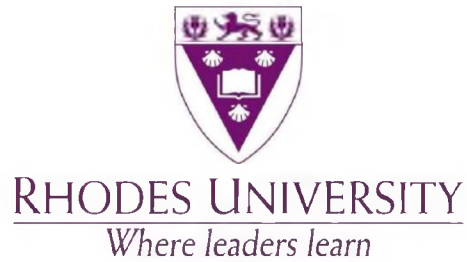


**Conversations, Turn-Taking, and Dialogue: An analysis of the political deliberations of
Zimbabwean citizens on the @263Chat Twitter handle.**



A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, Rhodes University, in partial fulfilment of
the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in Media Studies.

By

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I, Meli Mthabisi Ncube, do hereby declare that this is my own work, and that all other people's works have been fully acknowledged. I further declare that I have never before submitted this work for an award of a degree to this university or any other university. This work is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree at the School of Journalism and Media Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Rhodes University, Grahamstown - South Africa.

Signature:mmncube..... Date: ...11...July...2016.....

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ABSTRACT

The micro-blogging site Twitter, and the social networking site Facebook, are playing a key role in facilitating active political expression in the form of demonstrations against high rates of unemployment, poverty, rampant government repression and corruption. Twitter use in Zimbabwe is very vibrant and it even has its own name, 'Zwitter.' Zimbabwe has a closed legacy news media which are highly restricted, and most of the major news outlets are controlled by the state. Another limiting factor to any meaningful practice of deliberative democracy through the media and town hall debates is the intolerance of the ruling party ZANU-PF in dealing with dissenting voices. Thus in Zimbabwean politics, it can be argued that the internet has liberated political debates that have been suppressed and digital media is central to political and social deliberation. This study examines whether there are conversations, turn-taking, and dialogues-all features of deliberations- on the @263Chat Twitter platform which is used as a case study. Qualitative content analysis and interviewing were used to collect the data. The preliminary results of the research show that citizen-led engagements, which are facilitated by @263Chat, have brought to the fore the covert potential of social media platforms to drive political participation and deliberation.

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CHAPTER ONE (1)

1.1 Context/ Background of the Study

Many Internet-democracy commentators, researchers and practitioners (Benson 1996; Bohman 1996; Clift 2003; Davis 1999; Fang 1995; Fung and Kedl 2000; Gimmler 2001; Noveck 2000; Schneider 1997; Sunstein 2001; Tanner 2001; Wilhelm 2000) draw upon and advocate a deliberative public sphere as the ideal for citizen participation in politics. Here, the rational debate or argument between citizens over common problems leads to critically informed public opinion that can guide and scrutinise official decision making processes. In relation to the Internet, these deliberative public sphere advocates are interested in the extent and quality of argumentation being facilitated online, particularly given claims that the Internet's two-way, relatively low cost, semi-decentralised and global communications, combined with evolving interactive software and moderation techniques, offer the ideal basis for rational deliberation.

Chatora (2012) argues that blogs, the micro-blogging site Twitter, and the social networking site Facebook are playing a key role in facilitating active political expression in the form of demonstrations against high rates of unemployment, poverty, rampant government repression and corruption. In the United Kingdom, the violent protests which occurred between July and August 2011 were driven via Twitter, Facebook and Blackberry Messenger, in Tunisia popular protests forced President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali out of office on 14 January 2011. Similarly, protests mediated by social media in Egypt contributed to the forced resignation of President Hosni Mubarak on 11 February 2011. These citizen-led engagements, which were largely facilitated by social media, have brought to the fore the covert potential of social media platforms to drive political participation and deliberations.

Political participation is a fluid concept and the notion encompasses a diverse set of activities. Chatora (2012) defines political participation as citizen acts to influence the selection of and or the actions taken by political representatives. Thus, political participation can be understood as referring to the various mechanisms through which the public express their political views through deliberations and so exercise their influence on the political process.

It can then be argued that social media have the potential to facilitate the active citizen political engagement required to bring about political change in Africa if the events in Tunisia and Egypt are anything to go by. In turn, it is therefore reasonable to be optimistic,

although cautiously, about the potential of social media to encourage political participation and active citizenship. Hence, for citizens to fully exercise their political rights, the political context has to allow access to information. However, freedom of association and assembly related to citizens' right to access information is still heavily stifled in several African countries, meaning that the population's ability to actively engage in political activities is curtailed.

1.2 Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe has a closed 'legacy' news media which are distributed using a pre-Internet medium (print, radio, television), are highly restricted, and most of the major news outlets are controlled by the state. This is a direct result of the harsh Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) of 2002, which limits the functions and the role of mainstream media, and curbs freedom of expression generally. Thus, the Zimbabwean political environment is not conducive to open citizen participation, free speech and the freedoms of expression, association and assembly are heavily curtailed. Citizens who publicly express political opinions critical of the establishment are regularly subjected to arrest or harassment (Mpofu, 2015). Nevertheless, the Zimbabwean government has not overtly blocked or censored the use of social media platforms, but their distrust of these communicative tools is evident in the way arrests are made to those who post opposing views on the government on social media.

The regime has enacted a plethora of laws such as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the Miscellaneous Offenses Act, which severely limit public debate and criticism of government. This heavy regulation of the political space curtails citizens' right to freely participate and debate pertinent political issues. Another limiting factor to any meaningful practice of deliberative democracy through the media and face to face interactions is according to Mpofu (2015) the intolerance exhibited by the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) in dealing with dissenting voices. However, Mpofu (2015) reasons that in Zimbabwean politics the Internet has partially liberated those political debates that have been suppressed by ZANU-PF, and concludes that there is a possibility of digital media being central to public deliberations in Zimbabwe — both for political and social deliberations. Della Porta (2011) suggests that the Habermasian notion of the public sphere, where citizens are able to discuss their ideas and convince each other by force of the better argument, and thus influence decision-making, might now be possible

because of the Internet. The research asks questions which seek to elicit what kind of political dialogues occur on @263Chat and how these influence citizens' contribution to alternative discourse in and on Zimbabwe. Influence will be measured through the responses gathered from interviews with those who are active participants on @263Chat. In addition, the research also attempts to uncover the reasons why Zimbabwean citizens engage in political discourse on @263Chat, and the possible restrictions they face on the Twitter platform. Furthermore, the research also seeks to find out to which extent the political discourse on Twitter constitutes actual conversations, i.e. is there adherence to turn-taking and whether the dialogue is coherent.

1.3 Twitter

The mediatisation of society, recently driven powerfully by social media, has spawned new forms of political communication in the public sphere, accompanied by an implicit promise for more deliberative discourse (Lilleker, 2006: 3). The influence media exert on society and culture is, according to Lilleker (2006: 3), the mediatisation of society. This refers to the way media shape and frame the processes and discourse of political communication, as well as the society in which that communication takes place. Vicari (2012) argues that although Twitter has mostly been regarded as a platform for the diffusion of information and personal opinion, new and creative modes of interpersonal exchange patterns are increasingly positioning Twitter as a platform for political debate and deliberation. Twitter can even be seen as playing a key role in "public reasoning around social contention" (Vicari, 2012: 14).

Twitter is a popular social networking and microblogging site where users can post 140-character messages, or tweets. Apart from broadcasting tweets to an audience of followers, Twitter users interact with one another in two primary public ways: retweets and mentions. Retweets act as a form of endorsement, allowing individuals to rebroadcast content generated by other users, thereby raising the content's visibility. Mentions, that is any tweets that contain a username or tweets with replies (Boyd et al, 2008: 1), allow for dialogue among individuals who either follow each other on Twitter or not. This is the most sociologically interesting feature of Twitter (Boyd et al, 2008: 1), as it allows users to have actual conversations.

From preliminary research it appears that Twitter use in Zimbabwe is vibrant and it even has its own name, 'Zwitter,' (a combination of Zimbabwe plus Twitter). The users of Zwitter refer to themselves as 'Twimbos', (a combination of Twitter and our prominent nickname

‘Zimbos’). I would characterise Twitter use in Zimbabwe in two ways: ‘Young Twitter’ and ‘Old Twitter’. Young Twitter is more inclined to discussions of social life such as entertainment, popular culture, memes, music, movies, TV shows, nudes, and twars (Twitter + wars). Old Twitter is politically inclined and critical: it has users who are rooted in active political and civic engagement. This research focuses on Zimbabwe’s ‘Old Twitter.’

It is in this context that Masimba (2012: 1) claims that Twitter use among Zimbabwean ‘netizens’ is growing rapidly as the uptake among young people (i.e those between 15-35) has grown. Twitter, like all forms of social media, is not only about sharing content; it is also about dialogue and interaction. Consequently, Nyaruwanga (2014: 1) argues that in Zimbabwe, Twitter has allowed people to join in the broader conversations of ‘whatever’ is being discussed – both political and social.

263Chat¹ is a media company founded and created by Nigel Mugamu in September 2012. @263Chat is the official Twitter handle of 263Chat and the object of this study. The company website says that when it comes to Zimbabwe, there are often misconceptions about the reality on the ground. Therefore, 263Chat was created to encourage participation in the much-needed dialogue which would be focused solely on Zimbabwe. 263Chat suggest that it is a known fact that Zimbabweans are already engaged in various conversations about their daily lives and so thus they aim in part to amplify those dialogues. The @263Chat conversations commenced in September 2012, initially using twitter, but have since then, continued added other tools such as audio, video, and regular 263Chat Live Events designed to put the various voices in one room (<http://263chat.com/about-us/>, 2015).

1.4 Deliberation

Most of the studies examining the effects of social networks on political attitudes and behaviour have centred on social capital (Ellison et al, 2010; Ellison et al, 2007; Leiner et al, 2009; Steinfield, 2008; Valenzuela et al, 2009) because studies suggest that people primarily use social network sites to remain in contact with existing friends and learn more about individuals they meet offline (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Lampe et al, 2007). Johnson et al (2010) argue that less attention has been paid to whether social network sites influence political attitudes and behaviour.

¹ 263 is a very strong identifier for most Zimbabweans, especially those in the diaspora. It is the area code of the country, and it creates a sense of nostalgia and community for them.

Thus, interpersonal discussion is crucial to a functioning democracy because of the role discussion plays in sound political deliberation (Brundidge, 2006, 2008; De Tocqueville, 1965). Discussion plays a major role in political learning, attitude formation, and behaviour (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995; MacKuen & Brown, 1987). Studies have revealed that interpersonal discussion about politics is related to an increase in political involvement (Calhoun, 1988; McLeod et al, 1999). Political conversation often facilitates an increased desire to participate in political affairs (Katz, 1992) because the very act of interacting with one another helps to solidify opinions. Deliberation also serves to empower citizens (Warren, 1992). Political conversation contributes to the development of higher-quality opinions because of the refinement inherent in dialogue (Price, Nir, & Cappella, 2002). Communication with others can stimulate political activity. This is especially true for local political engagement. Stamm, Emig, and Hesse (1997) suggest a key role of interpersonal discussion as the primary mechanism for community integration. Interpersonal communication networks serve to promote political participation by providing information regarding how to get involved, and by conveying a sense of duty and obligation to serve the local community (Verba, Schlozman, Brady, & Nie, 1995). Research has since indicated that the development of homogeneous social networks reinforces existing political dispositions; often leading to more actively empowered political behaviour (Carey, 1989; Walsh, 2004). On the other hand, a more diverse social network stimulates discussion of controversial topics. Past analysis has found that citizens with more heterogeneous discussion networks are more likely to participate in community forums and assorted political activities (McLeod et al., 1999; Scheufele et al., 2006). It is thus apparent that interpersonal discussion with those of similar and different viewpoints is related to political activity at many levels.

Proponents of citizen deliberation argue that participation in deliberative forums, conventions, and panels has a positive impact on citizens' attitudes and behaviours. The potential benefits of deliberation include more informed and reflective judgments, a greater sense of political efficacy, and an increase in the frequency of political action (Bohman, 1996; Cohen, 1997; Fishkin, 1995; Gastil, 2000; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Mathews, 1994; Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997).

Though theorists disagree over a precise definition, most take democratic deliberation to include citizens voicing rational reasons for their preferences, listening to one another, exchanging information and thereby moving towards decision-making on contentious issues facing society (Conover et al, 2002: 24). Conover et al, 2002: 24 identify at least three

essential characteristics of democratic deliberation. First, such deliberations must be public, meaning that they should be open to anyone, and that citizens speak in a rational manner offering ‘public’ reasons. “Calling into a talk radio show; convincing a friend, neighbour, or co-worker whom to vote for; contacting the media or a public official about an issue; informally discussing a community concern” (Delli Carpini et al, 2004: 318). Secondly, democratic deliberations must meet the criterion of ‘non-tyranny’ in terms of both process and outcomes. Discussion and agreements cannot be coerced illegitimately or reflect the undue influence of powerful groups. Finally, democratic deliberations must meet a standard of ‘political equality’- “democratic governance stimulating good representation, just laws and institutions, and political legitimacy fostering mutual respect and the development of a common will” (Conover et al, 2002: 22). Thus, Conover et al (2002) state that democratic deliberation depends, procedurally, on citizens having equal access to deliberative arenas, and substantively on them having equal opportunities to influence the deliberation.

Public deliberation is defined by Gastil (2000) and Chambers (2003) as a specific, important, and idealised category within the broader notion of ‘discursive participation’. It is this definition of deliberation that this research seeks to work from. The conceptualisation of discursive participation has five principal characteristics according to Delli Carpini et al (2004). The first form of activity is discourse with other citizens – talking, discussing, listening, debating, and/or deliberating. The second characteristic is the ‘form’ (Delli Carpini et al, 2004: 318) of participation, with the third being that discursive participation can include, but is not limited to, the formal institutions and processes of civic and political life. The fourth characteristic is that it can occur through a variety of media, including face-to-face exchanges, phone conversations, email exchanges, and internet forums. The fifth characteristic is that it is focused on local, national, or international issues of public concern (Delli Carpini et al, 2004: 319). This research uses these five characteristics to analyse the political deliberations on the @263Chat account in an attempt to investigate how conversations about politics are constructed and how Zimbabwean citizens speak to each other about politics.

Consequentially, the research uses qualitative content analysis and interviewing as research methods. Qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2005: 1). Interviewing on the other hand

seeks to describe the meanings made of central themes by the @263Chat users, with the main task to understand these meanings in the life-worlds of the participants.

1.5 Structure of Dissertation

This chapter has introduced the research of this thesis by providing the background and context. I have indicated that many Internet-democracy commentators, researchers and practitioners advocate for a deliberative public sphere as the ideal for citizen participation in politics. It is from such a claim that I examined Twitter use by those Zimbabweans who are online in order to determine how these deliberations contribute to democracy. Twitter has since been argued by Chatora (2012) to play a key role facilitating active political expression in the form of demonstrations against high rates of unemployment, poverty, rampant government repression and corruption. Online citizen-led deliberations display the hidden potential of social media platforms to drive political participation. So therefore, for citizens to fully exercise their political rights, the political context has to allow access to information. Nonetheless, freedom of association and assembly related to citizens' right to access information is suppressed in several African countries, meaning that the population's ability to actively engage in political activities is curtailed. One such country in Africa is Zimbabwe which also has 'legacy' news media which are distributed using a pre-Internet medium (print, radio, television) are highly restricted, and most of the major news outlets are controlled by the state.

The Internet has thus partially liberated those political debates that have been suppressed by the state and we can note that there is a possibility of digital media being central to public deliberations— both for political and social deliberations. That is why Della Porta (2011) also argues that the Habermasian notion of the public sphere, where citizens are able to discuss their ideas and convince each other by force of the better argument, and thus influence decision-making, might now be possible because of the Internet. The theoretical framework used in this research is based on the concept of deliberation as it is key to a functioning democracy because of the role it plays in sound political conversations or dialogues. Therefore, participation in deliberative forums, conventions, and panels has a positive impact on citizens' attitudes and behaviours.

Chapter Two (2) will introduce the literature review which discusses aspects of citizen participation and dialogues, the Internet, social media, deliberation and democracy. Chapter Three (3) details the research methodology and Chapter Four (4) introduces the data and

findings with a discussions section on the major findings, and also presents the limitations of the study. Chapter Five (5) will conclude the study carried out on this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to the Chapter

In this literature review I will start by discussing Zimbabwe and its political context which has greatly influenced the media landscape of the country. It is near impossible to discuss one without the other as they have both played a major role in the life of ordinary Zimbabwean citizens and the processes of democratization of the country. Thus, we find that the political context of Zimbabwe has influenced how the media functions and to a certain extent how it has come to be viewed by most Zimbabweans. Due to this restricted media environment there has been an increase in alternative media platforms in and outside the country. These alternative media claim to contribute to democratic dialogues among citizens, and initiating and monitoring democracy in the country.

This literature review will attempt to indicate how democracy and freedom of speech is or has been limited by restricting media freedom. Furthermore, the argument made here is to also show that alternative media platforms could be useful in helping with monitoring governments and their practices of democratic ideals. The literature will also introduce scholarship on the notions of democracy; deliberation and online deliberation, the Internet, social networks and social media. It is my hope that this thesis will successfully argue that Twitter can provide an alternative space for deliberation in some contexts in the hope that it can do so in Zimbabwe.

2.2 Political and Media Contexts of Zimbabwe

The political landscape in Zimbabwe has, since independence in 1980, been dominated by one political party, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) led by President Robert Mugabe. Through the years, the party has extended its authority into the economic, social, and cultural spheres, including the mass media. As a result, a less discussed dimension of the well-known and documented Zimbabwean crisis has been the drastic restructuring of the media and its impacts on expression and identity. Most recent studies (Moyo, 2007; Moyo, 2009; Moyo, 2011; & Ndlela, 2010) on the media in Zimbabwe have tended to focus on the subject of state dominance and control over the country's media landscape and its impact on the democratic role of the media. These studies point to the consistent build-up of a state monopoly of the mass media over the years, and how it has led to a decline of democratic spaces in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe has closed ‘legacy’ news media—“media originally distributed using a pre-Internet medium (print, radio, television)...” (Miel & Faris, 2008:3)—which are highly restricted, and most of the major news outlets are controlled by the state. Thus, Chiumbu (2004: 29) points out that since 2000; the state media in Zimbabwe has been ‘contested terrain’ with ZANU-PF as the ruling party taking firm control of it and displaying heavy handedness to those who resist. Here we observe that Zimbabwean media, through ZANU-PF control, has spewed propaganda that has made land and sovereignty a definition of the Zimbabwean collective national identity and in addition formed the basis of an anti-colonial and anti-imperialist rhetoric. Thus, those who have not rallied behind this definition of national identity have been labelled in polite terms as ‘the others’ and in more crude terms, ‘sell-outs’ (Chiumbu, 2004: 30) by ZANU-PF and its most ardent followers.

As a result the ‘national identity’ project (Chiumbu, 2004: 29); which was principally engineered by the Department of Publicity and Information in the President’s Office, excludes many voices and perspectives from being heard, a circumstance which is of marked interest in my study. In July 2000, the operations of the media in the country came under the Department of Information and Publicity in the President’s Office and the former Ministry of Information, Posts and Telecommunications was dissolved (Chiumbu, 2004: 30), paving way for Professor Jonathan Moyo to become the new Minister of Information. Through the new Department, the government then introduced stringent laws that impinged on democracy and freedom of expression. In April 2001, Parliament passed the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA); the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) followed in January 2002; and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) was passed in March of the same year. These new laws stripped the media, both independent and state-owned, of their independence, objectivity, and partiality.

