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**Examining Agenda Setting Effects of Twitter Users during
the 2016 Uganda Presidential Election**

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Abstract

The main aim of this thesis is to examine the agenda setting effects of Twitter users by exploring the use of hashtag #UgandaDecides and the retweet (RT) activity during the 2016 presidential election. I do this by applying the first level agenda setting theory which holds that the news media sets the public agenda.

I apply a qualitative analysis using #UgandaDecides as a unit of analysis to collect tweets that received the most retweets to establish the actors tweeting during the study period. I conduct content analysis to establish the key issues/topics that received the most attention as per their level of frequency and prominence received through their retweet activity.

Results in this thesis show that different actors were involved in determining the topics/issues on the twitter public agenda during the 2016 Uganda presidential election. For the pre-election period, the news media set the agenda by influencing the topics/issues for discussion as seen by the number of the retweets from their tweets. However, on Election Day, the public mainly ordinary citizens were more active in determining what topics/issues were discussed on Twitter, manifesting signs of reverse agenda setting.

In this thesis, I thus conclude that Twitter can be empowering as it provides a space for ordinary citizens to participate in political discourse and that in a restrictive media environment, both media and public can use twitter as a participatory platform. The aspects of reversed agenda setting shown in this study are indicative of the changing media environment and how new power relations between different actors calls for the revision of the traditional agenda setting theory that the news media sets the public agenda.

Keywords: Twitter, Agenda setting, Elections, Uganda, First level agenda setting, social media, Reversed Agenda setting, Elections

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Chapter One

1.0 Introduction

1.1 *Why this study*

There is a growing interest in the potential of Twitter to provide space for deliberation on political and social issues. Studies on Twitter use in political settings provide that the platform may mimic a public that brings together users including ordinary citizens to deliberate on public issues (Ausserhofer & Axel Maireder, 2013; boyd, 2010; Shirky, 2010). Nonetheless, these claims have been disputed to argue that Twitter is not that democratizing as it leaves out critical actors such as ordinary citizens while giving voice for only established (Svensson and Larsson, 2015; Larsson and Moe, 2012; Fuchs, 2014; Bruns and Burgess, 2011; Fraia and Missaglia, 2014).

These findings provide mixed reaction for Twitter's democratic potential as they have applied to different national contexts when it comes to Twitter use in political communication (Wallesten, 2015; Skogerbøo and Krumisvik, 2015; Jungherr, 2014; Shirky, 2010; Murphy, 2013). I thus ask myself, whether when applied to Uganda, I could get the same results. In this thesis, I therefore consider as Twitter a democratic place that can facilitate political discourse where different actors can deliberate on different public issues.

Uganda is interesting to study because of its decline in respect for political participation with restrictive media landscape (Transparency International 2015; Kanyeihamba, 2010; Freedom House 2016; Africa Research Bulletin 2016; Amnesty International 2013; Adobo 2013, Rodrigues and Schiffrin 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2015). The current regime under President Yoweri K. Museveni has been described to exhibit aspects of a hybrid regime (Tripp 2010; Wakabi 2016), which according to Karl (1995) promote some aspects of liberal democracy and autocracy at the same time. This definition has been criticised by (Bardie et.al, 2012), who argue that it places too much attention to authoritarian characteristics. They thus call for the inclusion of "aspects that can be recurrent in authoritarian situation, such as the existence of incumbents who routinely abuse state resources, deny the opposition fair media coverage, harass opposition candidates and their supporters and in some instances, manipulate results" (1115). Tripp (2010) further argues that "hybrid regimes embody two divergent impulses: they promote civil rights and political liberties, and yet they unpredictably curtail those same rights and liberties. They limit rights and liberties often enough that they cannot be regarded as democratic—but not consistently enough to be regarded as fully authoritarian" (Tripp, 2010,1). Indeed, the characteristics of a hybrid regime exist in Uganda as seen in its decline in decline of freedom of speech offline and online; growing intolerance to government critics; failure to curb

corruption and despite holding regular elections; there has been no change in the current top leadership (Kanyehamba, 2010; Freedom House, 2016).

Given existing political and media challenges, there are assumptions that citizens and traditional new media are now actively turning to social media platforms like Twitter to discuss political issues that are seen critical of the government (Kamp et.al, 2016). Javuru (2013) has argued that for the case of Uganda, new media such as social media may offer a place for ‘participation and deliberation and thus could reduce the ‘authoritarian control of the communicative space’ (357).

Taking Javuru’s assertion that Twitter is a tool for political participation and deliberation, I thus look at Twitter as a public space, where different actors converge to participate in political discourse. Agenda setting theory holds that news media sets the public agenda by choosing salient issues for that form public opinion (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; McCombs, 2014). The theory has been mainly applied to political settings especially during election times to examine agenda setting effects of news media. dynamic of agenda setting. For this study, I chose to use the first level of agenda setting in determining how to public and media agendas were set on twitter during the study period.

In this thesis, I have chosen to apply the agenda setting theory to study Twitter use in Uganda as the platform is increasingly gaining popularity among the citizenry, news media organizations, activists and politicians as they try to navigate the restrictive media landscape to participate in political discourse (Kamp et.al, 2016). This process can be best explained by Andrew Chadwick’s Hybrid media system. In, Hybrid media system, different actors often try to shape political processes or events by plugging themselves in the news making process often in real time and strategically across and between older and newer media settings (Chadwick, 2013). In the case of Uganda, it even becomes more interesting to find out how different actors have plugged themselves into the Twittersphere as they attempt to stir political discourse on the platform.

1.2. Aim of the study

My main aim is to examine the agenda setting effects of Twitter users by exploring the hashtag (#) and retweet functions to show how Ugandans on Twitter rallied behind #UgandaDecides to participate in the political discourse on Twitter during 2016 presidential election. I do this by first establishing the different actors on Twitter in Uganda during the 2016 presidential election. By doing this, I then seek to examine their tweets by looking at the retweets they receive to establish who set the agenda for this study period.

1.3. Research Questions

In this thesis, I seek to respond to the main research question - *“Who set the agenda for political discourse on Twitter during the 2016 Uganda presidential elections through the #UgandaDecides?”* This question is expanded into three (3) sub-questions. Which actors set the agenda? (RQ1) Did the news media set the agenda or did they follow agendas of other actors? (RQ2) and What issues/topics gained the most attention among news media and other actors? (RQ3).

The purpose of RQ1 is to establish the key actors set the agenda for political discourse. The second RQ2, applies mainly to the first level agenda setting theory which provides that the media set the public agenda. In this question, I thus seek to establish whether this aspect of the theory holds. Lastly, RQ3 seeks to establish which issues/topics were considered salient among the media and other actors.

1.4 Disposition

To respond to the research questions proposed in this thesis, it’s important to understand the current political and media landscape in Uganda. With this, Chapter two presents background on the media, political and internet landscape of Uganda. In Chapter 3, I highlight different studies conducted about Twitter’s communicative affordances, Twitter use in politics, Twitter use in elections in general and in Uganda. In this chapter, I also make my contribution to the field. In Chapter 4, I present history of the theory used for my study, giving a general overview of the theory, its different concepts while defining and presenting the concept I have used in this study. In Chapter 5 I present the methodology used for data collection and analysis plus the ethical considerations considered for this study. For this study, I took a qualitative research approach by using qualitative content analysis and applying the three steps provided to prepare, organize and report the data collected. Validity and reliability of this study plus the limitations of the study are presented in this chapter as well. Findings are presented in Chapter 6 by showing how different agendas manifested during the pre-election period and the election day. I first present a description of the different actors on Twitter during the presidential election, then show the topics/objects that manifested on the Twittersphere after which I show how the news media set its agenda, the issues/topics that were the focus of the media and those by the public. Lastly, Chapter 7 conclusions, I draw from this study and future research recommendations.

Chapter Two

2.0 Background

This section highlights the political and media landscape, and Information Communication Technologies (ICT) use status in Uganda. To understand how Twitter is used in Uganda's political discourse, I felt it imperative to provide an overview of Uganda's political landscape, to include overall historical and governance structure of the country. I have also provided an overview of the media landscape as this thesis showcases Uganda's news media resilience in times of restrictive environment. Besides, news media are adopting to use of both new and old media to catch up with the current news making phenomena. Further, a synopsis of the ICT status is provided, showing internet use and social media statistics plus some obstacles to ICT adoption in the country. Lastly, I provide a general overview of the 2016 presidential elections including that of the candidates.

