

Annotated Reference List: Sample annotation of the primary research method- Questionnaire

Questionnaire

My first primary research method was a questionnaire, which generated 102 valid responses. It was created and distributed online through social media platforms such as Facebook and through messaging systems. The aim of the questionnaire was to investigate views on the bypass of traditional media outlets and how the use of social media as a key element in political campaigns has shifted perceptions of politicians, as well as the impact this has on all parties involved. The questionnaire revealed that the majority of respondents actively engage with political affairs, particularly through social media platforms. It emphasised the power of social media in providing politicians with increased control over their image through branding tactics and careful construction of social media posts. It also demonstrated how the majority of participants believed the main reasons for politicians increasingly using social media is to create a relatable image in addition to the evolutionary process of modernisation. This was specifically relevant for Chapter 2, examining the reasons for the bypass of traditional media as well as how politicians are currently making use of the platform. This research method was extremely helpful in supporting secondary evidence in my PIP, and I was able to correlate data from this questionnaire to my content analysis and interviews multiple times, contributing to the reliability of research analysis within my PIP. The gender bias was also limited with 48% of participants male and 52% of participants female. However, there were several limitations which must be taken into account when assessing the quality of this research method. At times, data collected contradicted findings from within my interviews, indicative of the lack of educated perspectives, also showing how partisans are desensitised to certain political branding behaviours. Therefore, this discounts the validity of this research method. Additionally, an age bias was present with 59.8% of participants aged between 40 and 54. Furthermore, a location bias was likely present given the distribution of this research method to a number of people who identified with similar institutions and areas. Thus, data collected was likely skewed towards certain political viewpoints, and may not have represented the views of western society as a whole. It also must be considered that this study was limited to micro and meso spheres, and given there was only a small number of participants, it may have been limited in its sample size. Additionally, participants at times seemed unsure about qualitative open response questions, and a number of inconclusive results were collected, indicating that clarity of questions could have been improved.

Nonetheless, this research method was extremely helpful for the most part in gaining an understanding of mainstream views relating to the increasing use of social media for political campaigning and how this implicates democratic ideology.