By introducing a study on Twitter in the Zimbabwean media and political landscape I aim to investigate whether those marginalised voices, the ordinary citizen, opposition politicians, human rights groups, gender activists and sexual orientation groups, can now be heard. However, the limitations here, even though Zimbabweans seem to have entered exciting new terrain, are what Moyo (2009) says are the digital, geographic and social divide. Academics (Norris 2001; Meredyth et al 2003; Sevron 2002; Holderness 1998; & Haywood 1998) have generally defined the digital divide as being primarily about the gap that exists between people who have access to the digital media and the Internet and those who do not have access. The geographic divide is mainly about access or lack of access to the digital media

and the Internet because of geographic location (Norris, 2001: 23). The social divide is about the differences in access between various social groups due to socio-demographic barriers such as class, income, education, gender, age, and race (Holderness, 1998:37).

As if the state clamping down on media freedoms, which also contributed significantly to restricted freedom of speech was not enough, ZANU-PF has in addition traditionally exhibited extreme intolerance in dealing with dissenting voices (Moyo, L, 2007: 83). Moreover, this pervasive media empire created by the state has been used to advance ruling party political interests which have tended to be exclusionary to the majority of citizens. Opposition political parties and civic organisations have also been systematically denied access to these communication channels, despite the fact that they are, in principle, 'public' media. The incapacitation and subsequent 'decapitation' of the mainstream media as watchdogs and custodians of the public good and active citizenship has thus culminated in the development of alternative online media platforms (Moyo, 2011: 746), where citizens produce and disseminate news and tell stories about the harsh realities of Zimbabwean life and politics under the current regime.

The repressive media environment in Zimbabwe has since ignited the rapid growth of political news websites (Ndlela, 2010: 93); NewZimbabwe.com, ZWNNews.com, Zimdaily.com, and ZimOnline.com, which are hosted in foreign domains such as South Africa, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom where large populations of Zimbabweans have emigrated to. The aim of these political news websites is to provide access to news sharing and content generation to those who otherwise would not have such open access in the traditional, mainstream, and legacy Zimbabwean media, and these include ordinary citizens, protests groups, 'dissident' trade unions, and opposition parties. Ndlela (2010: 93) asserts that these websites are driven by a focused political agenda aimed at democratic reforms in Zimbabwe. No doubt Ndlela's assertions may most likely originate from the fact that the websites describe and perceive themselves as "alternative spaces of communication and information for Zimbabweans with the intention of expanding the shrinking communicative space" (Ndlela, 2010: 93). In sum, these websites provided by online media platforms (representative of alternative media) have become seminal to public discussions (Moyo, 2011: 746), resulting in informal counter-hegemonic public spheres where public opinion can be formulated, nurtured and sustained.

Habermas's (1989: 31) concept of the public sphere is a realm within social life in which public opinion can be formed and which is accessible to all. The engagement within the public sphere according to Habermas (1989: 31) is blind to class positions and the connections between activists in the public sphere are formed through a mutual will to take part in matters that have a general interest. The public sphere is thus a product of democracy.

2.3 The Rise of Alternative Media and the Dearth of Journalism

Historically, societies living under repressive regimes have always come up with alternative forms of communication as tools of subversion. While underground newspapers and 'pirate radio' have been some of the most common forms, the advent of new communication technologies (Moyo, 2007: 81) in recent years has brought new forms of alternative media with greater possibilities for transnational citizen participation and empowerment.

Couldry and Curran define alternative media as "media production that challenges, at least implicitly, actual concentration of media power, whatever forms those concentrations may take in different locations" (2003:7). I would like to point out that what is important to stress from this definition is that these media are alternative not simply because they are non-mainstream, but because they position themselves in opposition to the mainstream, challenging both structural media concentration and the dominant discourse (content) that it produces. So for the purposes of this study I will refer to alternative media as those media that function in counter-position to state-controlled media systems by offering the means for democratic communication to groups and individuals who are otherwise excluded from the media production processes. As a result, I look at the alternative media from the Gramscian notion of 'counter-hegemony,' "as a way to categorise attempts to challenge dominant ideological frameworks and to supplant them with a radical alternative version" (Downing, 2001:15). Consequently, alternative media:

are about offering the means for democratic communication to people who are normally excluded from media production. They typically go beyond simply providing a platform for radical or alternative points of view: they emphasise the organisation of media to enable wider social participation in their creation, production and dissemination than is possible in the mass media (Atton, 2001).

Some scholars (Manning, 2001; McNair, 1998; Schudson, 1997) have acknowledged the centrality of ‘traditional’ journalism in the shaping of modern democratic society. However, over the years they have since expressed a growing dissatisfaction with the routinised, institutional forms of newsgathering, processing and dissemination of news which have crystallised into a rather narrow understanding of what news is. These concerns are also widely shared by scholars (Curran, 2002; Golding and Murdoch, 2001; Mosco, 1996) who are from the critical political economy perspective and stand opposed to the marketisation of the mass media. Hence, mainly traditional journalism has been criticised for being overly market-driven, leading to a parochial focus on a set of news values which include reference to elite persons and elite nations, obsession with negativity, unexpectedness, and so on (McNair, 1998; Schudson, 1997). Thus, by making such criticisms, these scholars have been indirectly advocating for alternative media forms and journalism practices that can break down the inflexible value systems that have become acceptable definers of news worldwide. Therefore, we now see ordinary global citizens who are appropriating new technological forms such as the Internet, social media, SMS, blogs, email. Others are also challenging and augmenting mainstream media coverage of critical issues and events of concern to their lives. These technologies have led to the development of horizontal citizen networks of interaction which promote the sharing of unfiltered information circulated with “no hindrances of editorial policy guidelines, no influence of advertisers on the angle and stance of the story in other words liberated journalism” (Moyo, 2009: 553). In sum, the rise of alternative media is contributing to a dearth of journalism which as some scholars (Manning, 2001; McNair, 1998; Schudson, 1997) have argued is becoming rather tedious and monotonous and does not contribute to democracy anymore. On the other hand, some forms of alternative media as I attempt to argue are good for democracy and freedom of speech. In the Zimbabwean context there has indeed been widespread proliferation of alternative media forms designed to counter the effects of suppressed freedom of expression and controlled state media.

2.4 Twitter and 263Chat

Twitter is a microblogging service that enables users to post messages commonly referred to as ‘tweets.’ Twitter was founded in early 2006 to enable people to share short textual messages—‘tweets’—with others in the system and this system was originally designed for tweets to be shared via SMS (Boyd et al, 2008: 3); and that is why the maximum length of a tweet is 140 characters. Though the service evolved to include more uses besides SMS, such as web and desktop clients, the 140-character limitation persisted, and so thus it was re-

narrated as a feature. Twitter supports a variety of communicative practices; participants use Twitter to converse with individuals, groups, and the public at large, so when conversations emerge, they are often experienced by broader audiences other than just the individuals engaged in a particular interchange.

Boyd et al (2008: 1) indicate that Twitter combines elements of social network sites and blogs, but with a few notable differences. With social network sites the profiles are connected through an underlying articulated network, but these connections are directed rather than undirected. Twitter participants on the other hand can link to ('follow') others and see their tweets, however the other users need not respond in a similar manner. Apart from broadcasting tweets to an audience of followers, Twitter users also interact with one another in two primary public ways: retweets and mentions. Retweets act as a form of endorsement (Boyd et al, 2008: 1), allowing individuals to rebroadcast content generated by other users, thereby raising the content's visibility. Mentions, that is any tweets that contain a username or tweets with replies (Boyd et al, 2008: 1), allow for dialogue among individuals who either follow each other on Twitter or not. Mentions are the most sociologically interesting feature of Twitter as they allow users to have actual conversations; and also they are largely the object of this research.

In a similar setting to that of blogs, participants' Twitter pages show all of their tweets in reverse chronological order. User profiles are minimal and public, although users can at their discretion make their tweet stream public or protected (private); the default and norm is public. The central feature of Twitter, which users see when they log in, is a stream of tweets posted by those that they follow, listed in reverse chronological order. Participants have different strategies for deciding who they follow; some follow thousands, while others follow a few people, some follow only those that they know personally, while others follow celebrities and strangers that they find interesting. Although people can interact with Twitter directly through the website, there are many third party applications available, ranging from mobile and desktop Twitter clients, to tools that allow participants to track popular topics, who un-follows whom, and how popular different users are.

Twitter participants are 'constrained' (Boyd et al, 2008: 3) to expressing themselves in 140 characters, and as participants embraced the technology and its affordances, a series of conventions emerged that allowed users to add structure to tweets. Thus, the creators of Twitter developed ways for users to reference other users to indicate topics, and devised

language to propagate messages. Twitter participants use the @user syntax to refer to specific users (e.g., @melincube) to address one another. Honeycutt and Herring (2009) point out that the use of @user is a form of ‘addressivity’, and indicates the intended recipients of messages that are posted in an otherwise public forum in order to gain the target person’s attention, which is essential for conversation to occur. A subset of participants also use hashtags (#’s) to mark tweets topically so that others can follow conversations centring on a particular topic.

Twitter has over the years grown and so have the participants or individuals who now have Twitter handles. As of February 2015 Twitter had 288 million users (Sloane, 2015:1), and it is projected that it will continue to grow year on year. Unfortunately, there are no recorded numbers about the amount of Twitter users in Zimbabwe.

263Chat² is a media company founded and created by Nigel Mugamu in September 2012. The company website describes the purpose of 263Chat as follows:

When it comes to Zimbabwe, there are often misconceptions about the reality on the ground. 263Chat was created to encourage and participate in the much-needed dialogue focused solely on Zimbabwe...It is a known fact that Zimbabweans are already engaged in various conversations about their daily lives. 263Chat aims in part to amplify that voice. Initially using twitter, the 263Chat conversations commenced in September 2012. Since then, the dialogue has continued adding other tools such as audio, video, and regular 263Chat Live Events designed to put the various voices in one room. (<http://263chat.com/about-us/>, 2015)

In sum, @263Chat is the official Twitter handle of 263Chat and it will be the object of my research.

2.5 The Internet

The Internet is generally hailed as an open platform and hyper-interactive medium; however participation on the Internet is curtailed by factors like access, costs, censorship, lack of technological literacy and technophobia. The Internet as a public sphere can be seen in the diversity and plurality of the voices found on the net (Moyo, 2009: 141), and these are represented by the websites of political parties (left and right wing), religious sites (radical

² 263 is a very strong identifier for most Zimbabweans, especially those in the diaspora. It is the area code of the country, and it creates a sense of nostalgia and community for them.

and moderates), civil society and government sites. The public sphere is a, “site through which the state is put in touch with the needs of society and is a regulatory institution against the authority of the state” (Habermas, 1989: 31). Internet interactivity implies that computer-mediated communication can influence dialogic, deliberative, communicative and democratic ideals, and online interactivity is then thus the means available on the Internet that generate electronic conversations and discussions.

Unlike the traditional mass media, the Internet allows citizens to engage in online discussions on significant public matters with like-minded individuals, regardless of physical and geographical constraints. Internet users share common interests, discuss public affairs, and deliberate about contentious issues. Moreover, they can have real-time conversations with politicians and legislatures regarding political issues that emerge as crucial in the public domain.

Conversely, Fishkin (2000) has argued that Internet discussions lack the richness of face-to-face exchanges, and are too superficial to sustain sound political deliberation. Sunstein (2001) warns that the Internet, far from encouraging the give-and-take of political dialogue over shared issues, will instead encourage “enclave” communication among very like-minded citizens, producing polarization of opinions, widening gulfs between extreme sides on public issues, and facilitating “cyber-cascades” of unfounded and often false information that may diffuse rapidly through such enclaves. Putnam (2000: 177) remains sceptical of the Internet’s capacities for regenerating social capital, in part because “computer-mediated communication networks tend to be sparse and unbounded,” encouraging “easy-in, easy out” and “drive-by” relationships rather than the dense networks of closer acquaintance promoted by face-to-face contact.

Nevertheless, Moyo (2009: 143) argues that unlike old analogue media, the Internet brings in a convergence of text, audio and the visual in all forms of dialogue. Thus, the development and spread of digital media across the world has culminated in the centrality of social media (Moyo, 2009:143) in the social, political and economic activities of people and organizations. Social media comes in various forms, but the most well-known and used modes are the social networking sites; Facebook and Twitter.

2.6 Social Media

Social media is a phenomenon that has transformed the interaction and communication of individuals throughout the world. In the past five years, social media websites have become ubiquitous, giving people a new way to interact with each other and communicate with the world.

Social media has enabled conversations to occur asynchronously and beyond geographic constraints, but they are still typically bounded by a reasonably well-defined group of participants in some sort of shared social context. Social media are “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010:60). Thus, the term ‘social media’ refers to a wide range of Internet-based and mobile services (Dewing, 2010: 1) and these allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user-created content, or join online communities. The kinds of Internet services commonly associated with social media include blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, virtual world content, media sharing sites, status-update services, and the more common social networking sites.

Use of social media web sites has increased the channels of communication and effectiveness in some organizations. Now people do not have to waste their time as it has become easy for a person to send messages through instant message services or a tweet and get the response quickly. Social media has also improved collaboration and acts as a source that allows people to generate and share their ideas. Thus, Edosomwan et al (2011) posit that social media helps conversations to reach a wider audience leveraging the ‘long tail’ concept, which means conversations can now be conveyed to different forums to reach a lot of people. Similarly, Sawyer (2011) argues that Social Media is an important part of our lives because it promotes the interconnectedness and interdependence of our culturally diverse world.

The Internet has thus enabled social media for people to communicate and engage with information that is quickly accessible on the Internet for interaction both socially and politically. Due to a high number of Internet users Sawyer (2011) contends that an increasing number of Internet users in today’s society means that social media have become increasingly popular in the daily patterns and routines of a large number of individuals. In sum, the communication that occurs in these online contexts promotes interactive dialogues that build understandings of different points of view. In social media, people have the opportunity to express their opinions to the public and participate in conversations and dialogue through a

common virtual medium. In sum, this research asks whether Twitter, a social media tool, can enhance democratic participation and dialogue in Zimbabwe via participation on @263Chat thus in the next section I will discuss the concept of democracy.

2.7 Democracy

This section introduces the concept of democracy; that is, the relationship of those who are participating in a democracy of any given society and or country, and the conditions necessary to create a democracy. Democracy has many meanings, and debating its meanings is one of the characteristics of a democracy. Democracy, which derives from the Greek word demos, or people (Clack, 2009:1), is defined basically as government in which the supreme power is vested in the people. In some forms, democracy can be exercised directly by the people; in large societies, it is by the people through their elected agents. Liberal democracy recognizes the moral primacy of the individual and that all persons have certain fundamental rights. A central purpose of democracy is to protect these rights in the practical world of everyday life.

Democracy is not just about elections, it's not just about politicians, argues Guinier (2012: 19); it's about the role we each play as citizens, as leaders, as public translators, as watchdogs, and as the sustaining members of a democracy. Kemmis (2012: 151) in turn suggests that democracy is about people taking charge of the conditions under which they live and that effective democracy is rooted primarily in people. However, democracy is not devoid of challenges which hamper its progress as Cortes Jr (2012: 43) suggests that it is in disarray either due to the moral failure and cynicism of the elite or because of the concentration of wealth and its corrosive effect on political institutions. Recent decades have also seen the erosion of institutions that are important to the sustenance of associative democracy (Cortes Jr, 2012: 45) and these are; family, neighbourhood organisation, political party, congregation, labour union, and mutual-aid society. This in turn has left a void in the avenues, customs and habits of deliberation and negotiating that are necessary for the successful functioning of a free and open democratic society.

Zimbabwe's media laws such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) of 2002, Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the Miscellaneous Offenses Act severely limit public debate and criticism of government and the functions and the role of mainstream media and curbs freedom of expression generally. The Zimbabwean political environment is not conducive to open citizen participation, free speech and the freedoms of

expression, association and assembly are heavily curtailed. Citizens who publicly express political opinions critical of the establishment are regularly subjected to arrest or harassment. It can thus be argued that Zimbabwe is not democratic since it does not allow for unrestricted and uncensored spaces for free deliberations for its citizens hence the study on how the Internet through social media, in particular Twitter using the @263Chat account as a case study, examines how and why Zimbabwean citizens now use the account as a space for political deliberation.

2.8 Deliberation

Discussion among citizens is thought to be the foundation of sound public opinion. Opinions formed in isolation, without the benefit of deliberation and debate, may reflect mass preferences; but without the back and forth of disagreement and discussion, one does not have true public opinion (Fishkin 1991, 1995). Discussion expands the range of ideas and arguments brought to bear on an issue; forces people to consider and defend their views, and fosters understanding of multiple points of view (Gutmann and Thompson 1996). Engaging in political debate is also thought to help people develop the sorts of abilities, attitudes, and motivations that enable deeper engagement in political affairs (Finkel 1985; Gastil, Deess and Weiser, 2002). And so, deliberation has been touted as crucial to a responsive and effective democracy. Theorists argue that deliberation fosters understanding, creates “the opportunity of exchanging error for truth” (Mill, 1956: 21), and promotes the “capacity for representative thinking and ... more valid ... final conclusions” (Arendt, 1968: 241). Deliberation is also said to increase efficacy, knowledge, and participation (Fishkin, 1995; Gastil and Dillard, 1999; Jacobs et al., 2009), legitimize the political system, and contribute to social cohesion (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996).

Theoretically, the concept of deliberation has absorbed the attention of contemporary democratic theorists (Dryzek, 2000); this is due to its optimistic expectation of rational collective actions. In general, deliberation is viewed as an interpersonal goal-directed discourse by which conflicting alternatives of public issues are resolved. Public deliberation is believed to enhance democratic governance and political opportunities for citizens by overcoming risks of the simple majority rule and elite-dominated representation. Deliberation is an integral democratic value that draws citizens into matters of public concern. It allows for the exchange of ideas and opinions and the blending of diverse views to reach a consensual action plan. In the process, vague arguments are crystallized and a course of action is justified

to increase public support. In particular, at the core of deliberative practice is computer-mediated communication because it creates a democratic potential by promoting pluralistic communicative action. In addition, it can be an alternative space when traditional media are restricted from playing a deliberative role.

Political discussion has been considered a key factor in societal consensus-building (Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002), since it increases tolerance, highlights opportunities for involvement and encourages engagement in public life (Walsh, 2004). Although there are many different ways to conceptualise deliberation, in the last few decades scholars from different research traditions have included in their definitions at least two common ideas: the concept of a genre or form of communication characterised by “the performance of a set of communicative behaviours that promote thorough group discussion” (Burkhalter, Gastil, & Kelshaw, 2002: 400), and the notion that in this process of communication the individuals involved weigh carefully the reasons for and against some of the propositions presented by others (Gastil, 2000; Schudson, 1997). A most basic definition of deliberation would be that; it is a long and careful consideration or discussion. However, scholars disagree over a precise definition of deliberation (Elster, 2011: 1), although most take ‘democratic’ deliberation to “include citizens voicing rational reasons for their preferences, listening to one another, exchanging information and thereby moving towards decision making on the contentious issues facing society”(Conover et al, 2002: 23).