2.1 Uganda Political landscape

Uganda is a landlocked country located in the Eastern part of Africa with population is estimated at 38 Million, 80 per cent of which live in rural areas and depend on agriculture as a source of income (UBOS 2016). Uganda gained her independence in 1962 and is established as a Presidential Republic by the 1995 Constitution with executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The executive branch is vested in the President, who holds multiple positions such as the head of state, head of Government and commander in chief of armed forces and is elected every five years by universal suffrage for all s). However, during the one-party system, political parties existed although they were not allowed to participate in the electoral process under the Political Parties and Other Organizations Act 2002 (Otiso, 2006). The move to re-instate political parties in 2005 was seen by opposition and other observers as an attempt for president Museveni to seek life presidency since his tenure was set to expire in 2006 having already served two term limits in 1996 – 2000 and 2001 - 2005 respectively (Kanyeihamba, 2010).

There are twenty nine (29) registered political parties in Uganda and major political parties include the National Resistance Movement (NRM, the ruling party), Forum for a Democratic Change (FDC), Democratic Party (DP), Conservative Party (CP), Justice Forum (JEEMA), and Uganda People's Congress (UPC), among others (Electoral Commission, 2016a).

Under the Legislative branch of Government is the Parliament of Uganda, which currently consists of 381 members, majority of whom are elected through universal suffrage, with a provision for special interest groups namely: women, the armed forces, the disabled and youth elected through Electoral Colleges (Electoral Commission, 2016b). On the other hand of government is the judicature

which comprises three courts – the Supreme Court, the court of appeal and the High Court. The judiciary is supposed to act independent and is not subject to the control or direction of any person or authority.

However, both the legislature and judiciary independence has been put into question with often cited meddling by the executive arm of government (Lugalambi, 2012; Kanyeihamba, 2010). Parliament has been accused for falling short on providing checks to the executive arm of government as majority of the members come from the ruling party and are often inclined to the President's influence (Lugalambi, 2012; Kanyeihamba, 2010).

The current regime under the NRM is described to exhibit aspects of a hybrid regime (Tripp, 2010; Wakabi, 2016). Hybrid regimes according to Karl, 1995 promote some aspects of liberal democracy and autocracy at the same time. Karl first introduced the term hybrid regime while describing regimes in central America at that time. This definition was criticized by Bardie et.al, 2012, who argue that it places too much attention to authoritarian characteristics. They thus call for the inclusion of “aspects that can be recurrent in authoritarian situation, such as the existence of incumbents who routinely abuse state resources, deny the opposition fair media coverage, harass opposition candidates and their supporters and in some instances, manipulate results” (P.1115). Tripp's definition, “hybrid regimes embody two divergent impulses: they promote civil rights and political liberties, and yet they unpredictably curtail those same rights and liberties. They limit rights and liberties often enough that they cannot be regarded as democratic—but not consistently enough to be regarded as fully authoritarian” (Tripp, 2010:1). These manifests are evidenced in Museveni's failure to address several governance challenges such as curbing corruption in public affairs, where in many instances, it has been seen to shield and reward perpetrators; poor service delivery; and a general deteriorating economy (Transparency International, 2015; Kanyeihamba, 2010; Freedom House, 2016).

2.2 Overview of Uganda Media Landscape

In order to explore how news media are using social media platforms such as Twitter to transform their communicative space, I provide a short overview of the media landscape in Uganda. This encompasses, the number of media houses both print and broadcast, ownership status and levels of influence on public engagement and media freedom.

The Uganda media sector was among the first to be liberalised in Africa leading to an influx of private radio and television stations. There are Twenty-eight (28) digital terrestrial TV stations; three (3) digital satellite TV stations and 292 radio FM stations. Only one television station is state owned – that is the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) Television (UCC, 2015). There is also one news

agency – the Uganda Radio Network (URN), hosts around forty-five (45) radio stations whose subscribers are mainly based upcountry. URN provides news in text and downloadable audio via Internet. There are four major newspapers in Uganda – the state owned New Vision, The Daily Monitor, The Observer Uganda and Bukedde published in vernacular and also owned by government (Otiso, 2006). Other vernacular papers include; - Etop, Rupiny and Orumuri, also run by the New Vision group. Several tabloids and magazines such as The Red Pepper, Rolling Stone and The Independent magazine operate along the main giants.

All print and electronic media houses have active online presence with each maintaining an active website and social media presence. Andrew Chadwick refer this phenomenon to a hybrid media system. In this system, different actors often try to shape political processes by strategically immersing themselves in news making process often in real time, across and between older and newer media settings (Chadwick, 2013).

Over the years, Uganda's media landscape has been subjected to government control and harassment due to perceived biasness of their reporting often tilted to counter national security and promote public interest (Tripp, 2010; Tripp, 2004; Ocitti, 2009; Human Rights Watch, 2015; Africa Research Bulletin, 2016). Some of the most taboo topics for government attempted control include; the military, the president's family, the oil sector, land-grabs, and presidential terms, which has cultivated a culture of self-censorship among journalists (Rodrigues and Schiffrin 2016). Moreover, several cases of media harassments to include closure of radio stations over hosting opposition leaders and police arrests on journalists covering political related events were reported in the led up to the 2016 elections (Human Rights Watch, 2015; Africa Research Bulletin, 2016). Other cases of media restrictions include the case in 2013, when security agencies for instance, ceased and closed offices of The Daily Monitor, an independent newspaper plus its sister offices over a news story published following succession rumors of the current president Yoweri K. Museveni (Lumu & Araali, 2015). Likewise, in the past, the incumbent president has labelled journalist criminals, who deserve to be locked up (Ocitti, 2009). These repeated attacks by the Museveni's government to control print and broadcast media is typical of many African countries and thus leaves limited space for discussion of political issues (Okorie et.al 2016).

2.3. Internet Use in Uganda

There are approximately 16 million Internet users approximately 45.8 per cent of the Uganda population (Uganda Communications Commission, 2016). This increase in internet access can be attributed to the unrestricted entry market and use of cheap mobile internet bundles that enables easy access to internet and its related services (Cartesian 2014). The 2015 Affordability Drivers Index (ADI)

scored Uganda 16th out of 51 countries with the most affordable internet, also ranking second in the Low Developing Countries category (Alliance for Affordable Internet, 2015).

There are 36 telecommunications service providers that offer both voice and data services, with one state-owned provider, the Uganda Electricity Transmission Company Limited (UCC, 2016). Further, seven (7) telecom companies - MTN Uganda, Uganda Telecom, Airtel, Smart Telecom, Africell Uganda (former Orange Uganda) and Vodafone dominate the telecommunications industry. Social networking and media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and Google+ are widely used in the country and Twitter ranks as the second most accessed platform in Uganda (Alexa 2016, StatCounter, 2016). I chose to study Twitter because it's becoming the most preferred social platform for political elite to talk about politics (Kamp et. al, 2016).

Nonetheless, despite increasing market competition that is driving down costs particularly on mobile phones, internet-enabled mobile devices cost an average of US\$50, which is still high for the majority of Ugandans (UCC, 2014). Other challenges inhibiting ICT access includes limited access to electricity, low literacy and high poverty levels. Nearly a quarter of the population lives in urban areas while only 20 percent have access to electricity and national literacy stands at 72.2 percent among persons aged 10 years and above (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Despite the low access to internet, Ugandans are seeking to break this barrier by embracing Twitter as a tool for political discourse (Kamp et. al, 2016).

2.4. The Uganda 2016 Presidential Election

Uganda has held five general elections under the current regime, while approximately 15 million registered voters were recorded in 2016 (Electoral Commission, 2016a) The last three general elections were held in 2006, 2011 and 2016 under the multi-party system. The removal of Presidential term limits in 2005 through a Constitutional amendment towards President Museveni end of tenure in 2001 made it possible for him to participate in all elections where he has always emerged a winner – including the just concluded February 18, 2016 election.

The 2016 general election attracted six presidential candidates including the incumbent president Yoweri K. Museveni. The other candidates included – Warren Kizza Besigye – the leading opposition candidate from Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), Joseph Mubirizi, Former Prime Minister John Patrick Amama Mbabazi, Dr. Venansius Baryamureeba, also former Makerere University Vice Chancellor, retired Army General Benon Biraaro, and former presidential advisor Faith Kyalya (Electoral Commission, 2016b). The main three contenders were the incumbent president Museveni, Kizza Besigye and John Patrick Amama Mbabazi.

