song Fees Must Fall, it was from that guy from WITS and he was the one that composed the song...but the song became so famous that it united all students from all different organizations” – Xolile (Transcript 10, page 4)

In the discussion in the literature, Mckee (2005) and Pough (2015) identified the use of songs as a form of inclusion in a network sphere. Particularly, with the opportunities provided by different social media platforms, songs are shared online

¹⁰ The song “Nobody wanna see us together” has several renditions on YouTube, and one of the renditions has a million views.

and can receive widespread acceptance among a particular sphere as identified in the song referred to by the participant above.

4.4.1 DUT and Engagement

Studies have established Facebook and Twitter as a critical engagement tool among students during campaigns (Chen, Chan and Lee 2016; Lee, Chen and Chan 2017). Likewise, during the recent #FeesMustFall campaign of 2019¹¹ at DUT, participants in this study elaborated on the need for university authorities to engage with student on social media.

“So, one thing that is happening at UKZN, and even here at DUT, they are complaining about rooms and residence that is there for students but NSFAS has made a plan that if all of us cannot fit into a residence, which is impossible, there is a private accommodation that is available. So there is money, there are funds available to students and many students are aware of it but everyone is still pushing to come to the Res, which is not possible. I think another thing as well with DUT is engagement as well, because with DUT, they wait until something becomes public and the social media is drawn in and it becomes a circus kind of, but if they are attacking early, students have complaints, they should rather attack those complaints early while they still can handle it. So, they wait until the situation is escalated and it becomes a problem.” – Cynthia (Transcript 5, page 2)

Cynthia referred to the 2019 students’ protest at DUT indicating for the need of a participatory culture among student and university authorities particularly on social media. While university authorities in as much as possible may want to distance themselves from communication on social media, it is pertinent to take into consideration that Facebook and Twitter is often the means of expressing dissatisfaction among young students. Chen, Chan and Lee (2016) and Lee, Chen and Chan (2017) in the study of the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement of 2014 found out that young people especially university students also find recourse in the use of

¹¹ There are still spill overs of the Fees Must Fall Campaign in Higher Institutions in South Africa as every other students’ protest find its rooting in the campaign.

Facebook as an engagement and inclusive means for communicating their complaint to authorities. Data in this study shows that students want to engage directly with the university even on these social network sites.

In the excerpt below, Xolile narrated her experience of the shooting of a student during a protest in early 2019¹². There was a lot of discussion and engagement among students and the public on Facebook and Twitter regarding the shooting on the said date. However, the university only released a statement about the incident the following day. Students seek immediate engagement with university authorities regarding issues like these, and most of the participants of this study attest to lack of engagement by the university authorities especially on Facebook and Twitter during protest.

“I am going to talk about the DUT shooting. The DUT shooting was one of the most controversial issues and I was one of the people who was not saying anything on social media but very annoyed with everyone who was saying everything and yet they were not even in DUT, they were in Jo’burg. And then it happened, on the day it happened SASCO released a statement on social media talking about it that this person died from fighting for free education which is not the truth and everybody kept writing statement because they were just following what everyone else was saying. It is very similar to the Marikana massacre, which each media house was just following what everyone else was saying but they didn’t know what actually happened. Because we had videos and some people were there and they saw it, I don’t want to say that was an illegal strike, but a strike or protest that has to do with anything related to the institution often involve student in the institution. And you know that it has to start from ML Sultan, to Steve Biko campus, it has to go to the management, to the vice chancellor, but that’s not what happened...” - Xolile (Transcript 10, page 6)

¹² Data was collected immediately after the 2019 protest/strike, therefore, most of the participants shared their experience of the protest during the interview.

Lack of engagement by the university made students and the public to form an opinion based on the immediate response and statement released by an arm of the student organization of the institution on different social media platforms.

4.4.2 The Social media Sphere

The conversation around this category is on how participants relive their experiences on different social networks. While there were references to other social networks, Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp were often described and mentioned as significant to connectivity, inclusion and flow of information among participants during the interviews. This is also evidence in the tabular representation of participants' demographic on the different types of social media they use in [Table 3-1](#). A report conducted by Pew Research Centre on emerging countries inclusive of South Africa reveals that people who are active on social media platforms have a large social network sphere (Silver and Huang 2019). Peer influence (Mustaffa *et al.* 2011) is a leading factor to young people participation and inclusion on Facebook, while Twitter has a systematic approach towards the flow of news and information (Gleason 2013). Participants mentioned these three social networks (Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp) as significant to the Fees Must Fall.

“So most post on Fees Must Fall will be posted on Twitter, on Facebook and on WhatsApp, few of them on WhatsApp because you know that is a personal thing, you can also share it with the next person, but unlike Facebook when you have 5000 friends, that you just post a video and within 15 minutes, you have like 1500 views after 2 hours 2500, 3 hours...again people they share, let's say I post something I have got 5000 friends, you like it, you see that it is interesting, it's informing, it's breaking, you also share it, your friends also see the post that you shared, they also share it. So Facebook did quite a good job and Twitter” - Thando (Transcript 11, page 4)

“Because I have been using Facebook forever, since I was in grade 11 and some people I don't have their numbers, I just catch up with them on Facebook via inboxing. Yeah...So I feel if I will be leaving Facebook, I will be leaving like everything and WhatsApp too” – Dime (Transcript 1, page 1)

WhatsApp is beginning to gain momentum as a leading messenger app among young people in South Africa (Roper, Newman and Schulz 2019). Although the focus of this study was on Facebook (which is still the leading platform for news sharing) and Twitter, participants referred to their use of WhatsApp during the Fees Must Fall campaign. Communications were spread among different WhatsApp groups. Hannah in specifically mentioned that her involvement during the #FeesMustFall campaign was through communication on WhatsApp.

“Yeah of course but it was more of a personal conversation like a WhatsApp thing. It was never really a post. It was more of a personal conversation with my friends. It was never a public post” – Hannah (Transcript 7, page 3)

This reveals audiences seek more private means of news communication among people they trust and can have further discussions with. Although, news communication can start from popular platforms like Facebook, these communications are shifted to a more ‘private’ public spheres (see Papacharissi 2008), like WhatsApp to discuss with people within the same communities and groups. Habermas and Mckee agreed that this allows for divergent voices of private individuals, which is the essence of a Public sphere. This private spheres gives the people the right and freedom to make choices without fear or coercion. In particular, more media houses are open to sharing WhatsApp voice messages on their channels as opposed to the traditional SMS.

“...they are now doing this new media thing, people are like given the chance now, they are no longer sending SMS, they do send SMS but now they do voices especially on WhatsApp.” - Linah (Transcript 3, page 4)

Also, there is quite a difference in the way Twitter and Facebook functions when it comes to news and information sharing. Since the participants of this study are final year journalism students, some of whom are already gaining online presence in the writing of news stories, there is generally some preference among participants when it comes to news sharing on social media platforms as reflected in the data excerpts below.

