



Play as an Indicator of Public Opinion in Online Political Commentary: A Content Analysis of Online News Forums Leading Up to the 2014 South African General Elections

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ABSTRACT This paper seeks to look at play as an indicator of public opinion in online political commentary of online news forums leading to the 2014 South African general elections. A qualitative content analysis was used to analyse viewers' comments about 2014 South African general elections posted online. A corpus of all commentary appended to 2014 South African general election news reports published online by Media24, Times Media Group, Mail & Guardian, Independent Newspapers, Caxton CTP, and TNA Media were selected. NVIVO 11 was utilized to code these readers' comments into their respective categories. The core findings of this paper reflect that online readers do not just engage in play but are more interactive and participative on these online public forums and their political discourse echo political affiliations with different political parties, bearing in mind that South Africa has 13 political parties that participated and are represented in parliament.