An opinion poll conducted between December 2015 and January 2016, identified ten top issues on the national agenda as, "High levels of corruption, High rate of unemployment; Increasing poverty levels; Inadequate health facilities and services; Poor roads and transport system; High inflation rate; Poor education facilities and standards; Lack of enough safe water sources; Leaders clinging on to power and Tribalism and Nepotism in that order" (Research World International Ltd, 2016. pg. 24). Additionally, those who participated in the opinion poll cited their "main fear" during the presidential elections as political instability, vote rigging, intimidation by security forces, failure by the incumbent president to hand over power and lack of trust in institutions such as the Electoral Commission, Uganda police and national army in acting impartially during the presidential elections) Research World International Ltd, 2016. Pg. 74). The poll also gave Museveni a lead with 51 percent of the surveyed voters saying they would vote for his stay in power. He was followed by Kizza Besigye and Amama Mbabazi at 32% and 12% respectively (Ibid.34) Even when compared to his top two contenders - Kizza Besigye and Amama Mbabazi, he still came out as the most likely candidate to be voted for. Indeed, it was no surprise when election results declared him the winner of the 2016 presidential elections with 61 percent of the vote, followed by Kizza Besigye and Amama Mbabazi with 35 percent and 1.2 percent respectively (Electoral Commission, 2016). However, reports of malpractice, vote rigging, voter intimidation, violence, arrest of opposition parties was rampant (Africa Research Bulletin, 2016) like past elections (Gibb 2012) and resonating with the main fear highlighted in the opinion poll by Research World International Ltd.

In this thesis, I have incorporated the above sections to demonstrate that in a restrictive media and political landscape, citizens are forced to find alternative spaces for discussing political issues and Twitter may provide such a space.

Chapter Three

3.0. Previous research

Twitter may provide an alternative space for deliberation for both news media and citizens in restrictive environments. For politicians, Twitter can be used to by-pass traditional agenda keeping role of the media by using the platform to directly communicate to citizens. Also, Twitter use in election setting can provide additional space for candidates to directly communicate to voters and promote their manifestos among others. In this section, I explore previous research on the use of Twitter as a communicative space, Twitter use in politics especially around election settings and how this relates to the Uganda case. I also present my contribution to the field at the end of this chapter.

3.1 Twitter as a communicative space

Twitter founded in 2006 by Jack Dorsey, is a microblogging platform that enables users to share news on what's happening within 140 characters referred to as a "tweet" (Twitter, 2016). The platform seeks "to give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers" (Twitter 2016b). Twitter describes itself as a "user-centered" platform as it enables users subscribe to other user's tweets (van Dijck 2013: 71).

It is an Internet-based service in which users have a public profile where they broadcast short public messages/updates whether they are directed to specific user(s) or not" (Murthy 2013: 10). Since its creation, that platform has transformed from a social networking and messaging site with status updates with a few circles of 'friends' into a news and information platform for a broader audience, argues Broersma and Graham (2012).

Among Twitter's main features is the trending topics introduced in 2008 that enables users to group posts by topic by articulating certain words or phrases pre-fixed with hashtag sign (#). This feature allows users to track trending topics since it "allows users to cluster around specific topics—essentially to create discursive clusters around a shared interest (Bode et.al, 2015: 150; Schmidt, 2014). Ogola, 2015 have also argued that Twitter hashtags, once started, quickly assume a life of their own, enabling two critical things: 1) they make possible broad citizen participation in the deliberation of stories; 2) the hashtags create spaces which dramatize the limits of free expression variously denied by the state and by mainstream media, thus reducing the fear of possible intimidation or even prosecution by those who participate in these discussions, particularly online.

Many political elites are including social media tools like Twitter into their communication strategies as a way of "reaching out to groups within their geographical constituency and those outside their official jurisdiction who share their ideological goals and priorities" or just as acts of self-promotion and impression management (Straus et.al, 2013: Ndavula and Mueni 2013; Fraia and

Missaglia; 2014; Jackson & Lilleker, 2011). These efforts are geared towards reinforcing or trying to change voter's attitudes towards them especially the undecided ones to go vote for them (Ustaahmetoølu, 2014).

In analyzing the use of Twitter by the United State Congress, Golbeck et.al, 2010 found that congress people used Twitter to self-promote themselves by sending messages linking to news articles about themselves, their blog posts and to report about their daily activities in attempt to control their public image in a national audience. Maarek, 2014 describes this process of politicians reporting about themselves as “depoliticization” a situation where “politicians tend to focus more on personal issues and image building rather than on core political issues” (P.17).

The ease of use of social media is enabling politicians and political parties connect directly with voters without relying of mass media (Maarek, 2014; Schmidt, 2014). In the same vein, users are also by-passing traditional media by sourcing for information directly from politicians either by following their accounts or choosing to follow those accounts that promise to provide content that is relevant to them. In studying the 2012 Obama and Romney presidential campaigns Kreiss, 2014 found that both campaigns sought to influence reporters directly by tweeting out strategic communication such as fact-checks of the opposing candidate. He also noted that journalists used Twitter as a proxy for public opinion to assess the candidates' debate performances and that both campaigns worked to create a “climate of opinion” favorable to their candidate to influence reporters' perceptions of political events as they read social media as a measure of public sentiment. (Kreiss 2014, 1475).

Traditional news organizations are accepting Twitter as part of their daily routines (Farhi, 2009) and at the same time journalists are using Twitter either through their personal accounts or their news network to source for news coverage during campaigns, establish and maintain source, promote their work or to connect with audiences (Jungherr, 2014; Ausserhofer & Axel Maireder, 2013, p.294). Broersma and Graham (2012) also found that Twitter offers journalists a rich, quick, and easy-to access harvest of utterances by using the platform to indicate the public sentiments about politicians and their performance. Their study suggests that journalists used tweets from politicians to illustrate their opinions and acts, especially when they are not (easily) available for comment or when they post inappropriate messages.

3.2 Twitter in Elections

Twitter use in elections has gained a lot of research, with the candidates integrating its use in campaign communication strategies, using it as a tool to share information about their manifestos and to interact directly with electorates.

While analyzing 100,000 Twitter messages containing a reference to either a party or politician in the German Federal 2009 elections, Sprenger et.al, 2011 found that the platform was used for sharing politically relevant information and that the number of party mentions on the platform accurately reflected the election results. They thus concluded that conversations on the platform can be used to mirror offline political landscape. However, Skogerbø and Krumisvik (2015) found less evidence of Twitter being used by local newspapers for sourcing information during the Norwegian 2011 local election campaigns. Their findings also show that candidates rarely retweeted or reposted links to news media about themselves. Instead links made were to political parties, the campaign and news media.

For the 2013 Italian elections, Fraia and Missaglia (2013) observed that candidates from the same party were interacted directly with media and citizens by bypassing mediation logic of traditional media carried out by parties. By dodging traditional media gatekeeping roles, politicians can increase direct communication with voters (Straus et al. 2013; Golbeck, et.al 2010).

Social media conversations can also be used to reflect offline issues. In the case of the 2013, Odinga, 2013 found that social media may have fueled hate speech during the 2013 election, a situation that led to the sensationalism on the public sphere. In support of this view, Mejora et.al, 2015 argues that although the “Twitter world may not be identical to the offline world, its real and at many times, users who desire status, admiration, social approval and attention in the offline relationships, often tend to bring these desires with them on Twitter” (P.12). These contradictory findings imply that Twitter usages may differ in different countries and thus should not be generalized.

Similarly, Wallsten, 2015 found that out of the 5,000 election articles he analyzed, only five percent of these cited use of Twitter in the 2012 US presidential election concluding that this is the only way journalists are holding onto their norms and what constitutes as an acceptable source. Therefore, when it comes to sourcing for tweets for information, journalists are holding onto their “traditional gatekeeping roles by filtering which tweets are discussed” (Wallsten, 2015: P.37).

The differences in these findings indicate how different media settings may have different results in Twitter use by news media as observed by (Wallesten, 2015; Skogerbø and Krumisvik, 2015). Either way, Conway et.al, 2015 concluded that social media users and traditional media depend on each other for legitimacy hence the agenda-setting power for traditional media has not been completely lost on social media.

In the case of Uganda, where citizens and political actors are increasingly taken keen interest in use of social media especially Twitter for social and political engagement, it becomes imperative to assess both media and public agendas especially during highly contested events such as the presidential election.