“Twitter is generally one of those social media that gives me freedom to speak. You know I felt like Twitter made me feel less ashamed to share views, you know how other social media platforms, let’s say Instagram or Facebook, people sort of get annoyed about how people share news, because they sometimes want to see pictures of you, sort of seeing you being human, like cracking a joke or engaging with them. But I feel like Twitter as much as I do comment and try to comment helps me to comment. It is that platform that I can use professionally as a journalist to share the story that I write without feeling people are annoyed with me. It’s a platform where I feel like sharing information whereas with other social media platforms, you feel like you are boring people with your stories especially on Instagram, like with Instagram you never actually feel like you can post things comfortably, you only feel like people want to know where I am, what I am doing, people have nice pictures and all that so can you imagine me write articles all over Instagram (laughs). People are going to unfollow me.” – Nqobile (Transcript 6, page 7&8)

“Facebook, I think Facebook, unlike Twitter, yes Twitter allows you to share your view and opinion on which ever issue and it limits you to specific number of words that you are to use, so you are able to get your story across but not the entire story, you have to now summarize your story, which then makes your story lose that human effect you wanted it to have in the society. So Facebook is not limited, it’s unlimited so it gives you the chance of saying whatever you want to say maybe it is in a long format and a lot of people are more active on Facebook than on Twitter because you find out that a lot of people in the rural area prefer Facebook than Twitter. So a lot of people are on Facebook, so you are able to get a bigger audience and able to express yourself unlimitedly. You are not limited and yeah, I feel like Facebook is a platform that allows us to express ourselves and get our message across, it does not limit you in terms of the things you are able to write.” – Nothula (Transcript 8, page 4)

Twitter is limited to 280 characters per post in terms of functionalities unlike Facebook. However, posts or tweets can contain links to other pages/websites for a fuller story. Ultimately, the use of Facebook or Twitter as seen in the excerpt above from Nqobile and Nothula is largely based on preferences of individuals. While Facebook polls the largest social media platform in South Africa in terms of users, Twitter offers functions that chronicles events in a sequential manner (Kayser and Bierwisch 2016; Muñoz-Expósito, Oviedo-García and Castellanos-Verdugo 2017).

This particular participant however maintained that the story you share on any platform depends on the size of the audience reach.

“Honestly, I feel like all platforms of social media, depending on the magnitude that you convey. So of course, a lot of magnitude of people, will be the Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. But for small magnitude, I feel like WhatsApp. So I feel like it’s really on magnitude of people. So if it is greater audience, greater magnitude it’s the Facebook and Twitter because you have a large number of audience than WhatsApp.” – Hannah (Transcript 7, page 3)

From the above excerpts, we can refer to these different social network sites as different ‘spheres’ of participation, audience inclusion and engagement. Habermas identified the audience public sphere as a space where democratic engagement and discussion is encouraged irrespective of the numbers and social status of members of the audience. Participants maintained that all these (Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp) social media platforms create inclusion for students regardless of the platforms. Therefore, social media allowed for political inclusion and democratic engagement among students during the fees must fall movement pertaining to the restructuring of universities.

4.5 Change in News Production

Under this theme, we found out how social media influences newsroom policy in the areas of news coverage and reporting, ethics, changes in job description and the future of Journalism. Each subtheme relates directly to how social media is changing the perspective of news reporting. Fletcher and Nielsen (2018) in their study of four

different countries found out that young people who make use of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are accidentally exposed to news. The intention of these young people may not primarily be directed towards seeking for news on these social media sites, however, because these sites are becoming popular in disseminating news and information, they are however exposed to news. In Chapter two, ([see 2.2.1 and 2.4.1](#)), we discussed the position of different media researchers regarding news and social media, and we established that the discussion should shift from how social media is taking the role of journalism, to rather explore the effect of these changes on news.

4.5.1 Social media Versus Traditional Media

The researcher felt it was necessary to discuss this relationship between the two media with the final year journalism students. The discussion under this category centered on which medium made the #FeesMustFall movement popular. The participants believed that the traditional media were not always telling their story or reflecting the audience perspective that is why they had to resort to social media. One particular participant mentioned that the #FeesMustFall discussion had started a week earlier on social media before she heard it on the traditional media.

“Because I remember quite clearly TV only started broadcasting it after a week that it (#FeesMustFall) started and it was already a big conversation on social media, so it was definitely social media” - Dime (Transcript 1, page 3)

The essence of what information counts as newsworthy for the traditional media may be one of the reasons why this participant, Dime, recalled an hesitation on their part in the case of the #FeesMustFall. Only a fraction of what is happening globally makes it to the news based on what is perceived as news value by the traditional media (Bahadur 2019; Harcup 2019). However, Moyo (2015) in the review of literature maintained that social media allows for the democratization of news since the public (audience) are now co-creator of contents with the traditional media, thereby giving diverse views on issues. Although the ethics of this has been question on the premises that it is subject to individualism (see Gladwell 2010 and Morozov 2017), the #FeesMustFall campaign proves that such diverse views bring to light the

voice of the audience. Social media allows for what is popularly referred to as User Generated Content and presence of audience inclusion in news content (Domingo et. al. 2008; Loosen & Schmidt 2012). Therefore, this allow for students to ensure that the campaign gains necessary support and attention even without initial coverage by the traditional media.

The concept of news agenda setting (see Wu & Coleman 2009) by the traditional media may not hold in the face of new media technology. This is largely due to the unlimited space on the social media sphere as against the limited slot time and space allocated to Television and print. Therefore, the traditional media is constrained to decide what information is more news worthy (Dejager 2016). In Dejager's (2016) analysis of tweets posted during the protest of Fees Must Fall, findings revealed that the old media print and Television were lagging behind in their reporting of the event as experienced by Dime.

This indicates that the power to break news is gradually resting more on the "active audience" (Papadouka 2016 et al: 657) based on the opportunity social media platforms provide and that traditional media may now have to follow news on social media to determine what is of news interest to its audience.

Similarly, in the definition of what count as news, participants of this study shared their experience as to what was reported in the mainstream media. The extracts below indicates that there was a difference in reporting style on social media and the traditional media during the #FeesMustFall. This situation may be because of the ethics upheld by the journalism profession.

"Most of the things that were covered on social media about Fees Must Fall were not the thing that were covered on the traditional media." – Tholani (Transcript 12, page 2)

"I was actually forced during that time of Fees Must Fall campaign to actually go on social media and find out about more and to know more because television will always give us a one side and a biased view." – Nothula (Transcript 8, page 3)

“Because now SABC for example is not coming in and telling both sides of the story, they are not sharing our story, we are telling our own sides of the stories.” – Cynthia (Transcript 5, page 4)

Cynthia and Nothula felt that the traditional media did not include the voice of the students in their reportage of the Fees Must Fall. This angle of reporting by the media is what Loosen & Schmidt refer to as “audience as recipients” (2012: 869). A situation whereby the media sees the audience as a mere receptor of news and information. However, Loosen & Schmidt (2012) argued that the audience should be seen as co-creator of news and not only as a receiver of news. Several researchers have emphasized the relevance of a mutual co-creation relationship between the media and the audience particularly in the era of emerging communication tools (Bruns, Highfield and Lind 2012; Loosen & Schmidt 2012; Heise et al. 2014). The audience voice can no longer be ignored in the creation of news content. The lack of co-creation of content resorted in students telling their ‘story’ on social media.

Another interesting discovery under this category is that most participants mentioned that the mainstream media saw the #FeesMustFall protests as mostly violent.

“So the traditional media will look at it as violent protest and not the Fees Must Fall movement. The media only realized that it was a movement after it has taken like two weeks...traditional media saw it just as a violent protest, a very violent protest” – Tholani (Transcript 12, page 2)

“Because Television will give you one side, when you look at it from the television point of view, you will only see.... They will put it to you in a way that the students are being violent, they are causing chaos, not necessarily telling us what are they striking for? Why are they striking?” – Nothula (Transcript 8, page 3)

Mckee (2005) explained that youth may not necessarily follow the pattern or structure of expressing complaints, but that does not indicate that they are apolitical or anti civil society. Although, the Fees Must Fall campaign was marred with

evidence of violence in some campuses (see Bosch 2016; Daniels 2016; Hodes 2017), that does not dispute that the students are united in one goal that fees must be free. According to Wasserman, Bosch and Chuma's (2018) findings, traditional media report of violent stories get more coverage than any other stories. Likewise, there are still some underlying elements of the apartheid era in today's South Africa (Hodes 2017), this made students situate the fight for free higher education for all under this discourse.

The 'grand' role of the journalist as a watchdog for the public leaves the entire role of 'news making' in the hands of the journalist. However, the social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter makes it possible for audience participation in the journalistic role as a watchdog or channel of public opinion. Peters and Witschge (2015) argue that most of the role accorded to journalists are now being performed by audiences. This is similar to the findings by Godsell et al. (2016) that social media encourages students and fellow supporters of #FeesMustFall to establish new methods of reporting stories thereby pushing against the traditional method of news reporting held on to by journalists. Also, the move towards the fourth industrial revolution especially among young people through the use of mobile devices such as phones, iPads and others created avenue for the Fees Must Fall movement to gain momentum online as evident in the data extract below. Most participants said the use of their phone was relevant during the #FeesMustFall campaign particularly as an engagement tool.