Despite the disagreement over the precise definition of deliberation most, if not all, definitions have three essential identifiable characteristics. The first essential characteristic according to Conover et al (2002: 24) is that deliberations must be public. Therefore, in meeting the criterion of publicity it is required that access be open, and that citizens deliberate in a rational manner offering ‘public’ reasons for their preferences, meaning that deliberation ultimately tries to exclude private talk. Secondly, democratic deliberations must meet the criterion of non-tyranny (Conover et al, 2002: 24) in terms of both process and outcomes; that is, discussion and agreements cannot be coerced illegitimately or reflect the undue influence of powerful groups. In meeting the requirement of non-tyranny it is required that deliberations admit and examine different viewpoints, that they be open to contestation. Finally, democratic deliberations must meet a standard of political equality (Conover et al, 2002: 24), thus satisfying the demand for political equality does not require that citizens actually participate equally in deliberations, but it does require that basic procedural and substantive inequalities that could prevent equal participation be eliminated. Therefore,

democratic deliberation depends, procedurally, on citizens having equal access to deliberative arenas, and substantively on them having equal opportunities to influence the deliberation. So, if deliberation meets the standards of publicity, non-tyranny and political equality it can be said that democracy is nurtured. In the next section I will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of deliberation.

2.9 The Advantages of Deliberation

The benefits of a deliberative democracy can be easy to imagine, but hard to achieve argues Lupia (2012: 59), because like any form of civic education, the success of a deliberative endeavour depends on choices made by its designers. Thus, for a deliberative endeavour to increase participation, or affect how a target audience thinks about an important political matter, its informational content must, at a minimum,

- 1) attract the audience's attention and hold it for a non-trivial amount of time,
- 2) affect the audience's memories in particular ways (not any change will do), and
- 3) cause them to retain subsequent beliefs, or choose different behaviours, than they would have had without deliberation (Lupia, 2002).

Gutmann and Thompson (2005: 10) argue that the general advantage of a deliberative democracy is to provide the most justifiable conception for dealing with moral disagreement in politics. Thus, in pursuing this aim, deliberative democracy serves four related purposes and the first is to promote the legitimacy of collective decisions. This aim is a response to one of the sources of moral disagreement, scarcity of resources, argue Gutmann and Thompson (2005: 10), meaning that in the face of scarcity, deliberation can help those who do not get what they want, or even what they need, to come to accept the legitimacy of a collective decision. The second advantage of deliberation is to encourage public-spirited perspectives on public issues (Gutmann & Thompson, 2005: 10), and this aim responds to another source of moral disagreement, that is, limited generosity. In Zimbabwe, as mentioned earlier, the space to encourage public-spirited perspectives is closed as Zanu-PF has firm control over state media (Chiumbu, 2004: 29) which is now contested terrain.

Few people are inclined to be wholly altruistic when they are arguing about contentious issues of public policy, and so therefore deliberation in well-constituted forums responds to this limited generosity by encouraging participants to take a broader perspective on questions of common interest. The third advantage of deliberation is to promote mutually respectful processes of decision-making (Gutmann & Thompson, 2005: 11), and here it responds to an

often neglected source of moral disagreement, that is, incompatible moral values. Here even fully altruistic individuals trying to decide on the morally best standards for governing a society of abundance would not be able to reconcile some moral conflicts beyond a reasonable doubt. Deliberation would not be able to make incompatible values compatible (Gutmann & Thompson, 2005: 11), however it would help participants recognize the moral merit in their opponents' claims when those claims have merit. In addition, according to Gutmann and Thompson (2005: 11) deliberation could also help deliberators distinguish those disagreements that arise from genuinely incompatible values from those that can be more resolvable than they first appear and could also support other practices of mutual respect.

The fourth purpose of deliberation is to help correct mistakes made by citizens and officials when they take collective actions (Gutmann & Thompson, 2005: 11) and the advantage of deliberation here is to respond to the source of disagreement, an incomplete understanding. In sum, a well-constituted deliberative forum will provide an opportunity for advancing both individual and collective understanding. Through the give-and-take of argument, participants can learn from each other, come to recognize their individual and collective misapprehensions, and develop new views and policies that can more successfully withstand critical scrutiny. When citizens bargain and negotiate, they may learn how better to get what they want (Gutmann & Thompson, 2005: 11), but when they deliberate, they can expand their knowledge, including both their self-understanding and their collective understanding of what will best serve their fellow citizens. This is particularly relevant to the research of this study as it seeks to uncover how those Zimbabwean citizens who are online can benefit from dialogues about the social, political and economic being of the country.

2.10 The Disadvantages of Deliberation

Sanders (1997: 1), argues that the deliberative ideal might trouble proponents of democracy for a number of reasons, for one, it carries conservative or antidemocratic connotations usually overlooked by well-intentioned theorists. Moreover, Sanders (1997: 1) adds that appeals to deliberation have often been fraught with connotations of rationality, reserve, cautiousness, quietude, community, selflessness, and universalism, connotations which in fact probably undermine deliberation's democratic claims. Democratic theorists have since expressed the prerequisites of deliberation and one of these conditions is the achievement of mutual respect. Mutual respect propositions that, citizens who deliberate must address each

other as equals and acknowledge this status by offering reasonable, morally justifiable arguments to each other. However, Sanders (1997: 2) finds this to be problematic in that some citizens are better than others at articulating their arguments in rational, reasonable terms and so thus these citizens would appear to be already deliberating, and, given the tight link between democracy and deliberation, appear already to be acting democratically.

Levine et al (2005: 2) also argue that although deliberation has tremendous value and promise for improving contemporary democracy, it also has several important limitations. They present at least four limitations, namely the elusive nature of public agreement, the challenge of organization, the challenge of scale, and the impact of deliberation on public decisions (Levine et al, 2005: 3). The first limitation, the elusive nature of public agreement presents to us that deliberation does not often generate a full consensus, especially in larger public bodies (Levine et al, 2005: 3). In this regard, even though people frequently change their views in the process of deliberation and come to understand one another's needs, values, and beliefs better, they rarely reach complete agreement. In sum, because disagreements persist in almost all conversations, a group cannot make a decision without some method, such as voting, and that forecloses further deliberation, at least for a period of time. The challenge of organisation (Levine et al, 2005: 3) puts forward that good deliberation is not self-generating thus the instances of poorly organised public participation that fall below the threshold of proper 'deliberation' far outnumber well organized deliberative encounters in which participants hear contesting reasons for diverse options and discuss them. Here, Levine et al (2005: 3) argue that to achieve high-quality deliberation, someone must organize a discursive process, choose a topic, recruit the participants, prepare background materials or invite speakers, provide facilitators, and raise the funds that are necessary to do these things. However, there is then a danger that that deliberation will be overly influenced by skilled organisers; with the greater danger is having no competent organisation at all. Moreover, facilitators and the organisations that train and support these skilled organisers are critical to most processes, yet they cannot themselves be completely democratic and deliberative.

The third limitation for the practice of deliberative democracy is the challenge of scale (Levine et al, 2005: 3), because to become politically and socially significant, public deliberation initiatives must scale 'out' in the sense of directly or indirectly including many more participants. In addition to including more participants, public deliberation also faces the challenge of scaling 'up' (Levine et al, 2005: 4), so as to address problems and policy issues of state, national, and even international concern. The fourth and final limitation which

is the impact of deliberation on public decisions (Levine et al, 2005: 2), is indicative of that even high quality public deliberation does not automatically result in social or political change. Therefore, most public deliberations do not directly alter public decisions and actions, and for the results of a deliberative process to count, powerful actors must be encouraged, persuaded, pressured, or obliged to heed them. However, this seldom happens, and rarely does it occur in a fully deliberative way.

In addition, Butteriss (2014:1) says that text-based online deliberations necessarily excludes some people as online forums predominantly rely on inputting text which can be challenging for those who can't write, can't spell, don't like to write, have poor keyboard skills, have no access to a keyboard, live with a disability that prevents them from reading text and using a keyboard. A busy online discussion forum may cause information overload as large volumes of messages can be overwhelming and hard to follow. Moreover, according to Butteriss (2014:1) participants may accidentally go off-topic within a particular discussion thread where the logical sequence of discussion is often broken by users not sticking to the topic.

2.11 Public Deliberations- Offline: A Discursive Participation

Public deliberation, which I will also use as an example of offline deliberation, is central to democracy (Page, 1996:1). A large and growing group of scholars (Barber 1984; Connolly 1983; Dahl 1989; Dewey 1954 [1927]; Fishkin 1992, 1995; Habermas 1996; Mansbridge 1983), foundations, and public intellectuals agree that democracy is about the role we each play as citizens, as leaders, as public translators, as watchdogs, and as the sustaining members of a democracy (Guinier (2012: 19). Kemmis (2012: 151) in turn suggests that democracy is about people taking charge of the conditions under which they live and that effective democracy is rooted primarily in people deliberating in their daily lives.

In defining what public deliberation is; this chapter adopts the definitions generally used by Gastil (2000) and Chambers (2003) that, public deliberation is a specific, important, and idealised category within the broader notion of what is called discursive participation. The conceptualisation of discursive participation has five principal characteristics according to Delli Carpini et al (2004: 318). The first form of activity is discourse with other citizens – talking, discussing, listening, debating, and/or deliberating. The second characteristic is the ‘form’ (Delli Carpini et al, 2004: 318) of participation, with the third being that discursive participation can include, but is not limited to, the formal institutions and processes of civic and political life. The fourth characteristic is that it can occur through a variety of media,

including face-to-face exchanges, phone conversations, email exchanges, and internet forums. The fifth characteristic is that it is focused on local, national, or international issues of public concern (Delli Carpini et al, 2004: 319).

It is from these five characteristics that the thesis analyses the political deliberations on the @263Chat Twitter account in an attempt to investigate how conversations about politics are constructed. Furthermore an investigation is being carried out into how Zimbabwean citizens speak to each other about politics, or alternatively how they deliberate democratically. Therefore, my aim is to seek how the instances of deliberative democratic practices occur in Zimbabwe among its citizenry on the @263chat platform.

2.12 Deliberative Democracy

The notion of deliberative democracy in contemporary discussions covers a multiplicity of theoretical approaches from Barber's (1984) 'strong democracy' to Dryzek's (1990) 'discursive democracy'. Since democratic theory took a deliberative turn a little more than a decade ago (Dryzek, 2000), theorists and academics from different backgrounds have applied the deliberative model to everything from new radical forms of democracy to more traditional models of representative democracy. Interest in deliberative democracy is still growing and its appeal is understandable. Deliberation, with its emphasis on distributed speech rights and information exchange (Habermas, 1996), has the potential to increase the quality and quantity of political interest and participation.

I would like to reiterate that this research is primarily concerned with how Zimbabweans deliberate democratically using @263Chat because the notion plays what Yankelovich et al (2012: 125) argue is a vital role in a democracy. Thus, deliberative democracy is likely to play a much more commanding role in our systems of governance because it aims to offer techniques for engaging the public and expressing the public voice. Following this line of reasoning it is evident that for a democracy to function, viable mechanisms must exist for expressing the will of the people as Yankelovich et al (2012: 125) suggest that the public must be reasonably attentive and engaged with the key pros and cons of vitally important issues. To achieve some considerable success in public attentiveness and engagement Yankelovich et al (2012: 132) claim that a shift is required from top-down communication towards two-way dialogue so that there is a different kind of conversation, based on dialogue rather than debate. Therefore, successful engagement for dialogues could require, for

instance, a facilitator tasked with organizing systems to engage a public thoughtfully and reconnect them with decision makers in order to create change.

Young (2012: 114) argues that ideas associated with deliberative democracy have become a subject of importance not only for political theorists, but many governmental and non-governmental practitioners who wish to improve the quality of public discussion and decision making. Even so, Young (2012: 114) posits that deliberative democracy ought not to be identified primarily with the process of discussion in face-to-face settings, as this view diminishes deliberative democracy's theoretical insight and critical force. Thus, Young (2012:114) suggests that deliberative democracy be conceived primarily as 'de-centred' which means that we do not find the process of deliberation taking place in a single forum or bounded group. Instead however, Young (2012: 114) proposes that we should understand processes of discussion and decision making that we evaluate under norms of deliberative democracy as occurring in multiple forums and sites connected to one another over broad spans of space and time. This is a sentiment also shared by Conover et al (2002: 23) who argue that democratic deliberation should include citizens voicing rational reasons for their preferences, listening to one another, exchanging information and thereby moving towards decision making on the contentious issues facing society. I will now move to discuss online deliberation as the research for this paper studies an online alternative media platform as a space for deliberation.

2.13 Online Deliberation

Online deliberation is the term for a network-based (usually Internet) computer application that supports the deliberative process in some way (Schuler, 2009: 293), and at present, very few examples exist, although the number is slowly increasing. Online deliberation has advantages and disadvantages relative to face-to-face deliberation. Broad criteria of success for either approach include access to the process, efficacy of the process (including the engagement of the participants and the process as a whole), and integration within the social context (including legal requirements, etc.). Of course these criteria overlap to some degree and influence each other. Online deliberation is a difficult service to provide and support optimally. Low literacy rates and the lack of access to appropriate networked computer facilities and services including support for non-English languages is one of the major reasons online deliberation is a difficult service to provide.

Schuler (2009) identifies three other reasons including that very few applications are available for use because deliberation applications are difficult to design and implement; and there is seemingly little money to be made with online deliberation. Moreover, deliberation is difficult to do, as according to Schuler (2009: 294) it is time consuming and confusing in many cases due to the complexity of content and process, such as knowing when to ‘call the question’. The final reason is that that meaningful civic deliberation plays a miniscule role in most societies. Here, Schuler (2009: 294) argues that sometimes with few exceptions governmental bodies from the smallest towns to the highest national and supranational levels seem unable (or, more accurately, unwilling) to support or promote public deliberation in a genuine way, whether it is online or not. However, by studying Twitter use for political deliberations by Zimbabweans, I am attempting to demonstrate that citizens as individuals are able to deliberate on matters of national interest without the aid of governmental or non-governmental bodies.

The anonymity of online deliberation is an innate feature of computer-mediated communication that further promotes such pluralistic conduct and according to Noelle-Neuman’s 1984 theory, the spiral of silence, people who have minority opinions tend to remain silent rather than speak out their opinions because they fear social isolation from the majority of others who have dominant opinions (Schuler, 2009: 294). The anonymity of online communication alleviates this sort of fear and as a consequence gives greater opportunity to express divergent opinions and views. While apparent shortcomings such as misinformation and abusive verbal assaults are observed (Zelwietro, 1998), computer-mediated communications substantially contribute to political regeneration by promoting the deliberative practice of ordinary citizens and envisaging new opportunities especially for marginalized groups of citizens. Grassroots activists are more likely to utilize the Internet for their activities because it is more effective than the traditional media in politicising people regarding the issues of new public demand (Zelwietro, 1998).

Public deliberation over the Internet, therefore, is a crucial factor that diffuses new political values and enhances citizens’ political engagement. Possible themes of online deliberation are inclusive of a variety of topics: not only political matters but also such non-political issues as arts and sports and other daily-life issues. However, it is necessary to point out that deliberation differs from mere interpersonal chatting in the sense that it allows citizens to exchange diverse, and sometimes conflicting, views through opinion asserting and statements which allow for them to reach public consensus as the democratic theorists have argued.

Issues related to arts and sports and other daily-life matters, once they go through deliberation, are likely to become 'public' matters as citizens engaged in deliberation often touch upon societal dimensions of issues, pursuing common good and public interest. This is the very point on which the main arguments about the impact of online deliberation on political engagement are based. The democratic practices of online deliberation enhance the political qualities of individual citizens, which lead to more active engagement in political activities.

The advent of electronic communication networks, and in particular the World Wide Web, potentially offers a new kind of public conversational space. It also presents the technological capacity to study, in new and unprecedented ways, public discussion and group opinion. The Internet and World Wide Web have been greeted by some (Poster 1999; Becker and Slaton 2000), as cause for optimism about a revitalized public sphere (Price, 2009: 42). While growing at a fairly rapid rate, however, Price (2009: 42) argues that political 'conversation' online remains a rare phenomenon. Nevertheless, Internet technologies have considerable appeal to adherents of deliberative theory and practice, in that they permit group interactions among geographically dispersed and diverse participants, potentially bringing far greater reach, reduced cost, and increased representation to exercises in deliberative democracy. For Price (2009: 43) the quasi-anonymity and text-based nature of electronic group discussion, for instance, might actually reduce patterns of social dominance. Price (2009: 43) argues that studies demonstrate that online discussions are generally much more egalitarian than face-to-face encounters, with reduced patterns of individual dominance and increased contributions by low-status participants (Dubrovsky, Kiesler, and Sethna 1991; Rice 1993; Walther 1995; Hollingshead 1996). Task-oriented groups generate more unique ideas working in computer-mediated settings than when face-to-face (Gallupe, DeSanctis, and Dickson 1988; Dennis 1996). Moreover, group decision making experiments generally indicate that online discussions, relative to face-to-face group meetings, generate more open exchanges of ideas (Rains 2005), suggesting considerable utility for deliberative work.

Recent studies, argues Price (2009: 43), suggest that the computer may not be the 'impersonal' medium it is commonly made out to be and that, in fact, people find it useful in forming relationships. In attempting to research how Zimbabweans use Twitter as a platform for deliberations about politics the study also aims to examine the nature or relationships that are created and or have been created via @263Chat among its followers. Tidwell and Walther (2002) found that experimental comparisons show that computer-mediated discussions

produce more questions, greater self-disclosure, more intimate and direct questions, and fewer peripheral exchanges than face-to-face encounters. On the other hand, other research similarly suggests that people find the lack of physical presence and reduction in social cues to be useful rather than limiting. Bargh, McKenna, and Fitzsimmons (2002) find that their experimental participants felt better able to reveal their 'true selves' online than in person. Stromer-Galley (2003) found a number of people reporting that they felt better able to discuss political disagreements over the Internet than face-to-face, because it felt to them more comfortable and less dangerous. These findings are particularly useful to the Zimbabwean context of participating or engaging online as intolerance exhibited by the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) in dealing with dissenting voices (Mpfungu, 2015) has hindered the meaningful practice of deliberative democracy through the media and face to face interactions. Finally, according to Price (2009: 43), online encounters may assist people in formulating their thoughts, by requiring greater economy of expression and the conversion of inchoate ideas into text and by permitting statements to be reviewed and edited prior to posting. In sum, political discussion online surely differs in fundamental ways from that carried out face-to-face (Price, 2009: 43), but because of these distinctive features they may well prove to help rather than hinder the core attributes of sound deliberation.

2.14 Challenges to Online Deliberation

Internet technologies have considerable appeal of adherents to deliberative theory and practice (Price, 2009: 6) because as they permit group interactions among geographically dispersed and diverse participants, they potentially bring far greater reach, reduced cost, and increased representation to exercises in deliberative democracy. However, Fishkin (2000) argues that text-based Internet discussions are likely to be too superficial to sustain sound political deliberation. Putnam (2000: 177) also remains sceptical of the Internet's capacities for generating social capital, in part because 'computer-mediated communication networks tend to be sparse and unbounded,' encouraging 'easy-in, easy out' and 'drive-by' relationships rather than the close acquaintance promoted by face-to-face contact. In addition computer-mediated communication is often framed as an impersonal phenomenon that de-individualises participants, rendering it poorly suited to getting to know others, instead encouraging uncivil discourse and group-based stereotyping (Kiesler, Siegel, and McGuire 1984; Rice 1993). Sunstein (2001) on the other hand warns that the Internet, far from encouraging reasonable dialogue over shared issues, merely encourages 'enclave'

communication among very like-minded citizens, circulating unfounded and often false information, polarising and intensifying opinions, and contributing to widening gaps between those on opposite sides of public issues.