3.3 Twitter in Uganda Election

With an estimated 42.7% percent of Ugandans accessing the Internet (UCC; 2016), social media platforms like Twitter are becoming a chosen platform for the educated, elites and youth of voting age to engage in political discourse (Kamp.et.al, 2016). Although the number of Twitter users in Uganda is unknown, the platform has been ranked second to Facebook (StatCounter, 2016). Current population statistics indicate that 23 per cent of Ugandans are between 18 - 30 years (UBOS, 2015) therefore eligible to vote and thus participate in the elections. Considering that Twitter is widely used by young people for social interaction and occasional political engagements in Uganda (Kamp.et.al, 2016) these demographics thus make the platform viable to investigate how political elites are engaging with these youths to stir political discourse.

The 2016 general elections set the precedent for the use of social media platforms for politicking and general voter engagement by presidential candidates. In the run, up to the elections for instance, one presidential candidate – John Patrick Amama Mbabazi (also former prime minister in the current regime) became the first politician to embrace social media by using Twitter and other social media platforms to engage with the public using the hashtag #AskAmama (Kamp,2016). This act by Mbabazi set the agenda for how other candidates would integrate social media in their campaign strategies. They did so by either hiring public relations team to keep abreast with the new media sensation or through creating a good public image of themselves in attempt to appeal voters to vote for them (Semakula and Natukunda 2015; Okuda, 2015; Kaaya; 2015). By adopting different social media platforms in their campaign strategies, presidential candidates' actions could be seen as the first indicator to by-pass traditional media's gatekeeping role thus seeking to make direct connection with voters.

At the start of the 2016 election campaigns in November 2015, two of the leading political parties National Resistance Movement (NRM) and Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) were active on Twitter, with NRM having about 2,500 followers, where it had posted 1,165 tweets while the FDC party had 1,295 followers and had sent 977 tweets (Kamp et al. 2016; 25).

Despite the recognition by different political actors of the importance of social media as seen in its use in the 2016 general elections (Kamp et.al, 2016), the Uganda government could not resist from restricting its use during this period. On February 17, 2016, the eve of the 2016 elections, access to Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and mobile services was blocked by telecom providers under instructions from the communications regulator in the pretext of protecting national security (BCC News, 2016). Communication in form of a Tweet from one of the leading Internet Service Providers – MTN Uganda indicated that it been instructed by the regulatory authority to block access to the

platforms due to security concerns (MTN-Uganda, 2016). Indeed, this communication was confirmed by the president saying that the blockade was a temporary measure to stop people using the platforms for “telling lies” (Tabugira, 2016). Nonetheless, Ugandans were able to by-pass the blockade and continued sharing messages via the platforms apart from mobile money service (CIPESA, 2016).

During social media shutdown period, one of the presidential candidates shared a tweet sharing tips on how to bypass the blockade. This move can be seen as an attempt by this candidate to appear sympathetic with the public but also as a way of him using the platform to paint a good image of himself. Most important to note is that the social media blockade is not the first time for the Ugandan government to seek to control the online public lock around election time. In 2011, just after the elections, the communications regulator issued an order to Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to block access to SMS services, Facebook and Twitter during public protests against increased cost of living (ACME, 2011; Balancing Act, 2011). However, the order was not executed. Government’s repeated attempts to control society through restricting mainstream media and social media use constrains free flow of information while at the same time indicating its aspiration to remain at the top in shaping public agenda. However as argued by Ogola, 2015, the internet’s myriad communicative possibilities can enable the exercise of various freedoms (P.72).

3.4 Contribution to the field

Studies of use of Twitter in political communication and in election settings have been dominated by both political and communication theories (Jungherr, 2014). Besides, the agenda setting theory been widely applied in several studies in political settings however, as far I am concerned, there is no academic research conducted about agenda setting theory with focus on Twitter as public space and more so in Uganda. My study will thus be the first of its kind to contribute to this.

I seek to contribute to the upcoming volume of studies on social media use in political communication by providing a new method for analyzing Twitter data to determine agenda setting effects of its users. Previous research on Twitter use in political settings has employed quantitative research methods to collecting and analyzing Twitter data. In my study, I show use qualitative methods to get a deeper understanding of the communicative features of Twitter and how they can be used to establish agenda setting effects of news media and other actors on the platform.

Chapter Four

4.0 Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I present the theoretical concepts used in this thesis by giving an introduction about agenda setting theory. I briefly explain the different levels of agenda setting and present some research conducted on the applicability of agenda setting theory on twitter.

4.1 Agenda Setting Theory

Agenda setting theory holds that the media sets public agenda by choosing salient or important issues for publication. First introduced by Max McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1968, the theory provides that “there a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media place on different campaign issues (reflecting to a certain considerable degree the emphasis on candidates) and the judgments of voters as to the salience and importance of various campaign messages” (McCombs & Shaw 1972, 181). The theory has since been used in several studies thus making it relevant for the mass media agenda setting function (McCombs 2005; McCombs, 2014). Agenda setting is a common idiom in “discussions of politics and public opinion” as it summarizes the “continued dialogue and debate in every community, from local neighborhoods to the international arena, over what should be at the centre of public attention and action” (McCombs; 2014, Pg. IX). The theory has been used to study agenda setting role of news media mainly around election setting as it’s always convenient to examine media effects during this period. During this period, there is a continuous huge influx of messages on public issues and other aspects of politics and if these messages are to have any significant social effects, the effects must occur by Election Day, argues McCombs (2014). Agenda setting theory thus predicts high positive correlation between the media agenda and the subject public agenda. The repeated mention of a topic by the news media warrants its ranking of importance on the public agenda. Additionally, McCombs argues if there is a tight focus on a handful of issues by numerous media, they then convey a strong message to the audience that those are the most important topics at the moment thus leading to the formation of public opinion.

There can be varying opinions when it comes to determining the public opinion thus the agenda setting role of the news media is to influence the salience of an issue, so to allow a significant number of people to regard it as worthwhile to hold a public opinion on it (McCombs, 2014). Three core levels of agenda setting theory have been advanced since it was first introduced in 1972 - that is the first, second and third levels of agenda setting. However, in this thesis, I will focus on the first agenda level.

4.2. First level agenda setting theory

The first level agenda-setting also known as the traditional agenda setting is when the news media is seen to directly influence the public agenda by telling us what to think about. This is done through repeatedly focusing the salience of objects often key public issues and other aspects of political communication such as candidates (McCombs, 2005). An object or topic is that “thing towards which our attention is directed or the thing about which we hold opinion” (McCombs, 2014; Pg.40). Therefore, the level of frequency and prominence news media attend an issue, makes it accessible in audience's memories (Kim et al., 2002).

While the first level of agenda setting focuses on getting an object gaining attention, the second level is when this object appears on the public agenda as it will have gained minimum exposure and attention. However, McCombs notes that in most cases, the first and second level agenda setting go hand in hand since objects and attributes can be combined in media messages and in public thoughts and conversations (McCombs, 2014)

In this thesis, my focus is on the first level of the agenda setting theory. Although this level has been mainly applied to traditional media such as radio, television, newspapers and magazines, in today's internet era, agenda setting role of the traditional media is diminishing as “a top-down process from traditional media to audiences”; rather it's becoming a “dynamic process where, under certain conditions, citizen reporting advanced in online spaces can give shape and definition to media and policy agendas” among the public (Kaufhold et.al, 2010; Maier 2010 cited in Groshek and Groshek 2013). Moreover, the speed with which information travels on social media outlets like Twitter the interactivity and the broadening of ideas brought into discussion on social media is most likely to put an end to the monopolistic traditional agenda setting of the mainstream media (Stars et.al, 2013; Boynton and Richardson, 2015). McCombs has also argued that as new media continues to be integrated and acceptable into the everyday communicative aspects of people, it diminishes the boundaries between various traditional media and its content by redefining its agenda setting role in society (McCombs, 2014).

Today, the media cannot be said to have total control over what the public thinks about since it informs different people with different backgrounds and mindsets. Besides, even though people may be in constant touch with the traditional media, they may choose not to be involved or even seem to be deeply engaged in the public issues or affairs raised by the media as they may genuinely lack interest in these issues or may not appear to them as important issues.

4.3 Agenda setting and social media

In the context of studying social media platforms such as Twitter, the concept of agenda setting as Bowman, 2015 notes offers unique affordances such as the '@' (at) symbol used to address messages to particular users (for example, @user), the retweet feature (for example, RT @user), the '#' hashtag symbol to group tweets and to search for tweets, the ability to add URLs, and the ability to add links to media (such as images and video) can be used to study how different audiences frame and interpret tweets. McCombs, 2005 has described agenda-setting effects as “the transmission of object and attribute salience from the press to the public about issues, political figures and other topics” (P.549). I thus believe that twitter’s unique functions can be used to measure these effects. As mentioned by Kim et. al, 2002, the level of frequency and prominence news media attend to an issue makes it accessible to audiences, the number of retweets a news media tweet commands can be used to determine the agenda effects of that tweet. Bowman, 2015 has also argued that in the process of analyzing dialogue among Twitter users, retweet activity to some extent easily establishes the public agenda on the platform.