"Of course the future is the social media but for the traditional media, I feel like it will always have a place in the society. Although it is getting weak because everything is on our phone. I am speaking for myself, I have my notes on my phone, I write my notes on my phone, my emails, my camera everything is on my phone. When I have to work, I have my phone on my hand; I can't remember the last time I read a newspaper. So for me as a young person, I know definitely I can get the online version and I have PDF on my phone. I can't put down my phone and grab a newspaper, no." - Hannah (Transcript 7, page 4)

Another rationale or argument in this study is if audience participation is an instrument for better journalistic output (within media organizations), can this

inclusion result in quality journalism with the use of different social media engagement tools? Some participants maintained that the professional ethics of news reporting by the media should be upheld. It is interesting to note that many however felt journalists should be able to express themselves separate from their media houses' affiliation on social media platforms like blogs and Twitter.

"...So honestly if there is an opinion, okay opinion is different from fact but if it has to do with credibility, something being reliable of course it has to be the mainstream because the mainstream allegedly has the underlying thing that we should not spread fake news that we should not, so with them it is a conduct, something they live for. If it has to do with credibility it has to be someone of that profession..." – Hannah (Transcript 7, page 4)

"Unlike social media, you can just write anything that you want but with news it is something that has been investigated, it has been proven and announced before given it to the society" – Thando (Transcript 11, page 7)

While one of the ethical conducts of the journalism profession is built on credibility, some of the participants maintained that there is really no media to trust when it comes to news reporting, but you as a person has to do your due diligence by researching and reading because most news agencies pick up news from either social media or other media agencies. Ku et al (2019) mentioned that the veracity of a credible news item does not rely on the information provider but on the consumer of information itself. Xolile mentioned below that for her to verify the credibility of a news item, she has to consult other sources.

"So to decide, I have to read, research this and I cannot base an opinion on one piece of information that I have being provided with...I don't think there is any particular media you can solely rely on." – Xolile (Transcript 10, page 7)

"We (referring to journalists) don't really find time to tap into our own personal opinion and actually write about it all the time so most of the times we are just looking at stories outside (social media)" – Tholani (Transcript 12, page 4)

Tholani referred to the fact that so many times journalists pick up on news on what is trending on social media in order to report. This is one of the manifestations of audience inclusion according to Loosen and Schmidt (2012), the audience influences the news to be reported by the performance (journalist) thereby bringing dynamism into news reporting. Another statement by one of the participants buttressed this assertion of the traditional media scouting for stories through what is being reported on social media by the audience.

“...then when you started hearing it on mainstream media then you realized, this is actually true story, so I think with mainstream media also fishing for story from social media, it does actually help...” – Cynthia (Transcript 5, page 6)

Cynthia believed that even though there are some breaking news on social media, the diligence and professional ethics of journalists ensure balance, facts and different angles to stories reported on social media. However, that angle might not necessarily be what is interesting to the audience as seen in the evidence of the #FeesMustFall campaign where some of the participants felt the traditional media saw the movement initially as violent protest.

4.5.2 Digital Journalism

The above discussion on the role of social media and traditional media reflects on a new form of journalism referred to as digital journalism. The participants under this study are final year journalism students in a university, most of whom mentioned that as journalism students, the department made it compulsory for them to have a social media account based on their line of profession. All of these point to the fact that the audience in the 21st century is playing a crucial role in news making as social media creates a mutual platform for the audience and the media to interact. As Loosen & Schmidt (2012) put it, these features social media platforms provide (for example Facebook and Twitter) are inclusion means for journalists to interact with the audience. An emerging journalist needs to have a social media presence as indicated by Dime in the excerpt below.

“I have my social media accounts because they were like compulsory (laughs)...” – Dime (Transcript 1, page 1)

Similarly, the media industry has come to accept the influence social media brings to the journalism profession. There have been instances even in Africa where the work of journalists are projected due to their interaction on social media. McIntyre and Sobel (2019) in their study revealed how Rwanda journalists’ interaction on social media influences positively news ideas and processing between them and the audience in the post genocide era of the country. This is what is described as “inclusion performance” from journalists as social media platforms created a shift in the work routines in media houses whereby we have social media managers (Loosen & Schmidt 2012).

“The only reason why I am on social media is because I think as if I am forced, I’m in it to get recognized by the industry, so they find me much quicker in terms of job employment” – Nothula (Transcript 8, page 2)

“I major in new media so most of our assignments we post them on the blog, your blog then you have to share them for your Twitter account, your Facebook, your Instagram and hear what the people outside think of the work that you have done” – Thando (Transcript 11, page 3)

The interaction of audience and journalist is very crucial as described in the experience of Thando. Audience are empowered by the use of social media platforms to participate and be inclusive in the news process. This ‘journalistic inclusion performance’ gives an avenue for the media to know more about their audience (Schmidt et al 2013). Most of the participants believed that their presence and relevance on social media would give them access to job opportunities after they are through with their studies.

“...some of the newspaper are going digital now, so I have to like associate ourselves with social media as journalist in order to keep up with the time. It is the future...” – Linah (Transcript 3, page 5)

“In 2nd year, we did an assignment in New Media on social media and print journalism and we were talking about how print journalism is slowly dying, like The Independent for instance fully stopped publishing in print and then they went online”
– Xolile (Transcript 10, page 4)

Newspaper houses folding up is one of the economical factors of audience inclusion mentioned by Loosen and Schmidt (2012).

“...For us, the new journalist, we can't really depend on the print media. It is getting out of fashion. It is getting old so we got to use the social media.” – Mthunzi (Transcript 13, page 10)

These conversations on the influence on social media as described by the participants of this study buttress the fact that there are changes in the way news is being reported as mainstream journalists must have an online presence in order to maintain relevance in their news reporting. Similarly, for journalists who have established a social media presence, it is much easier to create that mutual news sharing relationship with their audience.

“...so on Twitter I just check for the verification and trusted individual of journalists that I know and that I trust.” – Sne (Transcript 9, page 4)

“It is that platform that you can use professionally as a journalist to share the story that you write”. – Nqobile (Transcript 6, page 8)

While the participants agreed that going digital is the new way for news reporting, one of our participants who also works with the institution's online radio mentioned that the audience do not necessarily go in search of news online; many times, they stumble on the news through social media platforms.

“...like your online publication would not make too much of money as they do even going into social media because some online publications, like Timeslive for instance, you found out that I read an article because I stumble upon it through social media and I get to follow the link, and not necessarily because I went to google or search for Timeslive.” – Xolile (Transcript 10, page 3)

Therefore, the key factor is for these media houses not only to have an online presence but to have a social media presence to stay afloat.

4.5.3 Journalist-Audience Relationship

Another changing factor under this theme is the change in the relationship between audience and the 'media' as a result of this inclusion in news and information sharing. Some of the participants in this study believed that the students through social media drive the #FeesMustFall conversation and not the journalist as sometimes the audience set the agenda or stories for the mainstream journalist on these platforms. In a study conducted by (Bosch 2017), she found out that those who tweeted most about the #FeesMustFall were students and not the journalists. While journalist had been tasked with creating news agenda in the past, social media platforms allow for a co-creation of news stories (Lewis 2012; Hermida et al. 2012; Schmidt et al. 2013). Participants of this study who also are journalism students shared their thoughts on the news agenda in the following excerpt.

"...like us journalist, we identify stories (on social media) which we can write about..." – Lizzy (Transcript 2, page 4)

"...because in order to be working in a news outlet you have to have some social network audience." – Linah (Transcript 3, page 4)

Another participant mentioned that it is easy to start a conversation between the audience and the media using these new communication technologies.