2.15 Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the political and media landscape of Zimbabwe and also explained how both are entwined and have played a role in the life of ordinary Zimbabwean citizens and the processes of democratisation of the country. Because of a restricted media environment in Zimbabwe, the country has seen a proliferation of alternative media platforms. The spaces which are provided by these alternative online media have thus since become seminal to public discussions resulting in informal counter-hegemonic public spheres where public opinion can be formulated, nurtured and sustained. Alternative media has necessitated the rise of social media use in Zimbabwe to be used as spaces for ordinary citizens to set the agenda independent of mainstream media both state-owned and independent. The Internet has perhaps been the greatest contributor to the proliferation of alternative media platforms. We now see Twitter playing a role in initiating and encouraging dialogue and citizen participation in Zimbabwe.

Furthermore, I discussed the concept of deliberation which among citizens is the foundation of sound public opinion (Fishkin 1991, 1995), and is touted as crucial to a responsive and effective democracy. I also highlighted the advantages of deliberation whereby Gutmann and Thompson (2005: 10) argue that the general advantage of a deliberative democracy is to provide the most justifiable conception for dealing with moral disagreement in politics. I also indicated that deliberation has disadvantages with Levine et al (2005: 3) presenting at least four limitations namely; the elusive nature of public agreement, the challenge of organisation, the challenge of scale, and the impact of deliberation on public decisions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the different methods that were used to collect data that will provide explanations for some of the research questions set out, and explain why these methods were used in this particular way. I will also discuss validity and accuracy concerns, and ethical considerations towards the end of the chapter. I will be using a qualitative research methodology which is a type of scientific research and in general terms it is scientific research that consists of an investigation that seeks answers to a question, and systematically uses a predefined set of procedures to answer the question (Jensen, 2012: 266). In addition, qualitative research collects evidence, produces findings that were not determined in advance, and produces findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study. Therefore, qualitative research shares these characteristics and additionally, it seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves. Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts of particular populations. This is relevant to the research I am undertaking as I attempt to obtain culturally specific information from Zimbabwean citizens who participate on the @263Chat Twitter platform.

Thus, this research uses @263Chat as a case study to analyse how Zimbabwean citizens converse and take turns in deliberations about politics on Twitter. In brief, a case study is a “descriptive or explanatory analysis of people, groups, events, decisions, periods and projects which can be studied holistically by one or two methods” (Thomas, 2011: 14). It is thus a research strategy that investigates an occurrence within its real-life context. In this study, instances of political deliberations, via conversations on @263Chat, will be investigated by closely following and monitoring the dialogues on @263Chat as they occur on the Twitter account in real-time. I will look at five trending political topics over a period of a month as a sample for analysis of the ways in which conversations occur. This is in line with what Delli Carpini et al (2004: 318) argue is the first of five principal characteristics of discursive participation or discourse with other citizens – talking, discussing, listening, debating and/ or deliberating.

In using @263Chat as a case study, this research attempts to explore how and why Zimbabwean citizens use @263Chat as a space for political deliberation. Therefore, the proposed research will be guided by the following questions:

- What kind of political topics are prominent on @263Chat among citizens, and how do these influence the citizens' contribution to alternative discourse in and on Zimbabwe? The influence here will be measured through the responses my interviewees will give.
- How is politics spoken about? Is politics seriously debated on @263Chat or is the space used for trolling, and talking about entertainment, popular culture, memes, music, movies, TV shows, nudes, and twars? Likewise, this will be determined and measured by the responses obtained from the interviews and qualitative content analysis conducted.
- To what extent do political tweets receive responses and how extended are the 'conversations' on political themes?
- Do the interactions constitute actual conversations i.e. is there turn-taking, and is the dialogue coherent?
- Why do people engage in political conversations and what are they hoping to achieve by engaging on @263Chat?
- What are some of the restrictions faced by the @263Chat users with regards to deliberating about politics?

Qualitative content analysis and interviewing are the research methods that will be used. Zhang and Wildemuth (2005: 1) indicate that qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text. Interviewing seeks to describe the meanings made of central themes by the @263Chat users, and the main task here is to understand these meanings in the life-worlds of the participants.

3.2 A Case Study

Case study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. In the case of this research I have attempted to understand how Twitter can, as an alternative media, democratise the space for conversations and dialogue in Zimbabwe by using @263Chat as a case study. Case studies are complex because they generally involve

multiple sources of data and produce large amounts of data for analysis. As a way of avoiding having to deal with large of amounts of data I will interview ten people after having also done a qualitative content analysis. Researchers have used the case study research method for many years across a variety of disciplines. Social scientists, in particular, have made wide use of this qualitative research method to examine contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods. Yin defines the case study research method as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 1984: 23). In my case I will be investigating political deliberation on @263Chat in real-time and will use supporting findings from qualitative content analysis and responses from interviews to develop a hypothesis about my study.

Researchers from many disciplines use the case study method to build upon theory (Yin, 1984: 24), to produce new theory, to dispute or challenge theory, to explain a situation, to provide a basis to apply solutions to situations, to explore, or to describe an object or phenomenon. The advantages of the case study method are its applicability to real-life, contemporary, human situations and its public accessibility through written reports. These advantages are what have prompted this particular research of how Zimbabwean citizens converse and take turns in dialogues about politics on Twitter, using @263Chat as a case study. In addition, case study results relate directly to the common readers everyday experience and facilitate an understanding of complex real-life situations.

Case study research enables investigations on important topics not easily covered by other methods. Conversely, other methods may cover many topics better than a case study research. However, the overall idea is that different research methods serve complementary functions, and that is why I am using a case study approach in conjunction with qualitative content analysis and interviewing. I should however point out that the distinctive topics for applying the case study method arise from at least two situations. First and most important according to Shavelson and Townes (2002: 99-106), the case study method is pertinent when research addresses either a descriptive question (what happened?) or an explanatory question (how or why did something happen?). Second, there might be a need to illuminate a particular situation (Shavelson and Townes, 2002: 99-106), to get a close in-depth and first-hand understanding of it. Thus, the case study method helps in making direct observations and collecting data in natural settings compared to relying on “derived data” (Bromley, 1986:23).

The way @263Chat is envisioned by its founder and creator, Nigel Mugamu, makes it an attractive platform to use as a case study. 263Chat is a media company founded and created in September 2012 encourage Zimbabwean citizens to participate in the much-needed dialogue focused solely on Zimbabwe.

263Chat use various platforms to attempt to initiate conversations and encourage dialogue such as Facebook, 263Chat Live Events, YouTube, and the one which is the object of this study, Twitter, which uses the handle @263Chat. In sum, case study research is more than simply conducting research on a single individual or situation. This approach enables a researcher to answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ type of questions, while taking into consideration how a phenomenon is influenced by the context within which it is situated.

Qualitative research is commonly criticised for its lack of generalisability. Generalisability refers to the degree to which research findings are applicable to other populations or samples (Polit and Hungler 1991; Ryan and Bernard 2000). It involves “the usefulness of one set of findings in explaining other similar situations” (Grbich 1999:66). Generalising is central to the definition and creation of valid public knowledge (Metcalf 2005) and it is sometimes equated with terms of ‘transferability’ and ‘external validity’ (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003). Some authors doubt that generalisability can be achieved in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba say “the only generalisation is: there is no generalisation” (1985:110). Others emphasise the context-specificity of qualitative research (Wainwright 1997), which limits generalisation to other situations (Creswell 1998). Hammersley says that ethnographers are generally “not very effective in establishing the typicality of what they report” (1990:108). Nevertheless, it is not the aim of this research to generalise in anyway about political deliberations occurring on @263Chat instead this research attempts to use the data collected to analyse the political deliberations of Zimbabwean citizens beyond the @263Chat Twitter handle. This is so that I can answer the question of how and why Zimbabwean citizens use @263Chat as a space for political deliberations.

3.3 Qualitative Content Analysis

Content analysis is a family of systematic, rule-guided techniques (Mayring, 2000), used to analyse the informational content of textual data. There are several types of content analysis including quantitative and qualitative methods (Miles & Huberman, 1994), all sharing the central feature of systematically categorising textual data in order to make sense of it. They

differ; however, in the ways they generate categories and apply them to the data, and how they analyse the resulting data.

In qualitative content analysis, data are categorised using categories that are generated, at least in part, inductively i.e., derived from the data (Morgan, 1993), and in most cases applied to the data through close reading. There is disagreement in the literature on the precise definition of qualitative content analysis; and these differences are about how the data is analysed once it has been sorted into categories. For some authors (Morgan, 1993; Sandelowski, 2000), qualitative content analysis always entails counting words or categories (or analysing them statistically if there is sufficient sample size) to detect patterns in the data, then analysing those patterns to understand what they mean. Qualitative content analysis is defined more broadly by some researchers (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Mayring, 2000; Patton, 2002), to also include techniques in which the data are analysed solely qualitatively, without the use of counting or statistical techniques. Qualitative content analysis is one of many qualitative methods used to analyse textual data (Forman and Damschroder, 2007: 40), and it is a generic form of data analysis in that it is comprised of an atheoretical set of techniques which can be used in any qualitative inquiry in which the informational content of the data is relevant.

Rather than being a single method, current applications of content analysis show three distinct approaches: conventional, directed, or summative (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005: 1277), and all three approaches are used to interpret meaning from the content of text data and, hence, adhere to the naturalistic paradigm. The major differences among the approaches are coding schemes, origins of codes, and threats to trustworthiness, thus, in my research I used the three approaches. In conventional content analysis, coding categories are derived directly from the text data. With a directed approach, analysis starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial codes. A summative content analysis involves counting and comparisons, usually of keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context. In my qualitative content analysis I have favoured a combination of conventional and summative content analysis where I have derived coding categories directly from the text data and proceeded to count and compare the occurrences of key hashtags such as #Twimbos and #263Chat.

Hashtags are a tool used for the purpose of information organization and management. The hashtag is used for the purpose of tagging and organizing tweets to make having and

following discussions on topics easier (Shapp, 2014: 6). Therefore, the hashtags #263Chat and #Twimbos made the having and following of political deliberations on @263Chat easier for the purposes of the research. In addition to the #263Chat and #Twimbos hashtags there were identifiable hashtags which indicated that they were of political nature which was also evidenced by content analysis, these were #BringBackOurEconomy, #SONA2015, #ZIMSONA2015, among others.

A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005:). The success of a content analysis depends greatly on the coding process and I identified the hashtags before and during data analysis.

Twitter can have large volumes of information being shared at a time, therefore I chose only one month, August 2015, to analyse taking into consideration that this was also a mini study. Thus, I started collecting tweets which had the hashtags #263Chat and #Twimbos. I also collected any other tweets which had hashtags that referenced Zimbabwe and Zimbabwean politics or politicians. Hashtags like #Zimbabwe, #BringBackOurEconomy, #BringBackOurSkulls, #SONA2015, #ZIMSONA2015, #ZimSONA2015 in addition to #263Chat and #Twimbos assisted in the choosing of the relevant tweets which focused on Zimbabwe. The state of the nation address hashtags created some confusion among Zimbabwean Twitter users as South Africa's state of the nation address usually uses the #SONA hashtag. Therefore, the addition of the prefixes ZIM or Zim which also created confusion as no one seemed to agree on which hashtag to be used. I proceeded to then choose only the tweets that stimulated responses from online Zimbabwean citizens. The number of tweets which contained all the hashtags I have mentioned was 31, and I then chose the tweets which had threads of conversations which I could transcribe to data and apply the 5 discursive characteristics of Delli Carpini et al (2004).

I noticed that all posts or 'tweets' by @263Chat which asked a question or which were most likely to elicit a response from the Twitter handles followers always carried the hashtags #Twimbos and #263Chat. Tweets about news in Africa carried the hashtags #Zimbabwe and #Africa. So therefore, I decided in choosing tweets for analysis which contained the hashtags #Twimbos and #263Chat as part of my sample as they elicited responses from the @263Chat followers which resulted in conversations taking place. I chose only the tweets which

contained the hashtags but in addition only those tweets which received responses and later developed into conversations among users of @263Chat.

These hashtags are identifiers of Zimbabwean citizens whether in Zimbabwe or abroad and they make it easier in following a conversation which has a discussion about Zimbabwe or its citizens. The phrases #Twimbos and #263Chat appear to jolt the followers into responding to the question put to them from the platform. An example of both the hashtags #Twimbos and #263Chat being used is Fig 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3. I observed that when analysing my samples the hashtags which were of a political nature stemmed from statements attributed to politicians mainly, Professor Jonathan Moyo, the new Higher and Tertiary Education minister in Zimbabwe.

The hashtags #BringBackOurEconomy, #BringBackOurSkulls, #SONA2015 #ZIMSONA2015 initiated political deliberations among Zimbabwean citizens. An example of the #BringBackOurEconomy hashtag is at Fig 3.4 and an example of the #BringBackOurSkulls hashtag is at Fig 3.5. The latter hashtag was initiated in reference to Professor Jonathan Moyo having suggested that repatriating the skulls of historical Zimbabwean war figures from Britain was much more important than fixing the country's economy. In reference to President Robert Mugabe's official speech at the opening of the Zimbabwean parliament, the hashtags #SONA2015, #ZIMSONA2015, and #ZimSONA2015 were used interchangeably, the tweets which had these hashtags can be found at Fig 3.6.

Although @263Chat generally holds serious discussions around Zimbabwe, there is evidence that trolling is found on the account. In some instances @263Chat retweets 'trolls' which displays the fluid nature of the account. Therefore, trolling can be found even though most of the times the topics being deliberated are of serious nature. Trolling is when a person sows discord on the Internet by starting arguments or upsetting people, by posting inflammatory or off-topic messages in an online community with the deliberate intent of provoking readers into an emotional response or of otherwise disrupting normal on-topic discussion often for their own amusement (Williams, 2012:1). Examples of trolling on Zwitter, especially by @CynicHarare an account well-liked by Zimbos, an example is as follows Fig 3.8 - this particular meme plus troll is in reference to the Africa-India Summit 2015 where all invited Heads of State, but one Robert Mugabe, wore Indian regalia.

An advantage of content analysis is that large volumes of textual data and different textual sources can be dealt with. The trustworthiness of content analysis results depends on the

availability of rich, appropriate, and well-saturated data. Thus, data collection, analysis, and result reporting go hand in hand. Improving the trustworthiness of content analysis begins with thorough preparation prior to the study and requires advanced skills in data gathering, content analysis, trustworthiness discussion, and result reporting. The trustworthiness of data collection can be verified by providing precise details of the sampling method.

3.3 The Interviews

In this section I will discuss the interviewing process I undertook for the research. I opted to use interviewing as one of my methods as it seeks to describe the meanings made of central themes by the @263Chat users. My main task is to understand these meanings in the life-worlds of the participants. I used purposive sampling to identify 9 interviewees who are regular participants and/ or contributors on the @263Chat Twitter account, and the interviews were conducted via email. I have been mindful of the fact that the sample of interviewees has not represented the full range of the participants on @263Chat, and so are therefore liable to raise issues of the generalisability to the @263Chat population. In line with the position taken by qualitative researchers (Hansen et. al., 1998, Lindloff, 1995, and Maxwell, 1992) the critical issue in this study is the generalisability of the isolated cases to theoretical propositions, rather than to populations. The purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypotheses, and not to evaluate as the term is normally used. Instead, Seidman (2006: 9) suggests that at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. Being interested in others is the key to some of the basic assumptions underlying interviewing techniques (Seidman, 2006: 9); it requires that we interviewers keep our egos in check, that we realize we are not the centre of the world, and it demands that our actions as interviewers indicate that others' stories are important.

My interviewees were initially randomly chosen from @263Chat's 81 200 thousand followers, I followed 30 of these followers and 18 followed me back. Of the 18 that followed me back 7 were women and 11 men. I then sent direct messages requesting that I may interview them about @263Chat, only 9 responded with the other 9 not responding although I did send follow up direct messages. Of the 9 that responded 5 were women and 4 were men, I then requested Skype interviews to which all the interviewees declined and instead requested that I email them the questions with a short abstract of what my research entailed. The reasons for declining Skype interviews were the different time zones as some of my

interviewees are currently based outside of Africa in the United States of America (USA), Switzerland, and England. Other interviewees simply did not have Skype accounts, while others preferred responding in writing via email. The nine interviewees also indicated that they had no problem with their Twitter handles (names) being published in this research. The nine interviewees are as follows: @bayhaus; @CamillaSibanda, @Ndle_Nkosi, @Maqhawe_Mpofu, @finkynm, @Musvanhiri, @Just_Midzi, @diamond_head and @ZaneleM_.

When sending my questions to the nine interviewees I attached a short abstract as they requested as a way of explaining how I had come up with the question and also to show that their answers were to be used strictly for academic purposes only. I asked the questions with the intention of finding out what the interviewees thought of @263Chat and whether they thought it promoted and contributed to the conversations in Zimbabwe. I was also interested in finding out what political topics were prominent and whether they had particular topics they would like to be prominent on @263Chat. Likewise, I also wanted to find out if @263Chat was a platform where deliberations on politics could be taken seriously and whether these deliberations constituted actual conversations. Finally, I was also interested in finding out whether the interviewees had any particular reasons when engaging on @263Chat and what they hoped to achieve through this engagement. The questions posed to the interviewees can be found in Appendix number 1.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the two methods, qualitative content analysis and interviewing which I used for collecting the data for the research to provide explanations for some of the research questions set out and explain why these methods were used in this particular way. I chose to use @263Chat as a case study because case study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. Through the two methods I used for this research I gathered that @263Chat is regarded as a reliable and credible source of news in Zimbabwe. @263Chat also encourages citizen dialogue and is constantly initiating conversations where there is no fear of censorship or regulation. Political topics are the most favoured subject of discussion among Zimbabweans on @263Chat, although some suggested that this was wrong as it implied that Zimbabweans could not exist outside the political.

Figures are found in Appendix number 1 page 66

Chapter 4: Data and Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss my data and findings which were obtained through using @263Chat as a case study, and by using qualitative content analysis and interviewing as research methods.

At the time of writing there are a number of Twitter accounts with Zimbabwean names and websites. These Twitter accounts claim or suggest that they are encouraging citizen participation and or aiding in the democratisation of Zimbabwe, or in simple terms giving Zimbabweans a voice. I would like to postulate that the proliferation of these Twitter accounts is due to the fact that their owners reason that they are the best way to share information, sell products, advertise and generally say something. This is relatable to the research I am conducting as I am arguing that Twitter is seemingly opening up a space for uncensored dialogue in Zimbabwe among citizens who are on Twitter. Examples of these Twitter accounts shown from Figures 4.1 to 4.4 are @TribeOfTwimbos which claims to be *'Reclaiming the narrative....'*, @ZimVoices14 which claims that they *'[We] seek to give a voice to communities in Zimbabwe and to promote a culture of active citizen engagement in governance and development processes using ICT.'* There is also @kubatana which *'shares civic and human rights information on Zimbabwe'* and there is @CurateZIM which says it aims to give *'A different Zimbabwean experience every week.'*

Interestingly Twitter has also seen some accounts which are aligned to ethnicities and tribes in Zimbabwe. For example on Figures 4.5 to 4.7 there is @uMthwakaziRevie which is *'uMthwakazi Review: Pride of The Matebele Nation'*. This Twitter account is catering for the Ndebele people mainly found in the southern parts of Zimbabwe and is the second largest group after the Shona who are the majority. There is also @InothoKwabatsha which *'is a Matebeleland Affirmative Action Organization with a vision to economically empower the youths of the Region.'* As with @uMthwakaziRevie, @InothoKwabatsha is also catering for the Ndebele people found in the southern parts of Zimbabwe. Another account although it is purely geographically located is @VisitBULAWAYO which says that *'WE ARE ROYALS is an open invitation for people all around the world, to come and DISCOVER BULAWAYO as ROYALTIES. Get info & share your royal experiences!'* Bulawayo is the second largest city in Zimbabwe.