Moreover, Axel & Moe (2013) provide that retweets “constitute a mechanism which is inherently designed to move tweets across layer boundaries: Twitter users habitually use them to bring messages from the hashtag level to the attention of their own followers (in the form of manual or ‘button’ retweets), or even to that of specific recipients, e.g., through manual retweets to which they have added an @mention of the intended addressee: “Hey @recipient, look at this: RT @user [message] #[hashtag]” (p.22). The more people retweet from a specific user account, the more authority is attributed to it, they argue.

Social media can be used in setting the agenda for traditional news media and other social actors in discussing policy issue agendas. Political actors can use social media to bypass the traditional media gatekeeping role by availing those actors with an opportunity to directly engage with different actors to influence political change (Bruns et al, 2016). For instance, politicians and political parties can directly connect with voters without relying of mass media thereby increasing direct communication with voters (Maarek, 2014; Straus et. al, 2013; Golbeck et.al, 2010). In the same vain, citizens and political activists can directly source for information from politicians either by following their social media accounts or choosing to follow those accounts that promise to provide content that is relevant to them as seen (Fraia and Missaglia, 2013). Conway et.al, 2015 have concluded that social media users and traditional media depend on each other for legitimacy hence the agenda-setting power for traditional media has not been completely lost on social media. A study by Arabi Idid and Hassan Elawad, 2015, in their study of social media use in the 2010 Sudanese Elections found that the agendas of socio-political blogs were strongly correlated with those of the newspapers.

In another “Predicting Opinion Leaders in Twitter Activism Networks: The Case of the Wisconsin Recall Election” by (Xu et. al, 2014) on the found that tweets made by organizations had greater influence than those done by individuals. They thus concluded that Twitter users with higher connectivity and issue involvement were better at influencing information flow on the platform.

Research shows that the retweet and @reply functions were prominent in the Swedish parliamentary Twitter analysis as Svensson and Larsson (2015) found that mass media journalist’s accounts were often retweeted and replied to, indicating that “politicians were inclined to associate themselves with mass media actors and their messages” (P.14). While analyzing the agenda-building function of political tweets during the 2012 US elections, Parmelee (2014) found that tweets from political leaders led to news coverage of issues and candidates, where a political tweet acted as a tip to spark story ideas for journalists.

Meanwhile in analyzing the extent and how twitter can impact agenda setting processes during the 2012 local elections in Belgium, (D’heer and Verdegem, 2014) found the use of #hashtags by broadcast media especially during televised political debates created a shared viewer experience allowing real-time and collective comments and discussions. They also found that several tweets with the hashtag #vk2012 linked to other media platforms both traditional and social media platforms, indicating that the platform can be influenced and is influenced by other media channels. This process is referred to as intermedia agenda setting where one media influences the agenda of another media. McCombs, 2005 while reviewing current trends and future directions of agenda setting research called for the need to understand the influence of traditional news media and new online media. Meanwhile, Lim (2011) found that major news websites in South Korea influenced the agenda of online newspapers and influenced each other to some extent.

In this thesis, I use the hashtag (#) function to show how Ugandans on Twitter rallied behind #UgandaDecides by identifying the key topics/issues arising from this hashtag and thereafter identifying which actors/user accounts commanded authority in numbers of retweet (RT) activity attached to their tweets to determine who set the agenda during 2016 presidential election.

4.4. Research Questions

This thesis thus explores the concept of first level agenda setting by examining who set the agenda on Twitter during the Uganda 2016 presidential. The study is thus guided by the main research question – *“Who set the agenda for political discourse on Twitter during the 2016 Uganda presidential elections through the #UgandaDecides?”* The question is further expanded by the following the sub-questions –

1. Which actors set the agenda?
2. Did the media set the agenda or did they follow agendas of other actors?
3. What issues/topics gained the most attention among media and other actors?

Chapter Five

5.0 Methodology

In this chapter, I present the methods I have used in this thesis. I present why I choose to use qualitative research method for my study, providing an overview of the method and key definitions in this method. I then argue for the use of content analysis in this thesis. I also give a description of how I collected the data and the steps taken to analyze the collected data. Details of ethical considerations and limitations of the study are also presented in this chapter.

5.1 Choice for Qualitative Research

Qualitative research on Twitter is important in looking at other aspects of user segment other than mere tracking of followers or hashtag use, argues Marwick, 2014. The huge amount of text collect on Twitter makes it possible to apply textual analysis method such as qualitative coding of individual tweets to close readings of accounts (Marwick, 2014). In this thesis, I choose to use qualitative content analysis as I found it the most appropriate method to analyze archived Twitter data.

Content analysis in general refers to “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” Krippendorff (2013, p. 24). Content analysis aims at attaining condensed and broad description of the phenomenon, and the outcome of the analysis is concepts or categories describing the phenomenon (Elo and Kyngash, 2008). These concepts of categories are then used to build up a model, conceptual map or categories (Ibid).

Kaid, 1989 identified seven classic steps to qualitative content analysis – to include: formulating the research questions to be answered, selecting the sample to be analyzed, defining the categories to be applied, outlining the coding process and the coder training, implementing the coding process, determining trustworthiness, and analyzing the results of the coding process.

In conducting content analysis, two approaches can be applied that is – inductive and deductive approach. In this study, I use the inductive approach, which is recommended if there is no enough former knowledge or if the knowledge is fragmented (Lauri & Kynga's, 2005). I used the inductive approach since I had no prior knowledge about Twitter use in the political discourse in Uganda especially among the media.

Three phases to conducting content analysis have been are recommended –preparation, organization, and reporting of results (Elo et. al, 2014). Below, I provide details on how I applied these phases to collect the Twitter data, analyze and present the results.

5.2 Data collection

In deploying content analysis, the preparation phase involves selecting a unit of analysis (Cavanagh 1997, Guthrie et. al, 2004). For the preparation phase, I selected the #UgandaDecides as the unit of analysis to collect tweets for analysis. The use of hashtags in this study is based on previous works that have found hashtags useful in assessing the political aspects of Twitter, as they help to organize tweets around a single topic (Small 2011; Bruns and Burgess 2011). As mentioned earlier in the previous research section, in 2008 Twitter introduced the trending topics feature which enables users to group posts by topic articulating certain words or phrases pre-fixed with hashtag sign (#). Fitton et.al (2009) has noted that a hashtag that “catches on” easily “forms an instant community around it” (P.127).

Although most of the created hashtags are short-lived Fitton et.al (2009), others become ongoing conversations, recurring real-time events, or events entire movements. Further, Bode et. al (2015), argue that in political settings, hashtags are used to identify political allegiances, form discursive clusters, name media sources, and otherwise focus and direct exchanges on topics of interest. This was the case of the #UgandaDecides hashtag first appeared on the Uganda Twitter sphere in 2015 and lasted throughout the campaign and elections period. I therefore chose to use the #UgandaDecides hashtag since it remained relevant as it trended through the election period.

In the preparation phase of collecting suitable data, a research seeks to making sense of the data (Elo et al., 2014). I thus employed purposive sampling a research technique that has been widely used in identifying and selecting “information – rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources” (Patton, 2002 cited in Palinkas et.al, 2015, p.2). Purposive sampling may refer to “particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 1997, p. 87). It involves selecting certain units or cases “based on a specific purpose rather than randomly” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003a, p. 713). Purposive sampling is useful in raising awareness, providing new perspectives for providing description of events, beliefs and actions (Drisko and Maschi, 2015).

My focus on the retweet activity is seen here as a crucial measure of whose views are made important on Twitter whether it was the news media or other actors. I thus used the retweet level of a tweet to measure agenda setters by identifying prominent issues arising from the #UgandaDecides. The more a tweet was retweeted, it demonstrated the prominence of a topic/issue that tweet carried. With this, the most retweeted tweets were chosen as an operationalization of the Twitter agenda.

5.2.1 Study period

To get the dataset for this study, I divided the datasets into two periods – that the pre-election period (November 15, 2015 – February 17, 2016 and Election Day (February 18, 2016). I choose the two study periods as I wanted to first explore the different agendas of political actors and news media in a non-restrictive media environment.