"For the online paper...you will see they clearly have a column box, something we don't have in (print) newspaper so that can start a conversation and it is easy to talk to" – Dime (Transcript 1, page 3)

This kind of conversation encourages critical debates and civic participation among the audience which can bring about quality journalism as social media platforms open up journalism to the marginalized by encouraging the voice of ordinary citizens to make it to the news. Mckee (2005) and Habermas (2009) advocates for this kind of inclusion in a structured and a democratic setting, where all participation are

welcome in a sphere. However, some participants are cautious in order to protect the ethics of the journalism professions, their views are that the profession should be 'protected' from those that are not part of it.

"I think it is a very important platform that everybody uses social media, but to some certain extent I also feel that it is breaking journalism because everybody is now able to be a journalist in social media although they didn't study for it, although they don't have the skill that we have but everybody is able to say this happened and where, so it does break journalism, especially print journalism" – Xolile (Transcript 10, page 3)

The issue of professional control (see Hermida et al. 2012) of the news process results in the framing of news from the traditional media. However, the network audience (Castells 2015) are particularly more interested in what news are disseminated and seek ways to be involved in the process of news making. Hermida et al. (2012) and Torres and Hermida (2017) in their study also reflected on how social media is "reframing" news, which creates a new kind of relationship between the audience and the journalist. The audience wants more interaction on news with journalists this allows for an open boundaries relationship between both parties (Lewis 2012). Therefore, journalists can still maintain the integrity and value of the news process even when collaborating with audience, Torres and Hermida (2017) established this in their study where a journalist used his Twitter account to establish and engage in the this co-creation of news and was still able to maintain the professional ethics of journalism. One of the participants believed that the audience can make a contribution via writing to the editor of newspaper but agreed that social media allows for more inclusion and participation.

"I think the traditional media are still relevant because people can write to them about their opinion and the Newspaper can publish it. However, social media gives more room for people to air their opinion" – Mangi (Transcript 4, page 2)

But as we have initially discussed the issue of the censor, most newspaper house may censor some certain information based on what they feel should be public

knowledge, however with interactions between audience and journalist which Facebook and Twitter allows, such issues of concern are brought to limelight.

“In the newspaper, you have to write a letter and it has to go back and then they are even not going to publish it. It is easier online because of the comments.” – Dime (Transcript 1, page 4)

Audience values the participation of journalists on social media platforms due to the speed of information than through the traditional (old media) practices. (Lee, Lindsey and Kim 2017)

4.6 Motivation for Participation

Ekdale *et al.* (2010) in their study highlighted the motivation for audience inclusion in news on social media. The participants in this study believed that Facebook and Twitter provide audience inclusion in citizen or community engagement; provide ease of access; news information and knowledge; relationships and sense of belonging (connection). One common interesting discovery in this study and under this theme is that young people believed that it is their responsibility to sensitize and create awareness for their communities through citizen and community engagement using the different social media platforms. This is different from the popular opinion that youths are apolitical.

“The younger people from my neighbourhood that are younger than me are not going to the university because they didn’t even know, they don’t even have the idea of what is going on in varsity. They don’t even know what they must do to get here. You see, they lack information and...If I may push the campaign on social media. Like younger people have social media, they use it back home, if I might have maybe a Facebook social media which most people use back home. And making people know what is going on, how interesting university is, how Education might help them, things like that might uplift my community.” – Mthunzi (Transcript 13, page 6)

Loosen and Schmidt (2012) mentioned that some of the motivation for participating in news sharing can be driven by the need to participate in public discourse, to engage in critical debate with other members of the audience or to create awareness

about a particular topic. In several campaigns, social media platforms have been used to draw the attention of authorities to underlying societal issues. In the case of black students' protest against the language policy at the University of Stellenbosch that necessitated the hashtag '#Luister', a clip of the clash between black and white students posted on Youtube compelled the Minister of Higher Education and Training to enter the debate (Luescher et al. 2017). Social media allows for cohesion among the student community (Godsell et. al. 2016). The case is also recorded in the Fees Must Fall campaign and as experienced by participants in this study, Facebook and Twitter were used as a communication tool to draw the attention of the public and authorities to demands for free education.

Another reason why students make use of social media for news is the ease of access it provides. Social media provide a convergence for news and information.

"...because like as a student.....am always busy. Like as I am here, like I cannot sit in front of a TV, like watch news to see what is going on out there, but then...I will go straight to Facebook and Facebook has everything for me, I go to Twitter, Twitter has everything allocated in the same place for me. I go to Instagram and all other social media networks" – Mthunzi (Transcript 13, page 2)

The ease of access that Facebook and Twitter bring to news and information flow enable the audience to utilize this platform as their primary news source as shared in the experience of Mthunzi. Likewise, audience are certain that their contributions and voices are heard on social media rather than through the traditional media. The news process is changing due to the affordance of social media platforms. The concept of writing letters to media houses is fast eroding as described by Dime in the below excerpt, and that is what Loosen and Schmidt (2012: 875) mean when they argued that audience participation in news is no longer limited to the outlets media institutions provide due to the affordance of social media platforms.

"In the newspaper, you have to write a letter and it has to go back and then they are even not going to publish it. It is easier online because of the comment" – Dime (Transcript 1, page 4)

The social media, especially Facebook and Twitter provides an audience inclusion for students to be able to pass across information. Several studies have established how students make use of these platforms to converge and engage in governance discussion among themselves (Cheung, Chiu and Lee 2011; Kelling, Kelling and Lennon 2013; Chen, Chan and Lee 2016; Lee, Chen and Chan 2017). These platforms also provide a venue for students to share relevant information during the #FeesMustFall campaign.

“...it is easy to just go to social media and round people up and say we are doing this” – Sne (Transcript 9, page 3)

Because social media allows communication from all members of the audience, awareness of societal issues always comes to limelight on these platforms since all members are included. One of the participants responded that there are some issues you find on social media and not on the mainstream media. Most of our participants opted for Facebook and Twitter as their medium and source for news.

“I have noticed that there is awareness on certain issues on social media” – Cynthia (Transcript 5, page 1)

“Every time I want to know about something I go to Facebook, I go to Twitter” – Mthunzi (Transcript 13, page 3)

Different authors have established Facebook and Twitter as a source of breaking news, and the first source of news and information for students (Hermida et al. 2012; Newman, Dutton and Blank 2012; Lee, Chen and Chan 2017). Since Twitter facilitates multiple tagging and sharing of content, it inevitable draws young people to engage in political and democratic deliberation on this platform (Gleason 2013). Participants in this study also share the same thoughts about motivation for participating on this platform. Tholani also shares his experience in the below excerpt.

“Most of the times, many things that I confront are usually on social media” – Tholani (Transcript 12, page 1)

Another motivation for inclusion on social media is the need for relationships and to develop a sense of belonging among a particular network of community. Castells (2015) mentioned the attributes of developing a network convergence among a particular group or audience. Many of our participants also shared this network convergence especially on Facebook.

“Because I have been using Facebook forever, since I was in grade 11 and some people I don’t have their numbers, I just catch up with them on Facebook via inboxing. Yeah...So I feel if I will be leaving Facebook, I will be leaving like everything and whatsapp too” – Dime (Transcript 1, page 1)

“I get to know people, they get to know me. So it makes life easier for me as a 90 child, it’s more easy, its hassle free”. – Lizzy (Transcript 2, page 2)

The above excerpts from Dime and Lizzy indicate that young people are using these platforms to communicate and build a network audience. Other studies have also established the potentials of Facebook and Twitter as a communication tools especially among youths (Ghosh et. al. 2012; Kelling et. al. 2013; Castell 2015; Bosch 2017). Lizzy in particular shared her experience on how as a “90 child”¹³, social media connects her easily to other people (2019 Per. Comm. 8 March). Facebook and Twitter therefore have therefore become a converging point for youths due to the inclusion it provides. In addition, it provides a platform for relationship building as described in the excerpt by Linah.