From the above mentioned Twitter accounts it can be argued that the presence of Zimbabweans online has become robust with @263Chat commanding a following of 81 200 people (at the time of researching). However, I should also highlight that not everyone has access to the Internet as from Zimbabwe's estimated population of 13.6 million only 5.2 million have access to the Internet (Kabweza, 2014:1). Therefore, some of the claims by most of the mentioned Twitter accounts; such as for encouraging citizen participation and dialogue, promoting a culture of active citizen engagement in governance and development using ICT, economically empowering youths, and giving a different Zimbabwean experience every week, can be queried given that less than 50% of the Zimbabwean population has access to the Internet. Despite this, the value of investigating Twitter and @263Chat is that it does provide an alternative space for some of Zimbabwe's citizens, which is sometimes not possible in the heavily regulated mainstream media.

4.2 The 5 Principal Characteristics of Discursive Participation

Delli Carpini et al (2004) conceptualize discursive participation in five principal characteristics. Thus, in this study I used these five characteristics to analyse the political deliberations on the @263Chat account in an attempt to investigate how conversations about politics are constructed and how Zimbabwean citizens speak to each other about politics. First, the primary forms of activity which I was concerned about and which Delli Carpini et al (2004) present as 'discourse among citizens' was the talking, discussing, debating, and/or deliberating. Secondly, discourse of this kind is viewed as a form of participation. However, although analysis of civic and political participation have become more sensitive to the variety of ways in which citizens can act, they seldom include talk as a measure of engagement, focusing instead on activities such as voting, attending rallies, working for a political party, lobbying, joining and actively participating in voluntary organizations, protesting, and the like (Brady 1999, Ladd 2000, Putnam 2000, Skocpol & Fiorina 2000). Nevertheless, talking in public with other citizens is a form of participation, one that arguably provides the opportunity for individuals to develop and express their views, learn the positions of others, identify shared concerns and preferences, and come to understand and reach judgments about matters of public concern. Such exchanges are a central way of clarifying and negotiating deep divisions over material interests and moral values; they are also critical for publicly airing disagreements that have not been articulated or have been incompletely stated because so many citizens have withdrawn from electoral and legislative

politics (Benhabib 1992, 1996; Dryzek 1990; Elster 1998; Etzioni 1997; Gutmann & Thompson 1996; Habermas 1989; Michelman 1988).

Thirdly, discursive participation can include but is not limited to the formal institutions and processes of civic and political life. Thus, it can involve private individuals in informal, unplanned exchanges; those who convene for public purposes but do so outside the normal processes of government operations (Delli Carpini et al, 2004:219), for example, in such places as libraries, schools, homes, churches, and community centres; and those who are brought together in settings such as town hall meetings of political representatives and their constituents. Fourthly, discursive participation can occur through a variety of media, including face-to-face exchanges, phone conversations, email exchanges, and internet forums. In the case of the research I am conducting the latter, internet forums provides the foundation for the study as a whole. The fifth and last discursive participation characteristic is focused on local, national, and international issues of public concern. It is from these five characteristics that I will now present my data and findings of this research starting with qualitative content analysis.

4.3 Discussion on Data & Findings using Qualitative Content Analysis and Interviewing

The first discursive characteristic Delli Carpini et al (2004) present is ‘discourse among citizens’ which is the talking, discussing, debating, and/or deliberating. In the example I will be discussing here I will be addressing the first characteristic. I have earlier in this research mentioned that due to the political and economic well-being of Zimbabwe at present, a lot of families were displaced and broken up in search of greener pastures. One Stansly Maponga/@BeAst_MoDe90 is no different, Stansly Maponga is a Zimbabwean sports star who is an American football line-backer for the Atlanta Falcons (Nehanda Radio, 2015:1) who caused controversy when he described his upbringing in Zimbabwe before his family was forced to emigrate in search of greener pastures. Maponga torched a storm when he stated the following, “back home, kids grow up a lot quicker because you have to go look for food and stuff like that, I hunted for mostly deer, squirrel and also rabbits too” (Nehanda Radio, 2015:1). Zimbabweans who found out about these remarks were not impressed and took to Twitter and specifically @263Chat to voice their disapproval.

User @thandowako tagged Stansly Maponga and @263Chat (See Fig 4.8) asking that Maponga be told “to stop building an underdog story based on a foundation of lies”.



Now, because @263Chat was tagged in the tweet it meant that Zimbabweans who follow or are followed by the account saw the tweet and this led to a discussion, talking, and debating/deliberating among the citizens. User @chifarayi argues that Zimbabweans should just celebrate the athletes' achievements instead of berating him online, and to this, user @deltandou responds by suggesting that there was no need for the athlete to use his high profile achievements to advance falsehoods. @chifarayi then asks on what grounds @deltandou judges Maponga to be false and that it is best that those who grew up in rural areas comment on the issue of growing up hunting.

From this conversation I observe that despite the conversation threatening to turn into a heated argument as it continues, because of the nature of Twitter that you have to wait your

turn before responding, there is an indication of turn-taking in the dialogue. Evidence of turn-taking suggests that @263Chat has provided a space for talking, discussion and indeed debating/ deliberating among the citizens. Later on in the thread other users joined in the conversation as shown by Fig 4.9 and again there is evidence of turn-taking in the dialogue. The turn-taking here is necessitated by observing of mentions in tweets. Mentions are any tweets that contain a username or tweets with replies (Boyd et al, 2008: 1), and they allow for dialogue among individuals who either follow each other on Twitter or not. Mentions are the most sociologically interesting feature of Twitter as they allow users to have actual conversations; and also they are largely the object of this research.

To support the assertions I have made about @263chat that it provides a space for talking, discussion and indeed debating/ deliberating among the citizens, are the responses I received from my interviewees. User @Ndle_Nkosi even highlighted that @263Chat has since inspired ‘movements’ with similar ideals of encouraging and initiating citizen participation and dialogue to set-up Twitter accounts. These ‘movements’ which user @Ndle_nkosi is referring to are Twitter accounts such as @TribeOfTwimbos, @ZimVoices14 and @kubatana. User @Maqhawe_Mpofu on the other hand observes that @263Chat has made headway in encouraging free speech and/or freedom of expression which he argues is a foundational right for the enjoyment of all. @Maqhawe_Mpofu’s sentiments are shared by @Just_Midzi who also suggests that @263Chat is opening up conversations in a country where they are often guided or censored, or where one narrative is privileged over another. @bayhaus indicated that @263Chat is providing a platform for ordinary Zimbabweans in Zimbabwe and around the world to engage in issues affecting Zimbabwe. He also added that @263Chat was the go-to online platform to discuss current affairs within and those concerning Zimbabwe.

Similarly, @CamillaSibanda also added that @263Chat is a reliable source of online news as it tweets about the latest events in Zimbabwe. @CamillaSibanda also highlighted that unlike other news outlets @263Chat provided a space where one could actually deliberate and debate via the retweeting of opinions. @CamillaSibanda - *“From my perspective @263 chat is reliable online news outlet that tweets the latest events happening in Zimbabwe. Unlike other outlets you have access to a platform that allows to actually engage for example the retweeting of opinions which is different from other outlets that ignore any comments a user may make.”*

@Ndle_Nkosi echoes the same sentiments as @bayhaus that @263Chat as a platform for engagement amongst Zimbabweans in Zimbabwe and its diaspora. In addition, the topics for deliberation are suggested by Twimbos and usually depend on current news. Likewise, @Maqhawe_Mpofu suggests that @263Chat is a platform that allows Zimbabweans from different backgrounds, politically, economical and socially, to engage on current issues in Zimbabwe. He adds that @263Chat encourages people to speak. @Just_Midzi says that @263Chat is about opening up conversations in a country where they are often guided or censored, or where one narrative is privileged over another. @Just_Midzi – *“For me @263Chat is about opening up conversations in a country where they are often guided or censored, or where one narrative is privileged over another. Through the medium of Twitter and Facebook (but mostly Twitter), Zimbabweans both at home and in the diaspora are able to share ideas and information about the country. @263chat is tapping into the one thing Zimbabweans love to do - discuss the country and why we are where we are. While this is important, it's perhaps what different people decide to do after these conversations that matters the most.”* Therefore, through Twitter, Zimbabwean citizens both at home and in the diaspora are able to share ideas and information about the country.

I chose to use the example of Stansly Maponga because although it does not specifically stir any political deliberation among Zimbabwean citizens, the subject stems from the economic and political displacement some Zimbabweans find themselves in at present. Interestingly the Twitter outburst about Maponga's comments about growing up in Zimbabwe before he moved to the United States of America (USA) were enough for him to issue an apology to his fellow countrymen and women. Maponga issued the apology as a result of the Twitter fallout he experienced with Twimbos (Zimbabweans on Twitter). Fig 4.10 shows a screenshot of his Instagram account where Maponga apologises.

A political deliberation example is shown where the hashtag #BringBackOurEconomy was used to deliberate about Zimbabwe's comatose economy. However, in this example the conversations were not initiated by @263Chat but rather started with a tweet from a Zimbabwean politician and it resulted in dialogue on @263Chat. Here the talking, discussing, debating, and/or deliberating by Zimbabwean citizens was political and again it occurred on @263Chat. In addition, the hashtag #BringBackOurEconomy was perhaps inspired by Zimbabwean politician Professor Johnathan Moyo who has suggested that any discussion around the ailing economy was not as important as repatriating the skulls of Zimbabwean liberation legends, Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi, from the United Kingdom (UK)

museums. Fig 4.11 shows Professor Jonathan Moyo's remarks. After these remarks Zimbabweans took to twitter via @263Chat to express their dismay at such an utterance and this time they were aided by the hashtag #BringBackOurEconomy. Fig 4.12 shows some comments which were accompanied by the hashtag and were also largely tweeted onto the @263Chat platform.

What is noticeable here is that there is no conversation, dialogue or any turn-taking, but rather there seems to be unity for a common purpose which is to highlight the problems of the Zimbabwean economy. The absence of conversations, dialogue or turn-taking here is down to the fact that when hashtags are used the response that they receive is that other users simply tweet their opinions on the particular topic the hashtag is representing with the tweet containing the hashtag. When a hashtag is trending the use of mentions is absent thus there is no dialogue among individuals who either follow each other on Twitter or not. Unfortunately, there is no apology issued by Professor Jonathan Moyo even though his remarks were viewed as being negative by some twitter users in Zimbabwe. Some users even went as far as lambasting Professor Moyo for his 'off the cuff' comments as Fig 4.13 will show where user @ruziwahastings tweets to Professor Moyo stating that his statement is unacceptable.



The tweet by @ruziwahastings is in Shona and it translates to '*this is an unacceptable statement; let us see if you will still tweet this nonsense if you lose your job*'.

From the interviews there seems to be an indication that political deliberation was centred on Zimbabwean political leaders. However, one interviewee was frustrated by not being able to set a political agenda and instead had become reactionary. @finkynm indicated that as an individual they did not possess the ability to set the agenda of the media and thus they had become reactionary. In addition, @finkynm highlighted that the major players in Zimbabwean politics are the ones that usually make the news, with Zanu-PF politicians

dominating. On the other hand, @CamillaSibanda similarly indicated that the topics deliberated upon on @263Chat are largely political and are centred on political leaders. However, @CamillaSibanda said she is concerned with the Zimbabwean media's lack of addressing those outside politics as it implies that they do not exist outside of the political. @CamillaSibanda suggests that youth should be featured prominently on media coverage and even on @263Chat's deliberations as they are the future of the country.

User @Maqhawe_Mpofu is however not convinced that conversations on @263Chat are absolutely coherent and says that there is a room for improvement if all users can focus on one topic at a time and ultimately come to a resolution. @finkynm on the other hand suggests that her interactions on @263Chat have been comprehensive and says that the good thing about Twitter is that even when you pursue a topic that was started by another user and that user decides to leave the conversation, other people can carry the conversation forward.. For @Musvanhiri the interactions highly constitute actual conversations but there is a challenge in translating those conversations in the virtual space to action. @Musvanhiri - *"The interactions highly constitute actual conversations but there is a challenge of translating conversations from the virtual space to action. People can rant about poor service delivery on twitter but this does not mean, the conversations are then transferred to action where they can be taken to the relevant authority."*

@Just_Midzi on the other hand says that that the different nature of individuals sometimes hampers the conversations, but the problem on Twitter is that sometimes there are users who seem determined to misunderstand things.

The second of the five discursive participation principal characteristics is participation and in this instance the engagement on @263Chat. Here it is similar to the first characteristic of talking, discussing, debating, and/or deliberating. However, here I am concerned with the form of these actions as participation. Talking in public with other citizens is a form of participation, and it can be argued that talking provides the opportunity for individuals to develop and express their views, learn the positions of others, identify shared concerns and preferences, and come to understand and reach judgments about matters of public concern.

Therefore, such exchanges are a central way of clarifying and negotiating deep divisions over material interests and moral values because so many citizens have withdrawn from electoral and legislative politics. Moreover, they are also critical for publicly airing disagreements that have not been articulated or have been incompletely stated. Consequently, it can be argued

that there was evidence of participation by Zimbabwean citizens on Twitter via @263Chat. However, various scholars, (Brady 1999, Ladd 2000, Putnam 2000, Skocpol & Fiorina 2000), have argued that civic and political participation has become more sensitive to the variety of ways in which citizens can act, they seldom include talk as a measure of engagement, focusing instead on activities such as voting, attending rallies, working for a political party, lobbying, joining and actively participating in voluntary organizations, and protesting. The dialogue which occurred on @263Chat which I presented on earlier points to what scholars (Benhabib 1992, 1996; Dryzek 1990; Elster 1998; Etzioni 1997; Gutmann & Thompson 1996; Habermas 1989; Michelman 1988) have suggested is a form of participation; talking in public with other citizens. Here the citizens who engaged with each other on Twitter, it could be argued, were provided with the opportunity as individuals to develop and express their views, learn the positions of others, identify shared concerns and preferences, and come to understand and reach judgments about matters of public concern.

The interviewees indicated that they go onto Twitter as a public space because traditional spaces have been restricted. In addition, the interviewees underlined that @263Chat was an alternative public space. The responses gathered from the interviews also indicated that participation and conversations are dependent on who you follow and who follows you. @CamillaSibanda pointed out that for any one person to actually have meaningful conversations it heavily depended on the people you followed and those who followed you. In addition, @CamillaSibanda stated that there was a lot she had learnt from the @263Chat without necessarily having had to engage in any deliberations. On the other hand, @bayhaus stated that he did not see any evidence of conversations on @263Chat and he went on to compare the account to @CurateZIM which he said gave participants a chance to lead certain discussions on a weekly basis. @Ndle_Nkosi found most of the dialogues interesting and useful as it was easy to follow conversation threads and to sometimes search for conversations using the appropriate hashtags. He however, decried the fact that trolls always try and hijack conversations, with @SirNige, the founder of @263Chat, however managing to control the engagements in a constructive manner.

I observed that @263Chat used to host weekly chats on Tuesdays at 18h00 Zimbabwean time. These chats initiated conversations around current news events in Zimbabwe. @Ndle_Nkosi says that since then @263Chat seems to have turned into a communications media company which now partners with embassies and corporate companies in Zimbabwe. @ZaneleM_ adds that these Tuesday evening chats were highly structured and allowed for

conversations to take place in a coherent manner and allowed for actual conversations and exchanges of ideas. @bayhaus suggested that the conversations on @263Chat are free and open something which cannot be said for most of the media in Zimbabwe where interactions on them by Zimbabweans are done with fear of regulation and censorship. @ZaneleM_ on the other hand commends @263Chat's reach across Zimbabwe saying the exposure and access to the opinions of different demographics is important for political growth and democracy in the country. @ZaneleM_ - *"I like 263Chat because of the reach that it has. It is nice to have exposure and access to the opinions of different demographics. In my experience, Zimbabweans associate along socio-economic lines. So while we may have these conversations in our social circles, 263Chat gives a wider range. It is a great way to crowd source information."*

There was no evidence of the occurrence of Delli Carpini et al's (2004) third characteristic of discursive participation, which includes but is not limited to the formal institutions and processes of civic and political life, during the qualitative content analysis I carried out. Here, private individuals can be involved in informal, unplanned exchanges; that is, those who convene for public purposes but do so outside the normal processes of government operations. Examples of such places are listed by Delli Carpini et al (2004:219) as libraries, schools, homes, churches, and community centres; and those who are brought together in settings such as town hall meetings of political representatives and their constituents. Due to the fluid nature of the Internet and the fact that it can be found in the places listed by Delli Carpini et al (2004), it can be argued that social media in the form of Twitter can be one of these places where private individuals deliberate. This is in addition to that formal spaces in Zimbabwe are so controlled that it is not possible to use them for deliberation and so therefore one sees the increase in alternative spaces and the value of @263chat as an alternative space. Nevertheless, one interviewee indicated that @263Chat has become a site for venting, and complaining, although offering solutions and asking questions. @ZaneleM_ _ says that @263Chat reflects the current situation in Zimbabwe as political topics move users to engage vigorously online. She highlights that the range of topics has also expanded to previously taboo topics such as homosexuality, President Robert Mugabe's health and potential successor etc. The fourth characteristic of discursive participation is that deliberations can occur through a variety of media which includes face-to-face exchanges, phone conversations, email exchanges, and internet forums.

The fifth and last discursive participation characteristic is focused on local, national, and international issues of public concern. In Zimbabwe the local and national issues are can be found in the mainstream media. However, this mainstream media is regulated and censored so therefore freedom of speech is impeded upon. Thus, @263Chat is focused firstly on local and national issues of public concern as they indicate that; “when it comes to Zimbabwe, there are often misconceptions about the reality on the ground and thus 263Chat was created to encourage and participate in the much-needed dialogue focused solely on Zimbabwe” (<http://263chat.com/about-us/>, 2015). Although Twitter is not considered a formal space for deliberation according to Delli Carpini et al (2004) – it is a valuable space precisely because there are no formal spaces in Zimbabwe where these discussions can take place and therefore @263Chat has become that alternative platform for citizens.

In the examples I gave earlier, the controversy of Stansly Maponga and the hashtag #BringBackOurEconomy, had deliberations which were focused on issues of local and national interest.

In the instance of international issues of public concern @263Chat only seems to tweet online newspaper stories which get no fewer than 5 retweets at most, a single comment or a single like. I should also note that the online newspaper stories that get tweeted by @263Chat are only local Zimbabwean dailies, both independent and state-controlled. There is however a marked trend by @263Chat to tweet news stories from Africa more than it tweets those stories outside of Africa. At the time of writing an international issue of public concern were the Paris bombings which occurred on the 13th of November 2015 and have since claimed 120 lives. An example of this can be found at Fig 4.14. Figures 4.15, 4.16 and 4.17 are examples of how @263Chat tweeting stories from and about Africa also don't generate a lot of interest among Zimbabwean citizens on Twitter.

From the interviewees the response I received which perhaps indicates the fifth discursive participation characteristic, which suggests a focus on local, national, and international issues of public concern, is why the interviewees used @263chat. Frustration with the political situation in Zimbabwe was one of the reasons some engaged on @263Chat as they found it to be an outlet to vent their frustrations as most media is censored and regulated by the government of Zimbabwe. This in particular would point to why there seems to always be more discussion around local and national issues rather than international because these are more important to Zimbabwean citizens who have nowhere else to debate and discuss the

issues which affect them directly. Venting on @263Chat is therapeutic for some; others find it is a useful way of ‘crowd sourcing information.’ @CamillaSibanda said that at most times she engaged in political conversations on @263Chat out of frustration and out of a need to understand why things were the way they were. @Ndle_Nkosi on the other hand indicated that he likes to hear other Twimbos’ views on pressing issues and to see if together as Zimbabweans they can come up with possible solutions, idealistic or practical, to some of the problems bedeviling the country. For @Ndle_Nkosi, who says he is outside the country it helps him keep a pulse on issues in Zimbabwe. He also adds that the collective venting on @263Chat is “strangely therapeutic”.