In the pre-election period, I assumed that given the restrictive offline media setting, Twitter provided a democratic space for different actors to participate in political discourse in Uganda. Second, the election period was chosen because following the social media shutdown, I wanted to find out whether the news media still exerted its agenda setting role or whether it was the reversed. Therefore, by dividing the data into these timeframes, I could analyze tweets by the news media and how these were retweeted by select political actors while observing any changes in political discourse during these timeframes.

5.2.2. Sample size

Using the hashtag #UgandaDecides as the unit of analysis, a total of #38,606 tweets containing this hashtag were collected from the Twitter Streaming Application Programming Interface (API) using Mecodify data mining open-source tool used for “simplifying big data analysis and visualization software developed by the Media, Conflict and Democratization project (“Mecodify – Mecodem” 2017; Al-Saqaf, 2016).

Twitter has three data interfaces available to researchers - the Streaming API, the REST API and the Search API (Gaffney and Puschmann, 2014). The Streaming API provides data in a live poll, where a tweet is posted to twitter as soon as it becomes available. The REST Representational State Transfer) API on the other hand replicates the functionality of Twitter’s search function by providing a set of method for data interaction. The REST APIs provide programmatic access to read and write Twitter data (Twitter, 2017).

The Mecodify software mainly uses PHP and JavaScript and has used several open-source libraries including but not limited to HighCharts, TwitterAPIExchange, D3Js for various components of the platform (Ibid). The platform is accessible to researchers who want to “*measure the usage of twitter hashtags and compare real events with twitter activity* and can be used for network analysis to identify influential tweeters involved in a particular subject. Since Mecodify has a way to connect twitter users with each other using mentions and replies, it can also be used to do some network analysis to identify influential tweeters involved in a particular subject” (Ibid). Mecodify also provides datasets in .CSV file format. Therefore, the extracted data from Mecodify was saved using .CSV and

later exported to Ms. Office Excel for analysis. For this thesis, I thus found the software reliable for me to use in collecting the required data I needed.

I collected 38,606 tweets from the Twitter API. However, only 2,360 tweets that had been retweeted more than 10 times were purposively selected and analyzed for both study periods. I chose to collect tweets retweeted more than 10 times because I considered this as a manageable number for manual coding.

For the pre-election period, total of #1,455 tweets were collected while #905 tweets on the Election Day were collected and their retweet activity analyzed.

Table 1 Number of Tweets Analyzed

<i>Period</i>	<i>Number of Retweets</i>
<i>Pre-election</i>	1,455
<i>Election day</i>	905
<i>Total</i>	2,360

5.3 Coding procedure

The second phase of qualitative content analysis is the organization phase and it includes open coding, creating categories and abstraction (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In this phase, a researcher attempts to make sense of the data and learning what’s going on (Morse & Field 1995) and getting a general amount of time obtaining sense of the data. When reading the data, questions such as who is telling, where is this happening, when did it happen, what is happening and why? (Burnard,1991). This process can also be described as immersion, where the researcher becomes familiar with the data (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

For me, to determine tweet sources, the number of @user retweets and containing the #UgandaDecides were selected. Further, before determining who set the agenda between media and political actors, I wanted to identify the most active Twitter users. To do this, I developed a codebook based on descriptions of political actors such as media organization, journalists, citizen journalist, ordinary citizen, politician, among others.

Twitter accounts were coded using content related characteristics was the coding was based on the profile provided on their account. I thus analyzed public profiles of all Twitter accounts that had been identified to fall above the most retweeted tweet. I did this by analyzing their public Twitter account names and descriptions provided as most Twitter users provide a general description of their affiliations. However, for those accounts without descriptions, a Google search of the user’s identity

name provided on the account was done to ascertain which category they fell under. As such, four (4) twitter user categories were identified for pre-election period as shown in Table 02.

Table 2 Twitter user category descriptions for pre-election period

<i>No.</i>	<i>User category</i>	<i>Description</i>
1.	Journalist	Affiliation to a news media agency
2.	News Media	Print media, news blogs, online news magazines, broadcast media (TV and radio)
3.	Ordinary Citizen	Had no affiliation to any of the mentioned categories
4.	Presidential Candidate	Affiliated to a presidential candidate

A qualitative content analysis of the most retweeted users was done to determine the type of tweets that sparked conversation and thus set agenda for political discourse on the Uganda Twittersphere during the study period. This was done by manual coding which involved reviewing the tweets and contextualizing the issue being tweeted or retweeted about.

The topics identified from the coding also had similarity to those identified in the public opinion polls conducted December 2015 and January 2016 with focus on fear and service delivery issues (Research World International Ltd, 2016). The opinion poll conducted among 2,685 Ugandans, identified topics such as voter bribery, vote rigging, intimidation by security forces, trust in electoral institutions in conducting free and fair elections, poor service delivery in Uganda among other as concerns during elections. In agenda setting, the media issues are believed to have a public correlation to those on the public agenda (McCombs, 2014). Having taken Twitter as a public space, I looked at topics identified during the offline public opinion polls to align them with issues discussed on Twitter during the study periods.

As I mentioned in section 5.2.1, on why I choose the two study periods, I wanted to first explore the different agendas of political actors and news media in a non-restrictive media environment. These categories are described in Table 03.

Table 3 Categories of tweet topics/issues – Pre-election period

No. Twitter Topic/issue	Category Description
Call to action	Tweets calling for peaceful election. Tweets featured additional hashtags such as #IChoosePeace #Topowa (Don't giveup); Tweets calling to stop circulation of false information - for instance one of the presidential candidate tweeted to a television station which was reporting of him holding a joint rally with one of his opponent. See: "@ntvuganda Stop this misinformation! There is NO such rally with @AmamaMbabazi in Yumbe today #UgandaDecides https://t.co/JGzgrU85QQ "; Tweets calling to stop spread of hate speech.
Candidate leadership style	Tweets about leadership style, most were referred to the incumbent presidential as a dictator who should not be re-elected
Election history	Tweets providing history of Uganda elections. This provided insight into the history of Uganda elections with some providing links to articles about presidential candidates
Election monitoring	Tweets about candidate campaign schedule; arrival of election observers or commentary made by them about the election. Tweets providing general insight into the elections were also put under this category. Tweets reporting arrival and dispatch of ballot papers
Election results	Tweets reporting about when and how election results will be announced. Tweets predicting the election winner were also put under this category and those around access to the national tally centre
Election violence	These focused-on cases of police brutality, intimidation and arrest of opposition candidates, supporters and journalists
Electoral reforms	Tweets calling for change in the electoral systems
Media Censorship	Tweets reporting on the ban of media from covering candidate campaign trail, hosting of opposition candidates on radio and television and those condemning the ban against use of mobile phones

	during vote tallying. The electoral commission issued a ban to voters not to use mobile phones around polling stations.
Presidential Debate	Tweet focused on discussion around the first ever presidential debate held in January and February with an additional hashtag #UGDebate16
Service delivery	Focus on service delivery issues such as health, education, infrastructure, etc. and how candidates were addressing them or not in the campaign
Vote rigging	Tweets on discrepancies on the voter's register and those mentioning cases pre-ticket ballot papers and ballot papers on the eve of the election
Voter bribery	Tweets on voter bribery by candidates
Voter education	Tweets mainly shared by the electoral commission on election dates, where to vote from and how to contact

Election Day Data

Considering the shutdown of social media on the election day, I decided to broaden the Twitter user categories compared to the pre-election period categories. Also, considering there were a few number of tweets collected for this period, adding more user categories provided flexibility for better analysis of the issues discussed on Twitter and who the key influencers were. As such, nine (9) user categories were identified to assess media influence of their participation on the Twittersphere during this time. (See Table 4)

Table 4 Twitter user category descriptions for election day

<i>No.</i>	<i>User category</i>	<i>Description</i>
1.	Journalist	Affiliation to a news media agency
2.	News Media	Print media, news blogs, online news magazines, broadcast media (TV and radio)
3.	Ordinary Citizen	Had no affiliation to any of the mentioned categories
4.	Political Activist	Mention of their role
5.	Political Commentator	Mention of their role
6.	Political Organization	Affiliation to a political organization - Political organization classified as civic organization
7.	Political Party	Affiliation to a political party

8.	Politician	Mention of their role
9.	Presidential Candidate	Affiliated to a presidential candidate

For the determining twitter topics/issues discussed, eight (8) issues made it to on the election day as shown Table 5 below:

Table 5 Description of Twitter Discussion topic –Election day

No.	Twitter Topic/issue	Category Description
1.	Call to action	Tweets calling for peaceful elections. Tweets featured additional hashtags such as #IChoosePeace #Topowa (Don't giveup); Tweets calling to stop circulation of false information and Tweets calling to stop spread of hate speech.
2.	Election monitoring	Tweets providing general insight into the elections and those reporting about the arrival and dispatch of ballot papers
3.	Election results	Tweets reporting about when and how election results will be announced and those around access to the national tally centre
4.	Election violence	These focused-on cases of police brutality, intimidation and arrest of opposition candidates, supporters and journalists
5.	Election mismanagement	Tweets expressing delay of ballot papers e.g. some tweets contained additional hashtag #KiggunduResignNow . e.g. <i>#KiggunduResignNow by mismanaging elections, you are fueling conflict. Uganda deserves better. #UgandaDecides https://t.co/x3dDkEZYuf and “9:06PM Voting at 22 polling stations in Makindye affected by late delivery of voting materials postponed till tomorrow: EC #UgandaDecides”</i>
6.	Media Censorship	Tweets condemning the ban against use of mobile phones during vote tallying. Tweets about the social media blackout were also but under this category
7.	Voting coverage	Tweets about general voting process

8. Vote rigging	Tweets on discrepancies on the voter's register and those mentioning cases pre-ticket ballot papers and ballot papers on the eve of the election
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The last phase of content analysis, - the reporting phase involves describing results as per the content categories created. For this, I have where possible presented quotations from the dataset show connection between collected data and results.

5.4 Ethical considerations

The main ethical concern arising from this study is the lack of consent to use Twitter data provided by users which could lead to privacy violation of the users. Also, validity of the information provided on user's profiles may make it hard to determine the identity of the user (Golder and Macy, 2014). However, Twitter's privacy policy automatically sets users to consent to public viewing of their data conversation. Therefore, assumption was made that since users under this study period shared their opinions publically, they consented to their data being reused since it was now considered public information (Twitter, 2017). The Twitter privacy policy lays clear guidelines to users on how their information is handled.

See for instance disclaimer provided by Twitter *“Most of the information you provide us through the Twitter Services is information you are asking us to make public. Your public information includes the messages you Tweet; the metadata provided with Tweets, such as when you Tweeted and the client application you used to Tweet; the language and time zone associated with your account; and the lists you create, people you follow, tweets you mark as likes or Retweet, and many other bits of information that result from your use of the Twitter Services.”*

Regarding user identity management, the data application I used for extracting information from the Twitter API listed twitter accounts that were verified. Those that were not verified were further analyzed using BotOrNot software, which “checks the activity of a Twitter account and gives it a score based on how likely the account is to be a bot. Higher scores are more bot-like” (Ferrara et al. 2016). Tweets of accounts that failed this test were automatically rejected.

5.5 Validity and reliability of the study

Validity in qualitative research means “appropriateness” of the tools, processes and data being presented (Leung 2015). In assessing research validity, aspects of whether the research question is valid for the desired outcome, appropriateness of the chosen methodology for answering the research question, research design, appropriate sample and data analysis and whether the results and

conclusions are valid for the chosen sample and context are considered (Ibid). In this thesis, I address validity by first presenting the main research question “*Who set the agenda for political discourse on Twitter during the 2016 Uganda presidential elections through the #UgandaDecides?*” This question is relevant for me to search the Twitter API to for data on users tweeting with this #UgandaDecides hashtag, which further leads me to identify profiles of those tweeting, which profiles are then categorized to provide for the most retweeted user accounts as the most influential (agenda setters) during the study periods. Besides, I apply use of #UgandaDecides, by using an open-source tool designed to enable social scientists interested in gathering and analyzing Twitter data. I also provide a thorough description of how I conducted my data in sections 5.3 providing for transferability of my findings to a different setting thus providing for external validity. Reliability in qualitative research on the hand refers to consistency and where the study is replicable (Carcary, 2009). In this thesis, I have addressed this by providing a detailed description on how data was collected, coded and analyzed in section 5.3. I have also provided a code sheet in the appendix 1.

5.6 Limitations of the study

This study is without limitations. As such, I have identified 4 of these. I first acknowledge that Twitter users may not be representative of the overall population in Uganda as already stated by scholars such as Marwick, 2014, Fuchs, 2014 among others. Besides the opinion polls upon which categories of key issues the public felt pertinent during the election period was also not representative of the entire population of Ugandans. I can thus say that my study may not present a true reflection of agenda setting effects of media in shaping online discourse.

The second limitation is the choice of methodology used in this study. Although qualitative methods have been highlighted to provide a more detailed analysis of Twitter agenda setting effects, I only apply content analysis in my study. Other qualitative methods such interviews, netnography and ethnography would have enriched my results. Due to time constraints in collecting the data, this was not possible. As such I had to rely on archived tweets with #UgandaDecides as the unit of analysis.

Related to the above limitation, I was not able to engage with other researchers in identifying coding themes used in reaching to the categories used in this thesis. I thus acknowledge some biasness from me as the codes identified where based on my understanding of the political and media landscape in Uganda.

Chapter Six

6.0 Results Analysis

In this chapter, I present two sections presenting the data analyzed from the two study periods. The first analysis focuses on results from the pre-election period while the second analysis focuses on results on the Election Day. Analysis for the most retweeted user category and the public agenda issues also referred to as Twitter topics/issues for both study periods is presented in that order. I relate the findings to the theoretical framework while also aligning it to previous works done on Twitter use in political settings.

6.1 Determining the Agenda setters

To respond to RQ1, I sought to establish the key actors who set the agenda for political discourse. In this I looked at both study periods to identify the most retweeted user category.

For the pre-election period news media set the agenda for political discourse with 54% of the tweets made garnering retweets followed by ordinary citizens at 24%, journalists at 21% and Presidential candidates at 2%. See figure 1

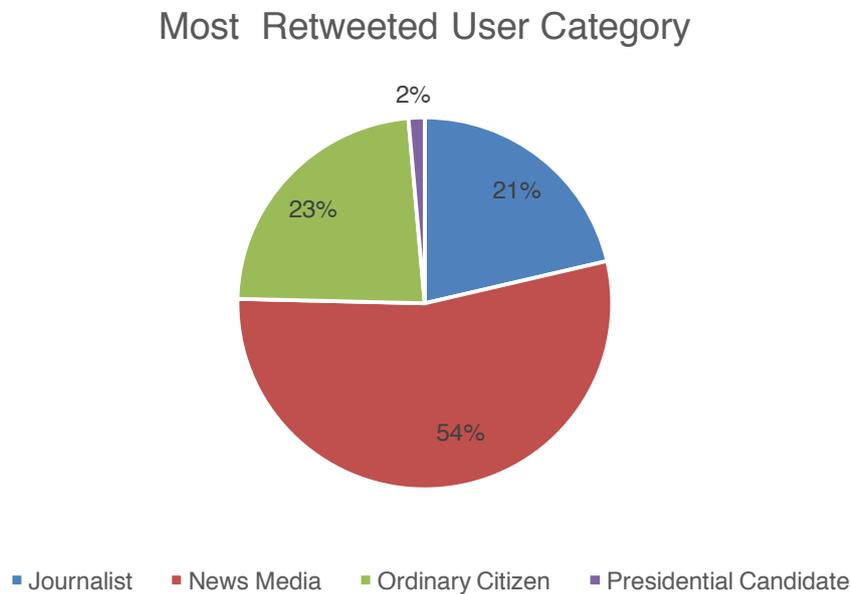


Figure 1 Most Retweeted User Category during the pre-election period

For this period, first level agenda holds that news media set the public agenda. This find also demonstrates that in the online world, news media holds onto its gatekeeping role by determining what

should be on the public agenda. This refutes claims made by Stars et.al, 2013; Boynton and Richardson, 2015, that mainstream media may lose its monopolistic traditional agenda setting.