“I communicate...like build relationships with them.” – Linah (Transcript 3, page 4)

During the Fees Must Fall campaign, one of our participants in particular mentioned that Twitter makes her feel connected to other fellow students because most of the comments she followed were from fellow students on Twitter since the school were not participating in the discussion on Twitter.

“Mostly students, the university tried by all means to distance themselves from commenting because they know that there are going to be some comments and

¹³ Someone born in the 90s

they are not going to be good. So mostly it is the student saying we experiencing one, two three, four, where can I get help? No, you should go to this faculty, you should get this help and stuff like that. So most of the people that were commenting on Twitter were actually student” – Lizzy (Transcript 2, page 4)

The reason why Institutions may not have a full presence on social media during the Fees Must Fall campaign may be that they have a dedicated traditional platform where they post updates for students and staff. Bosch (2017) found out that during the #RhodesMustFall campaign at UCT in 2015, students were the ones tweeting mostly about the hashtag and not the university authorities. Institutions may not have seen social media as an official tool of communication. Another reason may be due to the bureaucracy in many organizations, where every communication has to be approved by the head. The time-lag on social media and the case of Fees Must Fall do not allow for that kind of bureaucracy. Though Durban University of Technology has an official Facebook and Twitter handle, most of our participants attest to the fact that it is usually not engaging most especially during protest and campaigns as mentioned by this participant who also work with the online DUT radio.

“...Another thing as well with DUT is engagement as well, because with DUT, they wait until something becomes public and the media is drawn into it and it becomes a circus kind of, but if they are attacking early, students have complaints, they should rather attack those complaints early while they still can handle it. So they wait until the situation is escalated and it becomes a problem...Even the state at which student lived...

The above experience shows that students demand an engaging discussion with universities authorities even on social media. Students have come to accept these platforms as a means of communication and seek engagement via it from necessary authorities. Again, it is imperative to note that Facebook and Twitter created a sense of inclusion and a sphere for young people to drive discourse.

“...on Facebook, let’s say I post something, I have got 5000 friends, you like it, you see that it is interesting, it’s informing, it’s breaking, you also share it, your friends

also see the post that you shared, they also share it” – Thando (Transcript 11, page 4)

Facebook works in a way that enhances the audience to share information among their network audience at a single click. The multiplier effect this has is that many people are able to view the post compared to that of the traditional means of sharing information.

“I am making friends on social media, and I have been more aware of myself through social media” – Mangi (Transcript 4, page 1)

Mangi described the sense of awareness brought to him by the use of social media. This is possible because of the user generated content social media allows for the audience to create content and share them on this platform. Young people are able to express themselves more using social media.

“Social media has brought us together, it has brought us together more than ways you could never imagine. Also I feel freer on social media than I am unlike face to face thing...So I feel like it has provided a space for me to be open, to know people, like the fact that I have over 1000 friends on Facebook but in real life (laughs), I don’t even have one...” – Hannah (Transcript 7, page 2)

“Well.... social media helps me get connected...” – Nothula (Transcript 8, page 2)

Under this theme, we have established that Facebook and Twitter provide audience inclusion in citizen or community engagement. Other inclusion social media provides (ease of access; news information and knowledge; relationships and sense of belonging) are also discussed. One common interesting discovery under this theme is that young people believed that it is their responsibility to sensitize and create awareness for their communities through citizen and community engagement using the different social media platforms. The following theme, which is the last theme under this study will assess the outcomes of this audience inclusion.

4.7 Assessment of Audience Inclusion

This theme assesses the outcomes of audience inclusion in social media. It also speaks to Loosen & Schmidt's (2012) theory of inclusion among the audience as a result of access to various social media platforms made available through technology. Although, the case for this study is the #FeesMustFall, this theme also discusses audience views and concerns regarding inclusion on social media.

4.7.1 Cyber Activism

The case for this study is the #FeesMustFall campaign from 2015 – 2017, where the majority of our participants believed that Facebook and Twitter created an inclusion for the students and that it is a major reason the movement gained momentum.

“So even though Fees Must Fall had like people inside box, like Bonginkosi Khanyile and stuff like that, but it put in an awareness that us as student we still have like some voices to voice out...the Fees Must Fall campaign it was a success” - Lizzy (Transcript 2, page 2)

“I wasn't physically active but I was for it on my phone...on social media, I did like those posts.” – Linah (Transcript 3, page 4)

Data revealed that most students find recourse in online protest because of the protection their profile gives them online. They feel it is safer to campaign online as against the risk of protesting physically which may lead to exposure to attacks from either the security agents or consequences from the university. Several authors have discussed the use and importance of social media as a protest tool (Shirky 2011; Zhuo, Wellman, Yu 2012; Lee, Chen and Chan 2017; Bosch 2017), while others argued that this creates an armchair activist which does not allow for direct engagement and is therefore not effective (Gladwell 2010; Morozov 2017).

However, following the different trends from protests and campaigns among students in South Africa, evidence from the data under this study revealed that students find recourse in the inclusion role of social media as it gives them the avenue to express their concerns as described by Nqobile.

“I feel more comfortable on social media because as much as there can be some sort of argument and so, but the argument are not directly violent, they are not direct to me as a person, that is why people are able to voice out their opinion much better because the physical protest kind of create a protection barrier for you unlike if you are online, you sort of feel protected...you know. That is why people are able to speak up because they feel the profile protection.” - Nqobile (Transcript 6, page 7)

The tendency of physical protest to get violent make some students prefer the online protest as revealed in the extract above. Another angle is the confidentiality the social media platforms provide, the strength of posting your views and opinions without the feeling of having your voice subdued. The issue of privacy with regards to contributions on social media were paramount to most participants. People feel safe to participate because it protects their identity. Facebook and Twitter allows its user to adopt a pseudonym through the profile or handle name respectively. One participant says he feels safe to comment because he can always hide his identity:

“It is easier online because of the comment and if I don’t want to, I don’t have to use my name. I can write anything and then the conversation will go on and then I will be like....Its so much easier.” – Dime (Transcript 1, page 4)

“I will write everything without getting disturbed by anyone, without having someone else to ask me why is he saying this? You see, I will write everything even if they do not like it but they will get the message...” – Mthunzi (Transcript 13, page 7)

The freedom of expression social media provides made it possible for Mthunzi and Dime to express themselves freely. This is in particular relevant in a democratic system whereby everyone can contribute their views and express them accordingly. Habermas' concept of a public sphere described a situation where the public (audience) can comment freely using any platform without fear or coercion. This is enabled through social media as participants express that social media provides an avenue for engagement and effective discussion.

A lot of discussion centered on Facebook and Twitter allowing inclusion for people who are camera shy to express and participate in discussion pertaining to their well-being in university.

"...you know it is the way of writing something and then you know exactly that no one will be shouting back at you. If you are a shy person like I am, like I cannot stand in front of the camera at all, I am very shy, I cannot do that. So, I believe on social media." – Mthunzi (Transcript 13, page 7)

Furthermore, social media allows for students who are not vocal to engage with others as described by Mthunzi. Just as Zhuo, Wellman, Yu (2012) found out that social media allows for groups to organize their protest, break communication barriers among protesters, establish another sphere where protesters can communicate, and create a sense of belonging during the Arab spring, findings under this sub-theme also revealed that students use social media as a form of activism during the Fees Must Fall.

The following sub-themes will discuss other experiences of assessment of audience inclusion by the participants of this study.

4.7.2 Concerns on Audience Inclusion

Initially, the description for this category was social media vices (cyber bullying and attacks); however, it became concerns about audience inclusion as the data shows general concern about audience inclusion on social media that the former theme did not adequately capture. Many concerns raised about the inclusion of audience on social media revolves around physical (social) distance, social vices (cyber bullying), trustworthiness and reliability. Some authors have explored the influence of social media on daily lives, whether there is a difference between the personality projected on social media and in 'reality'. Although participants believed that Facebook and Twitter provide avenue for participation and inclusion of their voices, they still concerned about some of the vices this inclusion brings. This is exemplified in the statement below.