4.4 Discussion

Papacharissi (2002) theorises that the utopian rhetoric that surrounds new media technologies promises further democratisation of the post-industrial society. Thus, the Internet and other related technologies can augment avenues for personal expression and promote citizen activity. New technologies provide information and tools that may extend the role of the public in the social and political arena. Bowen (1996) and Browning (1996) both argue that the explosion of online political groups and activism certainly reflects political uses of the Internet. Proponents of cyberspace promise that online discourse will increase political participation and pave the way for a democratic utopia. According to them, the alleged decline of the public sphere lamented by academics, politicians, and several members of the public will be halted by the democratizing effects of the Internet and its surrounding technologies.

Price (2006) says that the capacities of ordinary citizens to engage in successful political give and-take, and thus to participate in meaningful deliberative democracy have been debated for some time. Even those espousing great faith in the deliberative citizen, however, have expressed doubts about the suitability of online, text-based exchanges for meaningful and constructive political discussion. Some argue that the impersonal nature of computerized communication renders it poorly suited to developing meaningful relationships, encourages uncivil discourse, facilitates diffusion of unverified information, and ultimately serves to polarize opinions rather than support finding common ground. Thus, this study started on the premise that Zimbabwe's restricted democratic space has since produced a variety of alternative public spheres that enable groups and individuals to participate and engage in the wider debate on the ever increasing crisis gripping the country since the turn of the century. I

have identified @263Chat as one such variety of an alternative public sphere which I have then used as a case study for this research. Zimbabwean citizens use @263Chat to come together in cyberspace to participate in the larger debate on the unfolding crisis in the country.

@263Chat is initiating and encouraging conversations among those Zimbabweans who are online and these discussions among the citizens are what Fishkin (1991, 1995) says is the foundation of sound public opinion. The discussions @263Chat initiates are found to expand the range of ideas and arguments brought to bear on social, political, and economic issues (Gutmann and Thompson 1996), in addition citizens are forced to consider and defend their views whilst fostering an understanding of multiple points of view.

As stated earlier in this research Zimbabwe has a closed ‘legacy’ news media which are highly restricted, and most of the major news outlets are controlled by the state. In addition to the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) of 2002 the intolerance exhibited by the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) in dealing with dissenting voices has limited freedom of speech and sound political deliberations. Mporu (2015) argues that the Internet in Zimbabwe has partially liberated political debates that have been suppressed by ZANU-PF, and concludes that there is a possibility of digital media being central to public deliberations in Zimbabwe — both for political and social deliberations. The findings indicated that Zimbabweans use of Twitter for political deliberations was rich. There was also a noticeable proliferation of Zimbabwean Twitter accounts which claimed to encourage citizen participation and aid in the democratisation of Zimbabwe, or in simple terms give Zimbabweans a voice.

In sum, the findings suggest that @263Chat as a Twitter account supports a variety of communicative practices; participants use @263Chat to converse with individuals, groups, and the public at large, so when conversations emerge, they are often experienced by broader audiences other than just the individuals engaged in a particular interchange. The most sociologically interesting feature of Twitter is the ‘mentions’ which allow users to have actual conversations which in turn were largely the object of this research I conducted. Mentions are any tweets that contain a username or tweets with replies (Boyd et al, 2008: 1) and they allow for dialogue among individuals who either follow each other on Twitter or do not follow each other. In the context of Zimbabwe, the Internet and its interactivity is found to have influenced dialogic, deliberative, communicative and democratic ideals via the

@263Chat Twitter account. As opposed to the legacy media in Zimbabwe, the Internet through @263Chat allows citizens to engage in online discussions on significant public matters with like-minded individuals, regardless of physical and geographical constraints. Internet users share common interests, discuss public affairs, and deliberate about contentious issues. Moreover, they can have real-time conversations with politicians regarding political issues that emerge as crucial in the public domain. These real-time conversations mean that democracy is not just about politicians but it's about the role citizens now play as the sustaining members of a democracy.

4.5 Limitations

In this section I will discuss the overall implications of the findings of the current research. The limitations in the research design and methods of data analysis are also discussed, and recommendations are made for future research, particularly within a Zimbabwean context. Moreover, I will also propose suggestions for future possible research. This research on Twitter and Zimbabwe is the first of its kind and I would like to point out that there has been a lack of reliable data on Twitter studies conducted in Zimbabwe due to the fact that there is a lack of prior research studies which could have assisted me in the process. Previous studies, in the Zimbabwean context, on social media and political deliberation have only used Facebook as a case study.

I draw the first limitation of this research from the sample size. The number of interviewees was meant to be 10 but I ended up having only 9 participants. This was a small number of interviewees when compared to the fact that @263Chat has 81 200 followers and so therefore the findings cannot entirely establish how @263Chat is contributing to conversations around politics. The second limitation has been the unwillingness of the founder of @263Chat, Nigel Mugamu, to be interviewed about his project; unfortunately he did not provide reasons as to why he was not keen on interviews. This was a limitation in the sense that information provided by the founder of 263Chat could be useful to this particular study.

4.7 Conclusion

Using Delli Carpini et al's (2004) conceptualisation of discursive participation in five principal characteristics the data and findings I have collected indicate that @263Chat is viewed as a safe space for political deliberations. @263Chat is a safe space because it is viewed as a platform or media space where those Zimbabwean citizens who are online can

vent their frustrations specifically about national and local issues without the fear of censorship and regulation by the government. Similarly, @Just_Midzi suggests that @263Chat is providing a space where there can be deliberations which are not guided or censored, or where one narrative is privileged over another. In addition, one of the major findings has been that @263Chat is inspiring discourse among Zimbabweans citizens both home and abroad. Some @263Chat users such as @Maqhawe_Mpofu observe that @263Chat has made headway in encouraging free speech and/or freedom of expression which is a foundational right enshrined in the Zimbabwean constitution. The political topics which are mostly prominent on @263Chat are those that include ZANU-PF, the succession debate on who is going to replace President Robert Mugabe, corruption, accountability and so on. However, some participants on @263Chat said that they were left frustrated by not being able to set an agenda for deliberation on @263Chat. Despite trolls being found on @263Chat the account provides for a space where serious political deliberations take place.

More figures found in Appendix number 2 page 67

Chapter 5 – Summary, and Concluding Remarks

5.1 Introduction

Since its first public release in 2006, Twitter has established itself as the leading micro-blogging platform in most parts of the world. Lievrouw (2002) argues that Twitter's widespread adoption and integration with other parts of the digital networked media ecosystem have sparked public debate, pop-cultural responses, and academic research. In addition, van Dijck (2011) says that like other 'new media,' Twitter is both underdetermined and recombinant which makes it subject to the interpretative flexibility of the particular social groups involved in developing and appropriating the technology and thus there are many different practices of Twitter use. In addition to being a versatile communications platform to users around the globe, Twitter is also an excellent source of current information according to Gaffney and Puschmann (2014). The data extracted from Twitter is used by researchers with different backgrounds (pollsters, marketers, academics from different disciplines) to answer a variety of questions, ranging from simple information about particular users or events to complex queries. Some studies examine select individuals or small communities, while others require large volumes of information collected over long periods. The study I undertook on this research examined @263Chat as a case study and it can be argued that the users of that particular Twitter account, who are Zimbabwean citizens, are a community.

This study set out to analyse the political deliberations of Zimbabwean citizens on @263Chat by paying particular attention to the conversations, the turn-taking, and dialogues which occurred in that particular space. The study was guided by questions which sought to find out what kind of political topics feature prominently on @263Chat and how these influence the citizens' contribution to alternative discourse in and on Zimbabwe. In addition, the study was also interested on how politics was spoken about on @263Chat, the extent to which political tweets received responses, and to determine how extended the 'conversations' on political themes are. Finally, the study also posed questions on whether the interactions on @263Chat constituted actual conversations, sought to find out why those Zimbabwean citizens who are online engaged in political conversations and what they hope to achieve.

In sum, Twitter is an awareness system that allows for an immediate, fast, and widespread dissemination of information (Kwak et al, 2010). The platform offers diverse means to share news from various sources, resulting in a stream of information, opinions, and emotions (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012) that presents a multifaceted experience of ambient

news (Hermida, 2010). We find that within political discourses, various political actors as well as individuals use Twitter to spread information on political events and to state their opinions (Small, 2011). Therefore, the Twitter stream potentially provides multiple viewpoints on political debates (Yardi & Boyd, 2010), and holds unique opportunities to structure those debates by the use of common hashtags (Bruns, 2012). Hashtag-driven political discourses are largely connected to events reported by mass media, at least in terms of topics taken up and quantity of messages sent (Bruns & Burgess, 2011; Larsson & Moe, 2011). Despite this connection, the Twitter agenda is likely to differ from the media agenda, because “events and themes are filtered through the community’s own established interests and news frames, resulting in a distribution of attention that is different from that of the mainstream media or of general public debate” (Bruns & Burgess, 2011:45).

5.2 Summary

From the findings @263Chat, which aims to encourage dialogue and participation among Zimbabwean citizens who are online, appeared to meet the mandate it set up to do. The interviews which I held indicated that @263Chat provided a platform for ordinary Zimbabweans in the country and the globe to engage in issues concerning Zimbabwe. The most notable thing about how @263Chat is perceived was that interviewee’s suggested that @263Chat was the go-to online platform to discuss current affairs, which is reliable, and hands-on in tweeting about the latest developments in Zimbabwe. User @Ndle_Nkosi provided a detailed summary of that assertion of saying @263Chat *“is a platform for engagement amongst Zimbabweans in Zimbabwe and its diaspora. It was started in 2012 as a tool to engage on topical issues in Zimbabwe, with topics suggested by the creator of the platform, @SirNige, or suggested by fellow “Twimbos” depending on what was in the news”* (@Ndle_Nkosi, 2015). @263Chat was also hailed as a unifier of some sort as it allowed Zimbabwean citizens from different political, social, and economic backgrounds to have civil conversations online. In addition, Zimbabwe which is viewed as a conservative country, has seen @263Chat emerge as a space for dialogue where taboo topics are freely discussed without any fear of judgement, reprisals or censorship.

In terms of political deliberation on @263Chat, politicians, policy making, service delivery, accountability of public office bearers and foreign investment in Zimbabwe, dominated the narrative of the conversations and or dialogues on the Twitter account. One politician in particular, Professor Johnathan Moyo, seems to always draw the ire of many Zimbabwean

citizens due to his controversial tweets or off the cuff remarks. Some users of @263Chat however pointed out that as the conversations on @263Chat were largely dominated by politicians; it was of concern as it suggested that the citizens themselves did not exist outside of the political spectrum. Given the choice to set the agenda for conversations user @CamillaSibanda suggested that she would like a discussion on free and fair elections, the state of Zimbabwean education, national language policies, freedom of association, press freedom and freedom of expression and two other highly controversial subjects in Zimbabwe; Gukurahundi and President Mugabe's succession plan. Politics is discussed in a non-partisan way on @263Chat and is seriously debated although many are guarded in the way they discuss issues - given the hazardous political landscape in Zimbabwe - others are more open in their criticism of the government. These 'others' are usually those who are based in the diaspora where it is thought to be safe from the government of Zimbabwe and its laws which severely restrict media freedoms. User @Musvanhiri says, "*The platform rarely engages in cheap and pedestrian talk or chat. Over the years, there has been a growth of mature conversations involving politicians, policy makers and even foreign dignitaries. However this is not to say social or entertainment issues are not discussed.*" This was found to be true during the qualitative content analysis I carried out on @263Chat. The interactions observed on @263Chat constituted conversations which had coherent dialogues. However, the challenge was in translating conversations from the virtual space to action. The dialogues were found to be interesting and useful with the added advantage of ease of following conversation threads via hashtags. User @finkynm says "*The interactions that I've been part of have been comprehensive. The good thing about Twitter is that even when you pursue a topic that was started by another handle there will always be other people to carry the conversation forward. There have been instances where I join a chain of tweets only to realise that the discussion was initiated by @263Chat.*" In sum, @263Chat has stirred conversations online for those Zimbabweans who are on Twitter.

Why have I studied Twitter in relation to Zimbabwe? It is a global phenomenon, growing in users and posts every day and it is increasingly entrenched in our media ecology, an instrument that few politicians, journalists, or marketers would want to miss. Moreover, through Twitter, researchers gain access to huge volumes of data, a treasure trove of digital traces, waiting to be mined for precious insights into people's behaviours, their moods, their consumption patterns, their language, and their voting behaviours. Puschmann et al (2014) argue that more social scientists should study Twitter because social media platforms are

increasingly influencing certain aspects of our lives, as they can be increasingly accessed from whenever and wherever, and millions of individuals around the globe use them. Furthermore, Twitter's embeddedness in everyday social and communicative interactions across so many nations of the developed world, and its role as a very public, global, real-time communications channel highlight the fact that it—alongside other major social media, like Facebook or YouTube—provides a window on contemporary society as such, at national and global levels.

This research determined that deliberation is more than a mere exchange of words. It should be reciprocal, reasonable, and open-minded. Although Twitter has mostly been regarded as a platform for the diffusion of information and personal opinion for individual or corporate interests, new and creative modes of interpersonal exchange patterns are increasingly leading to the perspective of Twitter as a platform for political debate and deliberation. Due to its format and technological frame, Twitter can even be seen as highly relevant for public reasoning around social contention. Proper deliberation extends beyond the mere consideration of reasons for actions. It also requires considering reasons against the contemplated actions. Considering, and weighing, pros and cons distinguishes deliberation from other forms of reasoning. Therefore, the Internet makes possible all kinds and quantities of communication and coordination that are unprecedented in human history. Through these portals people can learn about others in exciting new ways. Thus, the Internet domain has great untapped potential for transforming social life. With regard to inclusiveness, the internet allows for many-to-many communication, transcends geographical confines, grants users unprecedented control over content, and allows them to easily seek out and share information.

5.3 Concluding Remarks

@263Chat has helped those Zimbabweans who are online counter the effects of the Zimbabwean governments' plethora of laws such as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the Miscellaneous Offenses Act, which severely limit public debate and criticism of government. As this heavy regulation of the political space curtails citizens' right to freely participate and debate pertinent political issues, @263Chat now acts as a space where political deliberations take place without fear of censorship or reprisals. Discussion among citizens is thought to be the foundation of sound public opinion. Opinions formed in isolation, without the benefit of deliberation and debate, may reflect mass preferences; but without the

back and forth of disagreement and discussion, one does not have true public opinion (Fishkin 1991, 1995). Thus, social media is a phenomenon that has transformed the interaction and communication of individuals. In the past five years, social media websites have become ubiquitous, giving people a new way to interact with each other and communicate globally. In sum, use of social media web sites has increased the channels of communication and effectiveness in some organizations. Now people do not have to waste their time as it has become easy for a person to send messages through instant message services or a tweet and get the response quickly.

Social media has also improved collaboration and acts as a source that allows people to generate and share their ideas. In social media, people have the opportunity to express their opinions to the public and participate in conversations and dialogue through a common virtual medium. Social media can thus be argued to aid in democracy which is not just about elections, or politicians, but the role we each play as citizens, as leaders, as public translators, as watchdogs, and as the sustaining members of a democracy. Democracy is about people taking charge of the conditions under which they live. Effective democracy is rooted primarily in people. The Zimbabwean political environment is not conducive to open citizen participation, free speech and the freedoms of expression, association and assembly are heavily curtailed. Citizens who publicly express political opinions critical of the establishment are regularly subjected to arrest or harassment. It can thus be argued that Zimbabwe is not democratic since it does not allow for unrestricted and uncensored spaces for free deliberations for its citizens. However the Internet and social media, in particular the @263Chat Twitter account has in part liberated a space for freedom of expression.

Appendix 1

Interview Questions with abstract sent out via email to participants.

Twitter use in Zimbabwe is very vibrant and it even has its own name, 'Zwitter.' The users of Zwitter refer to themselves as 'Twimbos.' Of note is that it is also divided into two reference points: 'Young Twitter' and 'Old Twitter.' Young Twitter is more inclined to social aspects i.e. entertainment, popular culture, memes, music, movies, TV shows (series), nudes, and twars (Twitter + wars). Old Twitter is politically inclined and critical; it has users who are rooted in active political and civic engagement.

Zimbabwe has a closed legacy news media which are highly restricted, and most of the major news outlets are controlled by the state. This is a direct result of the excessively harsh Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) of 2002 which curbs freedom of expression. Another limiting factor to any meaningful practice of deliberative democracy through the media and town hall debates is the intolerance of the ruling party ZANU-PF in dealing with dissenting voices. Thus in Zimbabwean politics, it can be argued that the internet has liberated political debates that have been suppressed and digital media is central to political and social deliberation.

Proponents of citizen deliberation argue that participation in deliberative forums, conventions, and panels has a positive impact on citizens' attitudes and behaviours. The potential benefits of deliberation include more informed and reflective judgments, a greater sense of political efficacy, and an increase in the frequency of political action. This paper will examine the deliberations and dialogues on the @263Chat Twitter account. 263Chat is a media company founded and created by Zimbabwean Nigel Mugamu in September 2012 to encourage political participation. '263' is a very strong identifier for most, if not all, Zimbabweans, especially those in the diaspora. It is the area code of the country, and it creates a sense of nostalgia and community for them.

Topics on @263Chat include, but are not limited to; sport, food, the weather, fashion, sexual indulgences and intimacy and so on, but debates around politics appear to capture almost everyone's attention. In using @263Chat as a case study, this paper will explore the political deliberations of Zimbabwean citizens in their construction and talking of politics and to find out whether there is listening as well as speaking in this space. Ultimately the research aims to find out whether there are conversations, turn-taking, and dialogues-all features of deliberations- on the @263Chat Twitter platform.

Interview Questions for @263Chat

1. What is @263Chat and what is it doing for conversations in and about Zimbabwe?
2. What kind of political topics are prominent and would you like to be prominent on @263Chat?
3. Is there any particular way politics is spoken about? Is politics seriously debated on @263Chat or is the space used for trolling, and talking about entertainment, popular culture, memes, music, movies, TV shows, nudes, and twars?
4. Have the interactions you have had constituted actual conversations i.e. is there turn-taking, and has the dialogue been coherent?
5. Is there a particular reason you engage in political conversations particularly on @263Chat and if you do what are you hoping to achieve by this?