“As much as social media helps us to connect faster with our colleagues or pass on a message quicker, or help us get job, but I feel like at the same time, it destroys our lives, because it makes us lose ourselves in a way because we now get too attached and too caught up in the lives that is lived on social media...” – Nothula (Transcript 8, page 2)

The concept of self-presentation especially among young adults opens up discussion as to what is real and unreal on social media. Michikyan, Dennis and Subrahmanyam (2014) argued that what is obtainable offline is similar to what is seen in the online settings, as young adults have certain ways they behave whether in the company of others or alone. Nothula's experience of lives “lived on social media” indicates that there are certain ways people project themselves on social media which is rather different from the offline setting.

Another assessment of audience inclusion is the susceptibility of social media as a means for bullying. Hannah in the excerpt below refers to social media as a community; however she also mentions that cyber bullying can be a limiting factor.

“I just feel more comfortable posting on social media, it is like a community. Even though I feel it could get better especially with the news on cyber bullying...” – Hannah (Transcript 7, page 2)

The literature reviewed under the audience inclusion suggested that there are implications in allowing audience inclusion in the ‘media’ profession through social media (Loosen and Schmidt 2012). One of the key implications discovered during the data analysis was the trustworthiness of such information.

“That’s the thing, deciding which one is true is difficult. I have actually being a victim of that. I have shared fake news without knowing.” – Dime (Transcript 1, page 4)

Although concerns were raised on the vices on Facebook and Twitter and some participants were skeptical about news and information on social media, one of the participants explained that Twitter is a lot better in terms of management of these vices. Others are of the opinion that there are ways to verify such information even on social media by either confirming from trusted or verified accounts that are normally linked to Influencers or media personnel on social media platforms.

“oh...that’s difficult, but on Twitter I usually follow verified account” – Sne (Transcript 9, page 4)

“I think that you must research. You know for starter you sort of have to look for account that is...you sort of have to look for the account that has the blue tick. You

have to check for relevant information probably posted by (name of a popular person).” – Nqobile (Transcript 6, page 8)

With the advent of social media platforms, many traditional media institutions have seen the need to have either a Facebook or a Twitter presence for a wider reach of audience as described by Sne and Nqobile above. Some of the participants in this study rely on such online media institutions for veracity of information.

“I always make sure it is a verified account of a newspaper or a journalist then I...that’s where I get most of my news” – Sne (Transcript 9, page 4)

“...like sometimes if I come across something on Facebook and I suspected that it might be fake news, I try to go to google, quickly go there, search if it is something that is real, not one publication will write about it, you will see more relevant information that okay, it’s true, this happened...” – Thando (Transcript 11, page 5)

It is important to note that with the inclusion of social media for news most of our participants still rely on the social media mainstream journalists for veracity of information online in order to guard against fake news and information. Findings reveal that audiences still rely on the presence of these journalists on various social media platforms. Loosen and Schmidt (2012) also indicate that the relationship between audience and journalist on social media is for co-creation of news content, that is the audience and the media working together in news process and distribution. Domingo et al. (2008) refer to this as a participatory journalism. Facebook and YouTube have also created algorithms to limit the spread of fake information on their platforms (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017).

4.7.3 Virtual Communication

Some of the participants believed that social media gives the opportunity to reach a wider audience as a student. One of the participants, a former SRC member indicated that students used these platforms as a means of raising complaints concerning issues.

“At the beginning of every year in the university, students are always complaining on social media...students always complaining that they are hungry we don’t know when NSFAS are going to pay, I don’t receive NSFAS, I don’t receive any allowances from home” – Xolile (Transcript 10, page 4)

The findings in this study has established that social media, especially Facebook and Twitter provides this kind of rallying point for the audience to communicate virtually with one another regarding issue of interest. It is not only South African students that use social media for this kind of discussion, other studies conducted in different parts of the world have also established that Facebook and Twitter serves as an audience inclusion for students (Ghosh, Chawla and Mallott; Kelling et al. 2013; Chen, Chan and Lee 2016 and Lee, Chen and Chan 2017). Mthunzi in the excerpt below is a student and a youth representative of his local community and he emphasized that the Facebook page created by the youth of this community provided a platform to communicate to the government representative in the community.

“Yes, that’s where we lay our complaints, that’s where we state our dissatisfaction (yeah). If we are not satisfied with something that’s where we actually say we need finance in this area and the councilor, may you please do this for us? Things like that. We do have a page.” – Mthunzi (Transcript 13, page 4)

While most of the participants were excited about the opportunities provided by this kind of communication, there are however some concerns about the degeneration of physical communication in the ‘real word’.

“People now communicate like on the internet rather than having a one on one...I feel like social media is closing that human touch, yeah...People only communicate like on social media...” – Linah (Transcript 3, page 2)

“And you can sit like this as friends in a restaurant having some lunch but not even discussing one word because of social media. So you want to be there, you want to focus on what is going on around you but you tend to forget what is happening in front of you.” - Lizzy (Transcript 2, page 4)

Linah and Lizzy express concerns over the degeneration of physical communication. David and Roberts (2017) argued that despite the inclusion social media affords, the seeming attachment to these kind of media can come at a cost to face-to-face interactions. They found out in their study that people who seem attached to social media communications do this in order to secure an online inclusion.

4.7.4 Control & Censor

The researcher found out that some of the participants felt that there should be a 'power' that controls what people post on social media. While participants agreed that Facebook and Twitter provide a platform for audience inclusion in news reporting, they however want a sort of check and balance in the content of what is posted by individuals as it is seen in the mainstream journalism due to misinformation.

“But there is something that we still need to tweak on social media. The fact that anyone can post anything on it...if it is possible to track every interaction and every engagement that goes on because people used it for different reasons.”– Cynthia (Transcript 5, page 5)

Cynthia linked the above statement with an incident that recently happened during the data collection stating that such should not be encouraged on social media. One of the participants mentioned that there should be a tool to differentiate between the wrong information and the right one.

“ I don’t know how but there must be a way to identify or maybe to distinguish a thing that is real and not real...” - Mthunzi (Transcript 13, page 10)

Allcott and Gentzkow (2017:211) mentioned that there is no “third party filtering” of news content on Facebook as the audience have direct access to post contents on this platform. The traditional media on the other hand is conversant with check and balances when it comes to news process; however, according to a study conducted by Canter (2013) most of these journalists see this as somehow cumbersome for news flow and process particularly on social media. This is due to the influence of media organizations (media owners and editor-in-chiefs) on news which render the news process cumbrous (Lewis 2012; Loosen and Schmidt 2012; Ceron 2015; Lee et al. 2017). It is interesting to note that Cynthia works with the University online radio and on the other hand expressed concern about the regulations of DUT concerning news reporting on the online radio of the university.

“...every news that are DUT related, Radio DUT, they as well censored us when it comes to certain issues as well because Palesa, (I am not sure you know her), she is one of the ladies in our class, she was doing news report in 2017 and there was something that she recorded and a call came in from the head offices of DUT telling them to cut the story while she was on air. The station manager had to literally run and cut the news, so the news was cut shortly and abruptly because of that message relayed from the office. The reason why we are here as a (student) Journalist is to fight for the truth, expose corruption, but the institution will tell you no, do not publish this, we cannot publish this because I don’t know if it is PR or they want to look at the issue, the students and the public, but if we don’t expose some certain issues, how will we know there are problems that need to be solved, so therefore....that’s

the problem. Social media definitely does give me leeway (to express myself) because with social media there is no said rule.” – Cynthia (Transcript 5, page 5)

The issue of censor is prevalent when it comes to a structured or hierarchical news outlets such as the one mentioned above (in this case Radio DUT). Such external influences are due to the hierarchical nature of such mainstream organizations that leads to control over news and information (Ceron 2015).