Figures from Chapter 3: Methodology

Fig 3.1

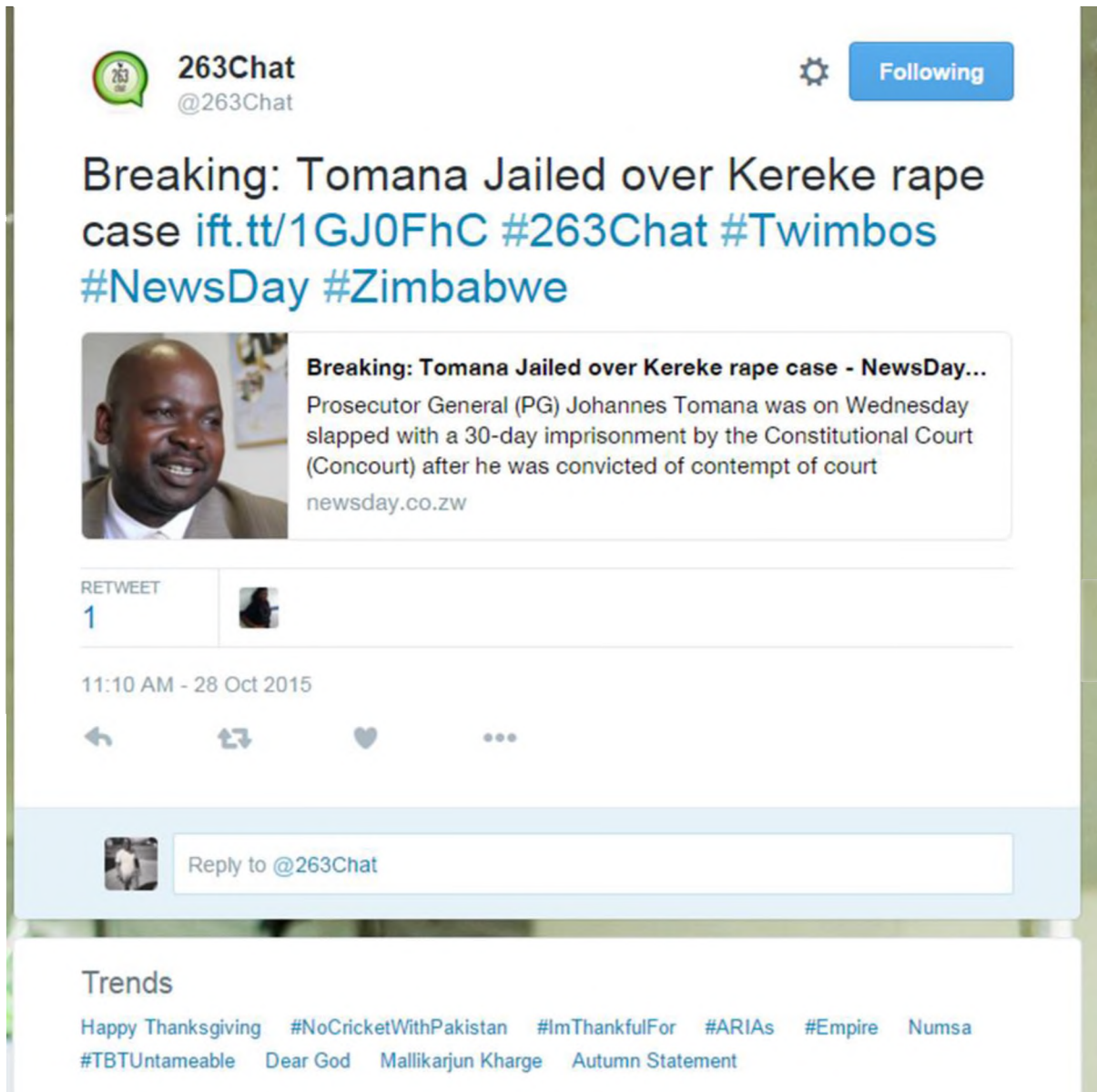


Fig 3.2

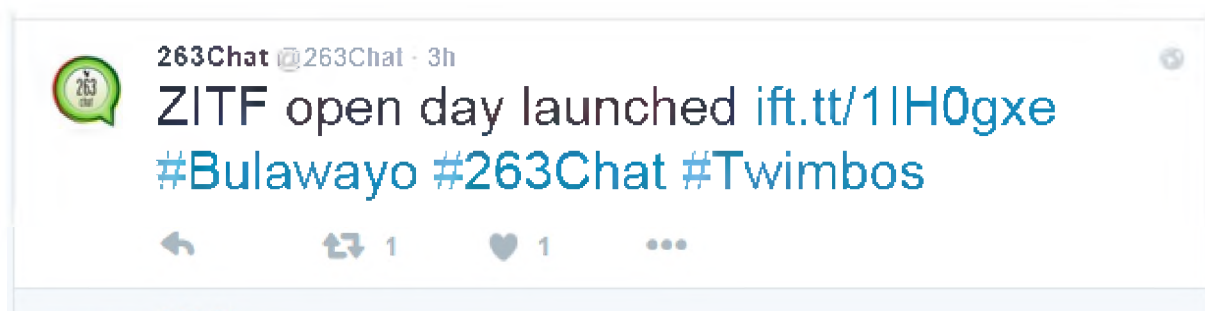


Fig 3.3

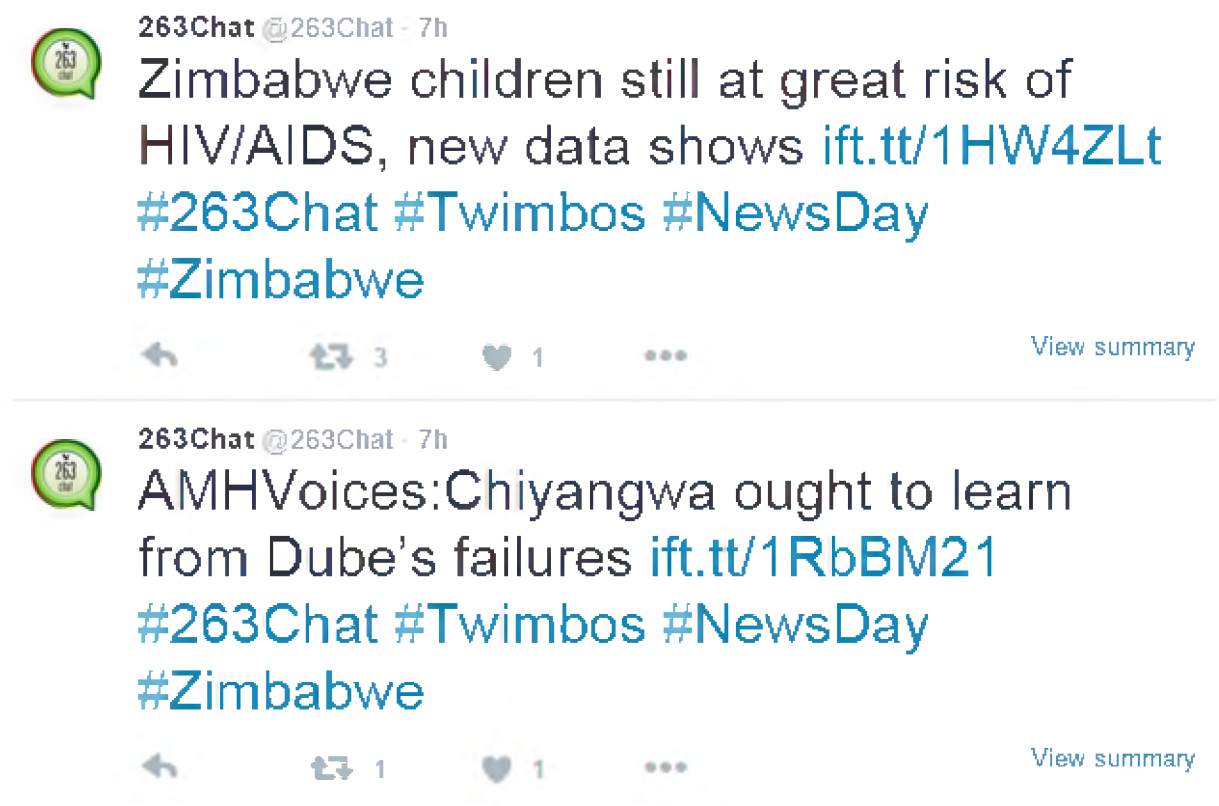


Fig 3.4

The image is a screenshot of a Twitter search results page for the hashtag #BringBackOurEconomy. At the top, there is a blue header with the hashtag text. Below the header, there are navigation tabs for 'Top', 'Live', 'Accounts', 'Photos', 'Videos', and 'More options'. The main content area displays a list of tweets. The first tweet is from Daniya Saad (@simplydaniya) dated Nov 19, with a photo of a landscape and text expressing a wish for a change in leadership. The second tweet is from ORE (@trojcity) dated Nov 19, which includes a quote from John Sampson (@JohnStarrone) discussing the order of bringing back soldiers, girls, and fuel. The third tweet is from Uchenna 5% (@Demoore90210) dated Nov 19, mentioning a trending hashtag and a Boko Haram incident. The fourth tweet is from Sbosh Zuma (@ComradeSwirri) dated Oct 23, with a 'VOTE ANC' poster and text criticizing the ANC's economic policies. The fifth tweet is from OkaNcube (@Mzilankatha_) dated Sep 18, with a portrait of Robert Mugabe and text about Zimbabwe's economic situation. Each tweet includes interaction icons for reply, retweet, like, and more options.

#BringBackOurEconomy

Top | Live | Accounts | Photos | Videos | More options ▾

Daniya Saad @simplydaniya · Nov 19
I wish they CHANGED only GEJ and left the economic team. There're so many things to bring back. #BringBackOurSoldiers #BringBackOurEconomy

ORE @trojcity · Nov 19
Add #BringBackOurEconomy

John Sampson @JohnStarrone
If you MUST #BringBackOurGirls. Then #BringBackOurSoldiers. And then #BringBackOurLight. And thereafter #BringBackOurFuel

Sir Nigel follows

Uchenna 5% @Demoore90210 · Nov 19
#BringBackOurSoldiers trending? 105 soldiers missing after intense battle w/ Boko Haram 🚒
Pls let's trend #BringBackOurEconomy after this

NationalCoGTA and 2 others follow

Sbosh Zuma @ComradeSwirri · Oct 23
I will tell you what the ANC failed to do. Yes they failed to #BringBackOurEconomy and treated white capitalists with kid gloves. THEY FAILED

Cheryl Khuphe and 19 others follow

OkaNcube @Mzilankatha_ · Sep 18
@LivingZimbabwe its a dog eat dog situation. Until Zimababwe is delivered from evil, we shall never find rest. #BringBackOurEconomy

View conversation

Fig 3.5

The image shows a screenshot of a Twitter search results page for the hashtag #BringBackOurSkulls. The page has a blue header with the hashtag name. Below the header are navigation tabs: Top, Live, Accounts, Photos, Videos, and More options. The main content area displays a list of tweets. The first tweet is a retweet by Boyd (@Jeffreyshoniwa) from October 19, quoting a tweet by @Kuda_Chizura about load shedding. The second tweet is from CurateZIM | Mugove and 12 others, dated September 16, discussing the UK museum and wrong speech. The third tweet is from Alex T Magaisa (@Wamagaisa) dated September 12, mentioning a deliverable. The fourth tweet is from WeKwaMukotsanjera (@edmkotsaz) dated September 8, mentioning ProfJNMoyo. The fifth and sixth tweets are from briank.flatface (@Brianflatface) dated August 25, discussing the old man and SONA.

#BringBackOurSkulls

Top | Live | Accounts | Photos | Videos | More options ▾

Boyd @Jeffreyshoniwa · Oct 19
Retweeted **#BringBackOurSkulls** (@uQwa):
"@Kuda_Chizura: Sadza ne Polony
Hakuna lol" in these load shedding times...

CurateZIM | Mugove and 12 others follow
TransformZimbabwe @TransformZim · Sep 16
It must be those **#Skulls** in the UK museum huh??? Someone **#BringBackOurSkulls** to stop these embarrassing moments... **#WrongSpeech**

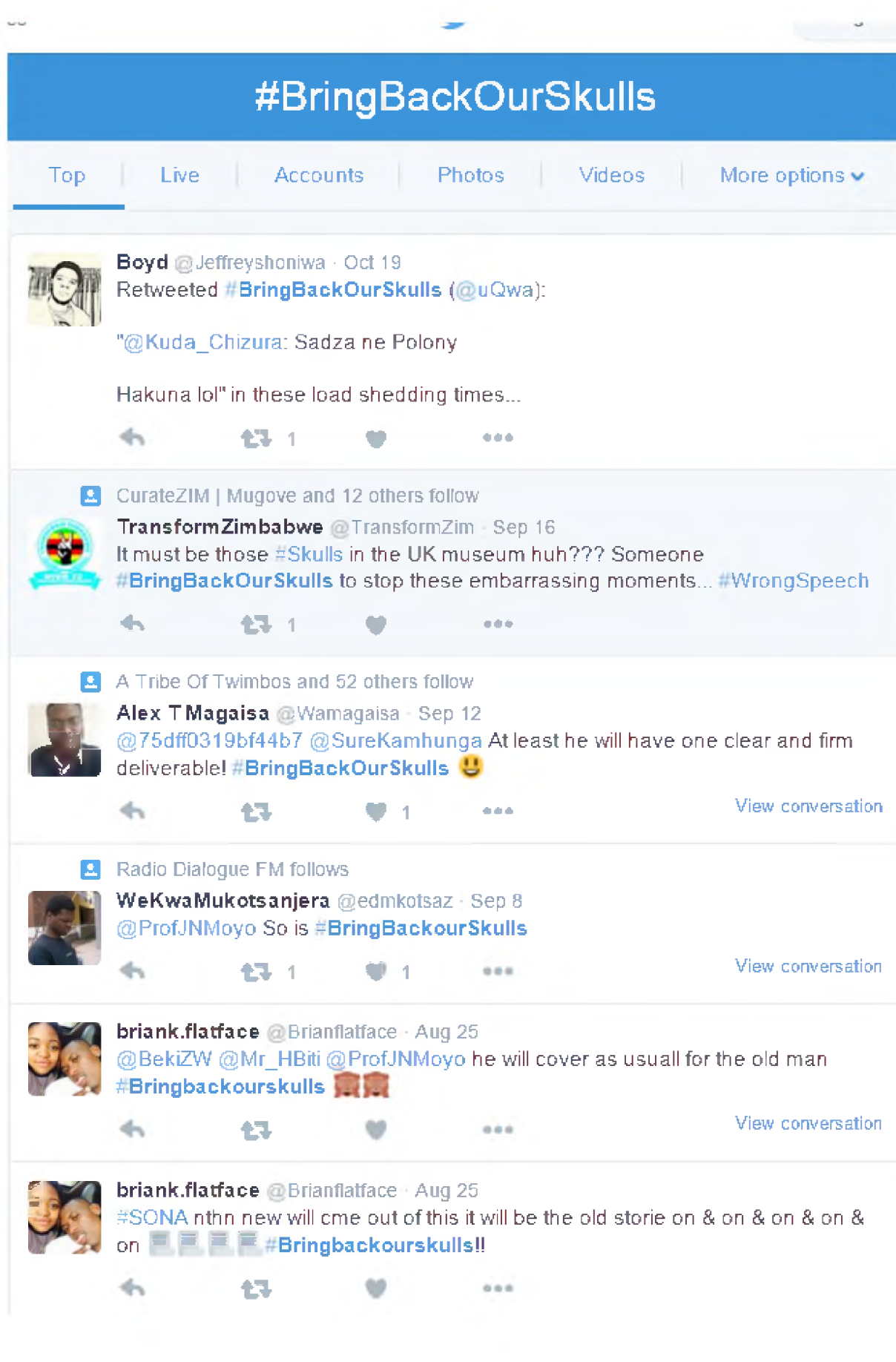
A Tribe Of Twimbos and 52 others follow
Alex T Magaisa @Wamagaisa · Sep 12
@75dff0319bf44b7 @SureKamhunga At least he will have one clear and firm deliverable! **#BringBackOurSkulls** 😊

Radio Dialogue FM follows
WeKwaMukotsanjera @edmkotsaz · Sep 8
@ProfJNMoyo So is **#BringBackourSkulls**

briank.flatface @Brianflatface · Aug 25
@BekiZW @Mr_HBiti @ProfJNMoyo he will cover as usual for the old man **#Bringbackourskulls** 🙏🙏

briank.flatface @Brianflatface · Aug 25
#SONA nthn new will cme out of this it will be the old storie on & on & on & on & on **#Bringbackourskulls!!**

Fig 3.6



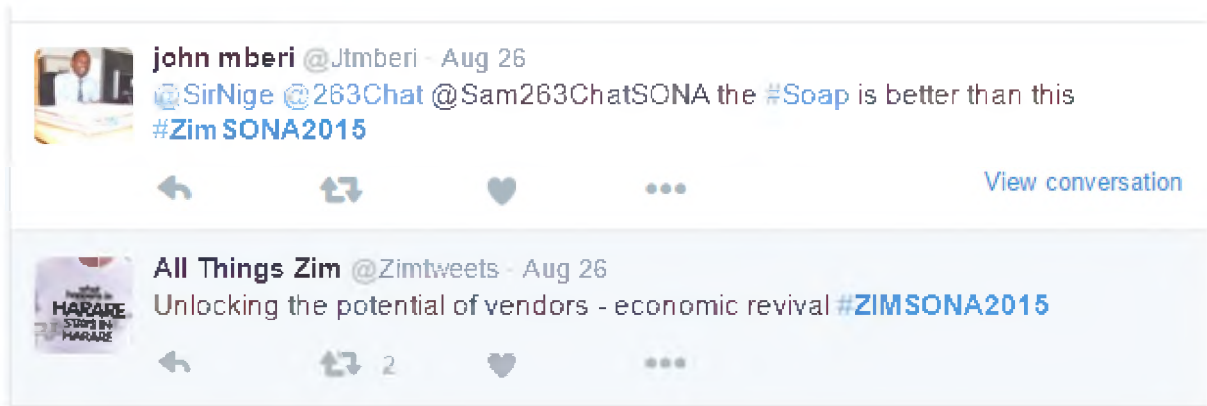


Fig 3.7



Fig 3.8



Papa Prophet Cynic.

@CynicHarare



 Follow

That one time you forgot it was civvies day at school...



RETWEETS
68

LIKES
21



Fig 3.9



Papa Prophet Cynic.

@CynicHarare



[Follow](#)

When the pastor is showing his congregation the benefits of tithes and offerings.









Fig 3.10






CCTV Africa on Twitter: "A" x (58) Twitter





39398400




Messages Search Twitter





 **@cctvnewsafrika**  **@CatrionaLaing1** They wanted my President to look silly. HE WILL NEVER BE COLONISED AGAIN!




  5  3 





 **Anuli Arinze**  **@anuli_arinze** · Oct 31
 **@JacobITM**  **@cctvnewsafrika**  **@CatrionaLaing1** Huh? Colonized? He's wearing a western suit...





  1  2 





 **Self-Made**  **@AchimPashi** · Oct 30
 **@BluryWells** he does and I honestly respect Him! The rest are just some any weak leaders





  1  3 





 **Olanrewaju**  **@Maczimus** · Oct 30
 **@cctvnewsafrika** Mugabe Baba. Respect dat man joor

   4 

 **homerC**  **@faryhc** · Oct 30
 **@cctvnewsafrika**  **@CatrionaLaing1** you don't have to always go with flow especially at 90 plus too late for peer pressure lol

   2 

 **طلحة TAL7A**  **@talha_abdi** · Oct 30
 **@cctvnewsafrika**  **@NajmaAli__** loool. For sure Mugabe didn't give a shit about dem clothes

   2 





 **MYCAL MUNASIA**  **@MycalMunasia** · Oct 30
 **@cctvnewsafrika**  **@SamuelKantai** Dressing !!! Was the purpose of the meeting?. Mugabe is being self,he's not there to please anyone.

Fig 3.11

263Chat @263Chat Following

Don't we all stumble sometimes though?