4.7.5 Judgmental View & Triviality

This category discussed issues the audience faced around inclusion on social media. Some of the reservations expressed by participants are about being judged in the future regarding what they posted.

“Its quite a good experience but it’s at the same time also has a negative aspect for instance everything you post on social media comes after you”. – Thando (Transcript 11, page 2)

“The thing is these days when you apply for work, some employers, possible employers, they also request your social media details. So I will be very careful and I am careful with my social media with the things I join, what I participate in and support in...I mean it depends really. If I am passionate about it, if it feels right then I definitely will.” – Sne (Transcript 9, page 3)

Since social media has become a way of life, people especially potential employers use either Facebook, Twitter or other social media platforms to get to know a potential employee. Hermida et al. (2012) mentioned that some media outlets now require journalists to have an online presence. While Sne said she is careful about what she posts on social media platforms, she however mentioned that it still would not deter her from joining a movement or posting what she is passionate about on social media. Other participants also expressed concerns about the different views on social media.

“...because if I were to like express it like on social media you know there are those people who will not be sympathetic or share the same views with you.” – Linah (Transcript 3, page 1)

The concept of a public sphere and audience inclusion is for everyone to express their views no matter how diverse or trivial such views. These kinds of communication and participation is exemplified on social media communications especially on Twitter and Facebook (Habermas 2006; Papacharissi 2008). Mckee (2005) argued that other members of the public may not necessarily share the same view in a public sphere and that is what a sphere represents; where everyone is able to share his/her view. Again, two (2) of the participants mentioned that social media discussion is sometimes fostered around trivialities.

“...you post something they take it as a joke, no one take you seriously and then you even end up regretting posting it....” – Mthunzi (Transcript 13, page 4)

“...but it comes back to what audience likes, when you think about it as people on social media, we are drawn to those videos that are violent than discussing land issues. – Cynthia (Transcript 5, page 6)

Mthunzi and Cynthia recognized that there are individual interests on social media. The discussion around Social media and triviality by Shirky (2011) emphasized that social media provides a platform to discuss any issue of interests to members of the public thereby facilitating audience inclusion for everyone based on their interest and therefore not excluding any members of the public.

4.8 Summary

This chapter presented the analysis from this study. The main themes and its categories were represented in [Table 4.3](#). Citizens in the form of university students have become more engaged with social media because of its ease of access and sense of connectedness. This sense of connectedness has resulted in social media movements where citizens document their own journeys: an inclusive form of Citizen journalism. Citizen journalism fosters a network audience-community. This audience community can be described as cyber activism in the case of the #FeesMustFall and

other similar university campaigns championed by students. The in-depth interviews conducted in this study further gave an insight into the experience of participants on how they understood the role of Facebook and Twitter in the reporting of the #FeesMustFall campaign. The chapter also discuss the key findings under the themes vis-à-vis the research questions. It also shows how each theme is relevant to this study and the key question on audience inclusion on Facebook and Twitter. The following chapter will summarize the key findings of this study and the conclusions.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, the themes and analysis of the findings of this study were presented. This was supported with data extracts as evidence from participants' lived experience. The main aim of this study was to explore the audience inclusion role of Facebook and Twitter and how it contributes to News reporting among students. The study in particular explores the inclusion role of Facebook and Twitter as tools for news in the case of #FeesMustFall. This study arrived at five major themes (including sub-themes) from the preceding chapter and the themes were analyzed and discussed. This chapter will reflect on the 'post' #FeesMustFall effect. It will outline the findings vis-a-vis the research questions and objectives of this study. It will also summarize the findings presented in chapter Four. This chapter will end with conclusions, observations and suggestions for future research.

5.2 Reflection on #FeesMustFall

The debate on whether the #FeesMustFall movement was a success is still ongoing as there have been evidence of strikes and disruptions of academic programmes even after the government's intervention of free fees for students from low income households. The agitations have shifted from free fees to management and allocation of funds for students by each university, housing and accommodation, historical debts incurred by students, staffing and security issues within campuses. The beginning of the 2019 academic calendar was marred with nation-wide protests and academic disruptions in most universities in South Africa due to new demands from students. The ripple effect of the #FeesMustFall led to the fatal shooting of a DUT student on campus during one of such protests in early 2019 (see DUT Statement 2019). As a researcher and a postgraduate student of the institution, I first became aware of the shooting not on the traditional media or from any of the DUT official communication channels but through a message on one of the

WhatsApp groups¹⁴ of which I was a member. Data collection for this study started in the week the university resumed from almost a month long strike as a result of the above issues and in particular the shooting. Many of the respondents/students referred to this incident during the interviews. The importance of social media in protest actions shows that institutions cannot but embrace these tools as a form of communication especially among students.

Participants for this study were final year Journalism students who mentioned that it is a criteria required by the department to have a social media presence as a journalism student and this was made compulsory for all students. This reflect the dynamics in news dissemination particularly in the 21st century. Lee, Lindsey and Kim (2017) in their study confirmed that audience are inclined to accessing news from the social media page of journalists than through the traditional means because of speed of information social media platform enables.

The five main themes of this study are Citizen Journalism, Network Audience Sphere, Change in News Production, Motivation for Participation and Assessment of Audience Inclusion. All of these themes revolve around the theoretical framework for this study, which is Audience Inclusion. The audience seek way in which to participate and be part of sharing information and news experience. The student as audience in the context of this study reflected that in the #FeesMustFall campaign. The next section will discuss and situate the audience inclusion concept with the themes and findings of this study.

5.3 Audience Inclusion

Lack of engagement and non-inclusion by the traditional media and universities' authority made students find recourse in social media as an avenue for participation and discussion. Ma, Sian Lee and Hoe-Lian Goh (2014) in their study suggested that university students consist of the highest proportion of online community who engage in discussion on social media. While 'online' participation does not necessarily equate to physical representation (see Gladwell 2010), the

¹⁴ All members of the WhatsApp group have affiliations with DUT

#FeesMustFall was able to create a social media storm as experienced by participants of this study. These various social media platforms, especially Facebook and Twitter gave a self-publishing 'power' to the audience. This is mentioned in Loosen and Schmidt's theory of inclusion as a method in which the audience makes use of technology to participate in news sharing. Therefore, Facebook and Twitter provided the audience inclusion students needed to air their views and share information during the #FeesMustFall.

Another major finding of this study is the relationship between social media and traditional media during the #FeesMustFall. While adherence to ethics of the journalism profession is vital (see Lewis 2012), this study observed that there needs to be a symbiotic relationship between the mainstream media and the social media community. Participant's experience of the #FeesMustFall was the ineffectiveness of the mainstream media to include and tell the students' story and was more focused on reporting the violent aspect of the protest. The mainstream media can follow social media discussion by building a 'balanced representation' of reporting both on social media and through the traditional approach as suggested in the audience inclusion approach (Loosen and Schmidt 2012; Heise et al. 2014; Lee et al. 2018). One interesting discovery during the discussions with the participants of this study is that journalism students are not just encouraged to have a social media presence but also compelled to participate in the discussion on these platforms. Therefore, the journalist experience of reporting news is changing as discovered in the findings of Verweij and Van Noort (2014). Journalists are to see the usefulness of the inclusion of their audience participation on these social media platforms in balancing their reporting.

Similarly, students feel empowered to tell their own story without the 'influence' of the 'external' media. The concept of citizen journalism (see Bruns, Highfield and Lind 2012; Lewis 2012; Moyo 2015) also reflected during the #FeesMustFall ensures that students experience an inclusion in dissemination of information through the avenue Facebook and Twitter provides. Moyo (2015) in her analysis of citizen reportage in South Africa and Zimbabwe found out that beyond the professional ethics of Journalism, the citizen/audience provides an individual

reportage of witnessed ongoing events. Furthermore, Bruns, Highfield and Lind (2012) mentioned that the advent of Facebook and Twitter make it possible for the audience and the media to occupy the same media space as stories published by news organizations in the form of press releases and other gazettes are available to all. Likewise, the symbolic nature of hashtags in protest to gain support and create awareness also contribute to the inclusion of students in owning the #FeesMustFall movement.

The findings revealed that students were motivated to participate as social media platforms provide audience inclusion in citizen or community engagement; provides ease of access to news and information regarding the #FeesMustFall movement; and it enriches the knowledge base of students. Another motivation was a sense of connectedness that Facebook brought among students during the protest. The youth believed that it is their responsibility to sensitize and create awareness for their communities through citizen and community engagement. This is different from the popular opinion that the youth are apolitical.

Although participants mentioned some vices that are related to audience inclusion in reporting news on social media and most importantly the credibility of such posts, the researcher observed that students have come to accept social media especially Facebook as a medium which gives them a global view into the world through discussions, interactions and participation.

Habermas' (2006) description of a public sphere is a public place where members of the public are free to air their views and opinions without fear of manipulation or cohesion. The researcher observed that participants agreed that the #FeesMustFall movement was devoid of political influence or ideology, but essentially the combination of a unified student movement to achieve a free education in higher institutions in South Africa. The participants believed that the social media created a 'network sphere' for students to come together and with a unified voice. The concept of the empowered network as seen in the work of Castells (2015) is evident during the #FeesMustFall movement.

While Twitter provides a platform for sequential debate on trending topics and discussions, the researcher observed that most participants in this study still regard Facebook as their primary source of news and information. This is because Facebook is not limited by too many rules in terms of the numbers of words you can post unlike Twitter and many believed that the functionalities on Facebook is easier to understand for an averagely educated audience compared to Twitter. Most especially in a developing country like South Africa, this study discovered that Facebook provided that avenue for 'informal' discussion and debate. In a report by Pew Research Centre in 2018, Facebook was listed first before Twitter and Instagram as country specific examples of social media sites in South Africa (Poushter, Bishop and Chwe 2018). The researcher therefore noted that in as much as Twitter created an avenue for synchronised discussion during the #FeesMustFall, however Facebook is a relevant social media site for audience inclusion as students makes use of this platform for detailed information during the #FeesMustFall. It is important to note that the audience which in this case are students benefit in the inclusion role Facebook and Twitter provide for news reporting during the #FeesMustFall and wanted the traditional media to co-participate in these audience inclusion avenues.

5.4 Recommendations

Since students find audience inclusion on Facebook and Twitter, universities are expected to utilise social media platforms, especially Facebook and Twitter to engage in official communication with students. This is in line with the audience inclusion mentioned in the Literature review chapter (Loosen and Schmidt 2012), the affordance of these communication technologies (social media) makes it possible for student to engage and interact with one another. Part of the findings of this study is that students seek information on Facebook and Twitter during any campaign or protest. Therefore, South African universities should have a social media management crises team that engages with students to stem violent protest and give right information. This is also reflected in other researchers' findings (see Castells 2015; Booyseen 2016; Bosch 2016; Hodes 2017; Luescher 2016 and 2017; Frasinelli 2018) on #FeesMustFall and other social media campaigns mentioned

in the Literature. Facebook and Twitter provides inclusion for students to share their views and voice their concerns, therefore university authorities can make use of these social media platforms to engage and interact often with students. Since participants of this study indicated they visit the verified Twitter account of journalists for news and information, universities can also have a verified account and make it functional so students can visit for update and information.

The inclusion expectation indicators described by Loosen and Schmidt (2012) indicated that 'audience no longer needs interaction with journalist'. The findings of this study however revealed that audience wants to interact and engage with journalists on these social media platforms. Therefore, media outlets in South Africa and journalists can collaborate with the audience for co-creation contents using Facebook and Twitter as this study has established the need and relevance of seeing the audience as co-creator rather than just consumer of news.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has discussed the major findings of this study vis-à-vis the research questions and objectives. The findings in this study shows that young university students experience Facebook and Twitter as an audience inclusion channel during the #FeesMustFall campaign. However, the audience still wants the participation and contribution of the mainstream media in discussions on social media. While this study focuses on the audience (though student journalists) perspective of news reporting on social media, a further study can explore the practicing journalist's view on audience inclusion in news reporting. The #FeesMustFall was a national student movement in all South African universities, therefore a similar qualitative study may be done in different higher institutions in South Africa to explore the peculiarities of audience inclusion in the reporting of the #FeesMustFall movement in each institution.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I Letter of Information



LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study:

Exploring audience inclusion in Facebook and Twitter reporting among young university students in South Africa: The case of #FeesMustFall

Principal Investigator/s/researcher:

Anu Olagunju, B.A Linguistics

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s:

Tarryn Frankish, MSocSc (Psychology) Summa Cum Laude

031 373-6619

Prof. Phillippe Wade, BA, Hons, MA, PhD

0312091902

The purpose of the study is to explore the role of social media in the #FeesMustFall campaign.

Taking part in this study involves participating in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. Fifteen (15) students will be selected from DUT for the interview. The interview will contain questions pertaining to the role of Social Media as news tool. It involves you answering questions on the spread of #FeesMustFall on social media. The Interview will be

minimum one (1) hour with a maximum of two (2) hours duration.

There is no risk or discomfort to you in this study.

There is no direct benefit to you, but the findings from this study will be useful to communication researchers studying news and social media. Findings from this study will feature in publications and conference proceedings.

You are allowed to withdraw from the study at any time if you feel uncomfortable with the questions during the interview process. There will be no adverse consequences to you should you choose to withdraw.

There will be no monetary reward to you as a result of participating in this research.

There will be no costs to you as a result of taking part in this research study.

The records from this study will be kept as confidential as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from this study. All transcripts and summaries will be given codes and stored separately from any names or other direct identification of participants. Research information will be kept in locked files at all times. Only research personnel will have access to the files and only those with an essential need to see names will have access to that particular file.

Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:

Please contact the researcher (0613541950), my supervisor (031 373-6619), or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support, Prof. K. Duffy on 031 373 2577 or researchdirector@dut.ac.za

Full Name of Witness (If applicable) **Date** _____
Signature

Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable) **Date** _____
Signature

Appendix III IREC Approval



Institutional Research Ethics Committee
Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate
3rd Floor, Benoni Court
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus
Durban University of Technology
P.O. Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001
Tel: 031 271 2175
Email: irec@dut.ac.za
irc@www.dut.ac.za/ethics/irec/irec_research_ethics
www.dut.ac.za

5 March 2019

Mrs A C Olagunju
40 Palm Grove
Berca
4001

Dear Mrs Olagunju

Exploring audience inclusion in Facebook and Twitter reporting among young university students in South Africa: The case of #FeesMustFall

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letter.

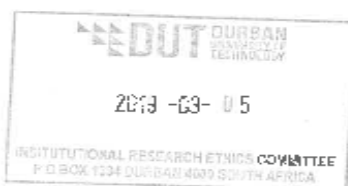
Please note that FULL APPROVAL is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's).

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely

Professor J K Adam
Chairperson: IREC



Appendix IV Research Instrument (Interview Guide)

Introduction

My name is Anu Olagunju, I am a Masters student in the department of Journalism. I am conducting a research on the experience of students on social media. The questions asked will include your experiences during the #FeesMustFall and on social media generally.

After the mini-introduction, the researcher will begin the interview by generally asking the participant the question “Could you please tell me about yourself”

1. Tell me an experience you have had where you need to air your voice or opinion to fellow students or members of the public about any issue of concern to you?
2. Could you please describe as detailed as possible your experiences using social media sites e.g Facebook and Twitter?
3. Let me take you back to the #FeesMustFall campaign, could you describe as detailed as possible your experience of the campaign?
4. Tell me about the factors you think led to the popularity of the #FeesMustFall?
5. Could you please describe your experiences after the campaign ended? Would you join other similar campaigns on social media in the future?
6. What kind of media gives you the freedom in participating and being included in trending topics? And how does this media give you this avenue?

Appendix V Coding Similarity