Itai @ionkid81
@263Chat you.tube/3TJkilsXEo4 As a Zimbo, I am worried to see my President failing to go up 1 step on a podium. This is embarrassing

RETWEET 1 LIKE 1

6:55 AM - 30 Oct 2015

Reply to @263Chat

Garikai Mlambo @mambogary · Oct 30
@263Chat @ionkid81 . Zanu Pf chefs ar heartless. How can they do tht to our President. Retiring him is the best option ever. He faired wel

Itai @ionkid81 · Oct 30
@263Chat we do, however the video shows someone out of control of his balance. 1 step up for crying out loud. They helped him down as well.

Fig 3.12 (original image has since been deleted)

Val
@LivingHerLife_

Follow

“@tee_tashian: When your parents break up but daddy missing mums cooking 😂
pic.twitter.com/kBNWrO3NBI” 😂😂😂😂
😂

RETWEETS
2

LIKE
1

12:50 PM - 31 Oct 2015

Nacogdoches, TX

Reply to @LivingHerLife_

Trends

Happy Thanksgiving #MacysParade #ImThankfulFor #NoCricketWithPakistan #Empire
#BaseHottestMC Numsa Dear God Autumn Statement Mallikarjun Kharge

Figures from Data and Findings

Fig 4.1



Fig 4.2

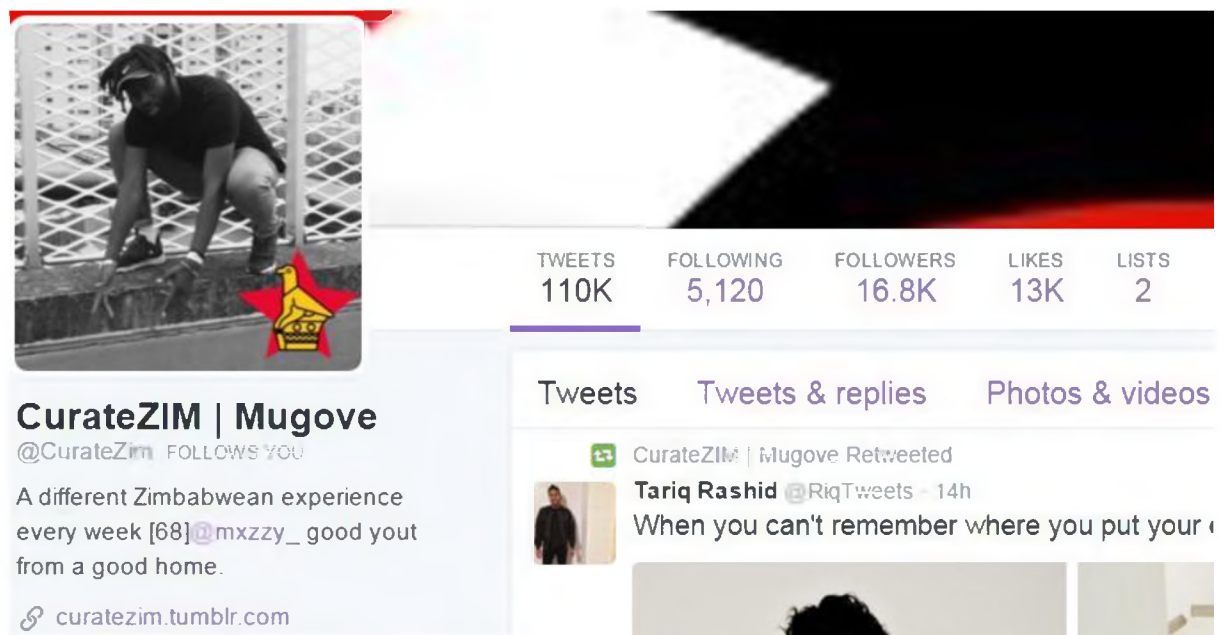


Fig 4.3



The screenshot shows the Twitter profile for the hashtag #BringItaiHome. The profile picture is a black square with the text "#Bring Itai Home" in a stylized font. The bio reads: "@kubatana FOLLOWS YOU", "Kubatana.net shares civic and human rights information on Zimbabwe", "Harare, Zimbabwe", "kubatana.net", and "Joined April 2009". The statistics are: TWEETS 13.2K, FOLLOWING 11.3K, FOLLOWERS 31.4K, LIKES 1,001, and LISTS 3. A pinned tweet is visible, dated Mar 10, with the text: "#BringItaiHome @kubatana #twimbos - Join us in asking #WhereIsItaiDzamarara Share pass it on @263Chat @Zim\

Fig 4.4



The screenshot shows the Twitter profile for CurateZIM | Mugove. The profile picture is a black and white photo of a person crouching on a ledge, with a red star logo in the bottom right corner. The bio reads: "@CurateZim FOLLOWS YOU", "A different Zimbabwean experience every week [68] @mxzzy_ good yout from a good home.", and "curatezim.tumblr.com". The statistics are: TWEETS 110K, FOLLOWING 5,120, FOLLOWERS 16.8K, LIKES 13K, and LISTS 2. A retweeted tweet is visible, dated 14h, with the text: "Tariq Rashid @RiqTweets - 14h When you can't remember where you put your c

Fig 4.5



umthwakaziReview
 @uMthwakaziRevie **FOLLOWS YOU**
 uMthwakazi Review: Pride of The Matebele Nation
umthwakaziReview.com
 Joined June 2012

TWEETS 1,391 FOLLOWING 1,937 FOLLOWERS 880 LIKES 32

Tweets Tweets & replies Photos & vi

umthwakaziReview @uMthwakaziRevie - Nov 25
 Ndebele cultural day loor
 uMthwakazi Review shar
 sharethis

Fig 4.6



Inotho Kwabatsha
 @InothoKwabatsha **FOLLOWS YOU**
 Inotho Kwabatsha is a Matebeleland Affirmative Action Organization with a vision to economically empower the youths of the Region.
 Zimbabwe

TWEETS 100 FOLLOWING 473 FOLLOWERS 171 LIKES 1

Tweets Tweets & replies Photos & videos

Inotho Kwabatsha @InothoKwabatsha - Sep 15
 Congratulations to Cde Patri
 his appointment as Minister of
 Indigenisation and Economic
fb.me/22fuLTWVR

Fig 4.7



BULAWAYO
we are royals



TWEETS	FOLLOWING	FOLLOWERS	LIKES
611	923	816	176

VisitBULAWAYO

@VisitBULAWAYO FOLLOWS YOU

WE ARE ROYALS is an open invitation for people all around the world, to come and DISCOVER BULAWAYO as ROYALTIES. Get info & share your royal experiences !

📍 Matland- Zimbabwe

📅 Joined March 2013

Tweets Tweets & replies Photos & videos

🔄 VisitBULAWAYO Retweeted

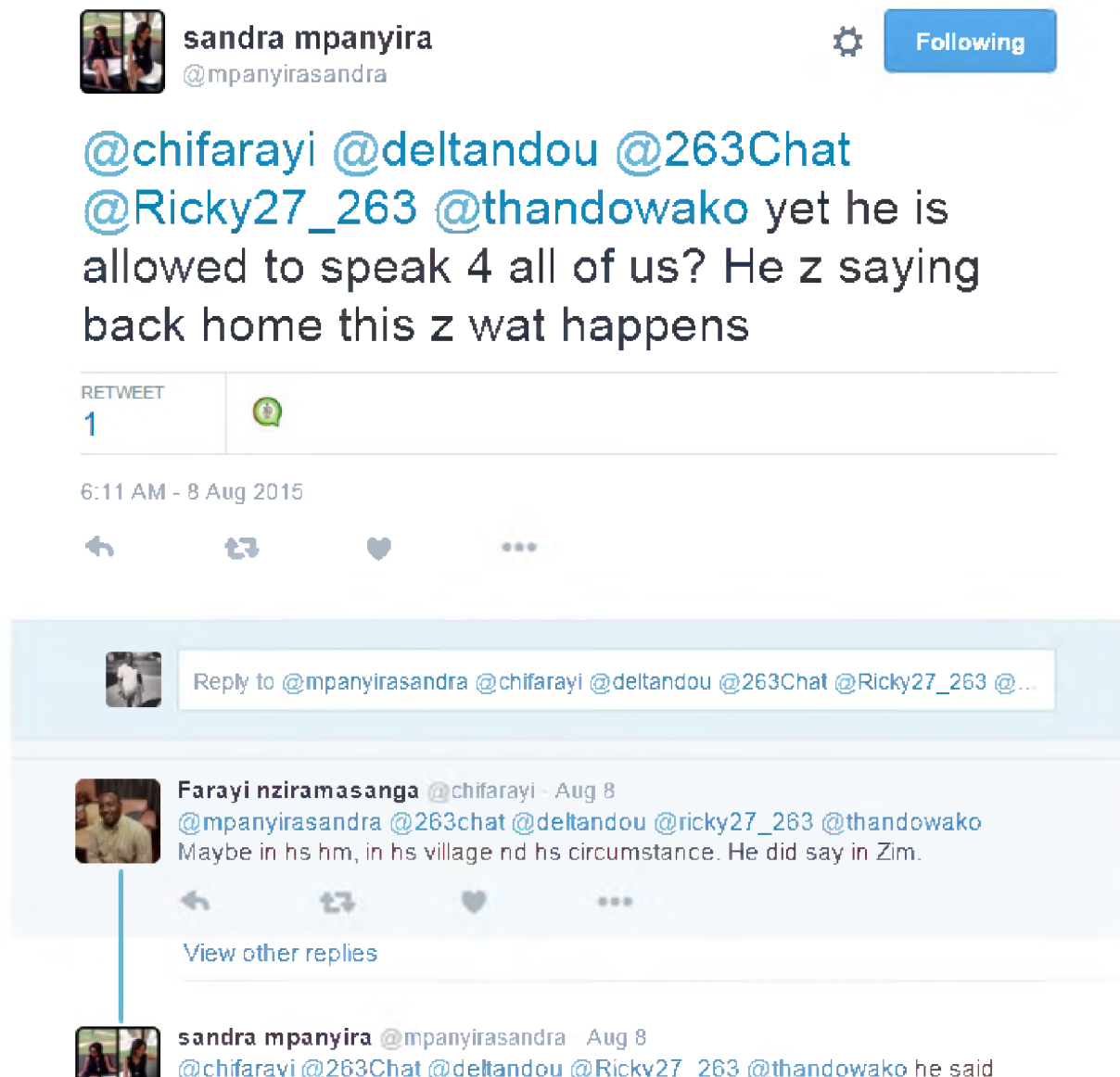


Philip Maina @kimutaimaina · 23h

My side mirror was stolen in traffic today, but in one. I asked myself #WhatWouldMagufuliDo



Fig 4.9

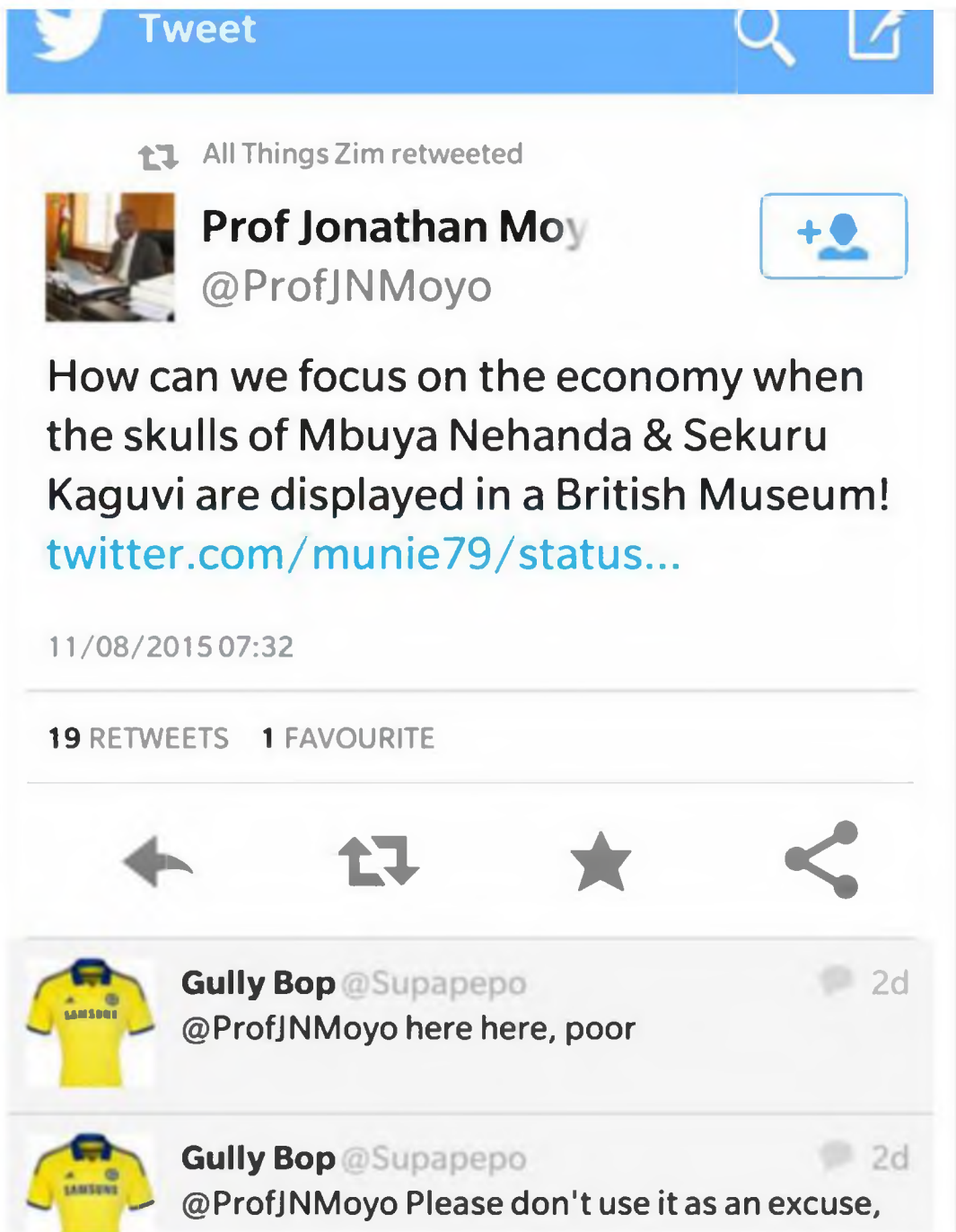


The image shows a screenshot of a Twitter thread. At the top, a tweet from **sandra mpanyira** (@mpanyirasandra) is displayed. The tweet text reads: "@chifarayi @deltandou @263Chat @Ricky27_263 @thandowako yet he is allowed to speak 4 all of us? He z saying back home this z wat happens". The tweet has 1 retweet and was posted at 6:11 AM on August 8, 2015. Below the tweet, there is a reply bar with a dropdown menu showing "Reply to @mpanyirasandra @chifarayi @deltandou @263Chat @Ricky27_263 @...". The first reply is from **Farayi nziramasanga** (@chifarayi) on August 8, stating: "@mpanyirasandra @263chat @deltandou @ricky27_263 @thandowako Maybe in hs hm, in hs village nd hs circumstance. He did say in Zim." Below this reply is a link to "View other replies". The second reply is from **sandra mpanyira** (@mpanyirasandra) on August 8, replying to the first: "@chifarayi @263Chat @deltandou @Ricky27_263 @thandowako he said".

Fig 4.10 (the original post has since been deleted)



Fig 4.11



The image shows a screenshot of a Twitter interface. At the top, there is a blue header with the Twitter logo, the word "Tweet", a magnifying glass icon, and a share icon. Below the header, a retweet notification says "All Things Zim retweeted". The main tweet is from "Prof Jonathan Moy" (@ProfJNMoyo), who has a profile picture of a man in a suit sitting at a desk. To the right of the name is a blue button with a plus sign and a person icon. The tweet text reads: "How can we focus on the economy when the skulls of Mbuya Nehanda & Sekuru Kaguvi are displayed in a British Museum!" followed by a blue link "twitter.com/munie79/status...". Below the text is the timestamp "11/08/2015 07:32". Underneath the timestamp, it says "19 RETWEETS" and "1 FAVOURITE". A horizontal line separates this from a row of four icons: a left-pointing arrow, a retweet icon, a star icon, and a share icon. Below this are two replies from "Gully Bop @Supapepo", each with a profile picture of a yellow football jersey with "LANSONE" on it. The first reply says "@ProfJNMoyo here here, poor" and is timestamped "2d". The second reply says "@ProfJNMoyo Please don't use it as an excuse," and is also timestamped "2d".

Prof Jonathan Moy @ProfJNMoyo

How can we focus on the economy when the skulls of Mbuya Nehanda & Sekuru Kaguvi are displayed in a British Museum!
twitter.com/munie79/status...

11/08/2015 07:32

19 RETWEETS 1 FAVOURITE

Gully Bop @Supapepo @ProfJNMoyo here here, poor 2d

Gully Bop @Supapepo @ProfJNMoyo Please don't use it as an excuse, 2d

Fig 4.12

The image shows a vertical scroll of six tweets on a mobile device. Each tweet includes a profile picture, the user's name and handle, the date (Aug 14), and the text of the tweet. Below each tweet are icons for replying, retweeting, liking, and a menu. The tweets discuss the economic situation in Zimbabwe and the debate between two hashtags: #BringBackOurEconomy and #BringBackOurSkulls.

Tich Ray @TichRay · Aug 14
It's the economy, stupid! #FiddlingWhileZimbabweBurns#Skulls#BringBackOurEconomy

Chiwandire Tatenda.T @ttchiwandire · Aug 14
#BringBackOurEconomy NOT #BringBackOurSkulls. @ProfJNMoyo please don't start this nonsense of trying to divert our attention.

TEENASHE #thatguy @teenashe1 · Aug 14
#bringbackoureconomy

#agc @agcSpeaks · Aug 14
Lol, well put bruv.. #BringBackOurEconomy

Sir Nigel @SirNige
Some people are busy tweeting #BringBackOurSkulls but I prefer reality: #BringBackOurEconomy

thomas nyika @nyikathomas · Aug 14
We are saying #BringBackOurEconomy and ivo they are saying #BringBackOurSkulls. Wotshaya kuti zvichambofamba sei? #Twimbos

S'phesihle Nonto TM @Snonti · Aug 14
Umhudo kuphela lo. #BringBackOurEconomy masela.

4.14



263Chat

@263Chat



Following

Terrorist Bombings in Paris, France
ift.tt/1kU3fYe #VOAZimbabwe #263Chat
#Twimbos



Terrorist Bombings in Paris, France

More than 120 people were killed in the terrorist attacks in Paris, France.

voazimbabwe.com

RETWEETS

4



4.15



263Chat
@263Chat



Following

Celebrating African Cinema: LANTANDA
GUINEA BISSAU ift.tt/20SXk6Q #ATOB
#Africa

View translation

LIKES

2

4W



7:52 AM - 14 Nov 2015



Reply to @263Chat

Trends

#TrySomethingNew Promoted by Fuze Tea ZA Happy Thanksgiving #MacysParade #Empire
Black Friday #BaseHottestMC #MaryJBligeAtBETXAfrica #NationalCakeDay Solly Phetoe
Ahmed Kathrada Rs 22.5



263Chat
@263Chat



Following

Nigeria troops rescue over 60, kill 4 Islamists ift.tt/1HOgGhM #Chronicle #263Chat #Twimbos

RETWEETS

2



7:39 PM - 13 Nov 2015



Reply to @263Chat

4.17



263Chat @263Chat · 1h

South Africa says #ZumaMustFall after shock sacking of finance minister ift.tt/1UdbMSC #263Chat #Africa



1



[View summary](#)

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