However, results from the election period presented were contradictory to the pre-election period when it came to news media in setting the public agenda. For this period, ordinary citizens set the agenda as tweets from their accounts received the most retweets accounting for 43.2% of the retweet activity. This was followed by news media at 23.2%, journalists at 14.7% and political activists at 10.3%. Political organization, political commentators, presidential candidate, presidential candidates, political party and political organization came last with 4.6%, 2.1%, 0.7%, 0.7 and 0.3 % respectively. See figure 2 below:

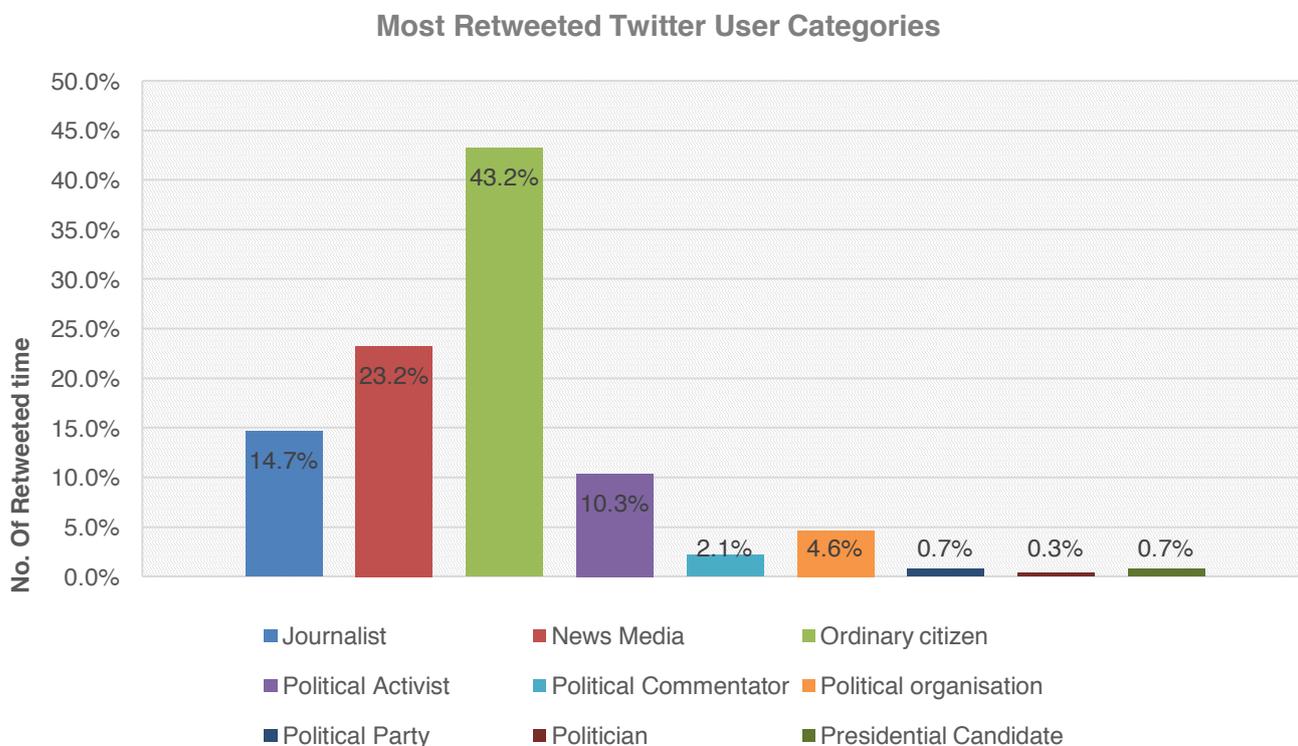


Figure 2 Most retweeted Twitter user categories

On election day, news media agenda setting role was reversed. This finding also shows that in applying the first level agenda setting on the Twittersphere in Uganda, news media role in setting the public agenda was weakened. Taking into consideration that news media came in second followed by journalists, it could mean that much as their agenda setting role was challenged, there was attempt to stir debate.

This finding also demonstrates Twitter’s potential in acting as a democratic media that can bring together ordinary people to have an equal foot in the political discourse (Shirky, 2011; Murthy, 2013;

Xu et al., 2014). Most importantly, the presence of other actors as political commentators, political organizations, candidates, politicians and political, although with minimal influence indicates the emerging recognition of Twitter as a tool that facilitate political discourse.

6.2. Twitter agenda issues/topics

Out of the tweets analyzed from the pre-election data, a total of 13 topics were identified and categorized as - Call to action; Candidate leadership style; Election Monitoring; Election results; Election violence; Electoral reforms; Media Censorship; Opinion poll; Presidential Debate; Service delivery; Vote rigging; Voter bribery and Voter education. These are summarized in the table below. For this period, news media set the public agenda for other actors when it came to topics/issues for discussion with a score of 57%, followed by ordinary citizens (24%); journalists (23%) and presidential candidates at 2%. See Table 6 below:

Table 6 Twitter topic/issues Vs retweets of User Category during the pre-election period

Twitter topics/issues	User categories				Total
	Journalist	News Media	Ordinary Citizen	Presidential Candidate	
Call to action	0.9%	2.7%	3.4%	0.5%	7.4%
Candidate leadership style	0.1%	1.4%	0.2%	0.0%	1.7%
Election Monitoring	5.9%	15.0%	4.7%	0.5%	26.1%
Election results	0.1%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%
Election violence	5.4%	15.2%	7.8%	0.1%	28.4%
Electoral reforms	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Media Censorship	0.6%	2.5%	0.8%	0.1%	3.9%
Opinion poll	0.1%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%
Presidential Debate	3.5%	11.2%	4.2%	0.3%	19.2%
Service delivery	0.3%	1.0%	1.2%	0.0%	2.5%
Vote rigging	0.4%	2.9%	1.2%	0.0%	4.5%
Voter bribery	0.0%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.4%
Voter education	0.3%	1.7%	0.4%	0.0%	2.4%
Grand	17.7%	57.0%	24.0%	1.4%	100.0%

News Media were more prominent in tweeting about election monitoring, violence; presidential debate; vote rigging; media censorship and vote rigging and as such these topics gained the most attention among other actors. For instance, the most retweeted tweet about election violence came from BBC Africa reporting about police presence in Kampala. This tweet was retweeted 322 times with 139 favorites.

*“Strong police presence in Uganda's capital, ordered businesses to shut
<https://t.co/Ia1mY2ZyaE> #UgandaDecides <https://t.co/ffUBBPU7ma>”,
 @bbcafrica*

In this period, ordinary citizens are seen to be set the agenda for issuing calling for action (see 5.4) for category descriptions.

A closer look the most retweeted tweets from news media, one government owned newspaper, the New Vision Uganda and a private TV station, NBS Television were around voter education with information shared by the electoral commission on election dates, information about polling stations. (See Table 7 below).

Table 7 Most Retweeted Tweets News Media organization during pre-election period

News Media Organization	Twitter text	retweets
New Vision UGANDA	Kigundu: In case a voter makes a mistake on their ballot paper, they have a right to ask a polling officer for another paper. #UgandaDecides	21
NBS Television	Kiggundu: We have 28,010 polling stations. We imported more than 32K devices. If there's a flaw in one, there'll be reserve #UgandaDecides	19
NBS Television	Dr. Kiggundu: Voters have a right to ask a polling officer for another ballot paper in case they error on the first one. #UgandaDecides	18
New Vision UGANDA	Kiggundu: Complaints Desk will be reachable via toll free numbers 0800110022, 0800110023, 0800776776, 0800778778. 7am-4pm #UgandaDecides	15

The above tweets relate to the public concern of lack of trust in institutions such as the electoral commission expressed in the opinion polls (Research World International, 2016). It can be argued here that in the above tweets, news media tweets tweeting about the electoral commission sought to resonate with the offline public agenda concern thereby providing electoral commission some sort of legitimacy. Previous studies have shown that social media conversations can be used to reflect offline issues (Odinga, 2013; Mejora et.al, 2015).

The other issues tweeted by the news media that gained prominence among Twitter users included – tweets about voter bribery, vote rigging, service delivery, presidential debate, the public opinion poll, media censorship, election violence and election monitoring. These tweeted issues were also prominent in the opinion polls.

However, the pre-election period also manifested minimal aspects of reverse agenda setting. In reversed agenda setting, media loses its agenda setting role as online users seek to drive the agenda of media to other issues that they deem important. Tweets about “call to action” included those about calling for peaceful elections, calls to stop circulation of misinformation and hate speech. Looking at the issue of call to action regarding the issues that retweeted from the news media, it shows that in online communities like on Twitter, news media’s agenda setting role can be challenged. This is so because interests of online users may be different from those of the news media. In fact, the most retweeted tweet under this category was an expression by an ordinary citizen lamenting about the lovely people, culture and beauty of the country and how it had been good to him. In his tweet, he added another hashtag #IChoosePeaceUG in addition to the #UgandaDecides hashtag, which is the focus of this study. This tweet was retweeted 48 times, received 38 mentions and 45 likes. See the tweet below:



OPP
@patrickoyulu

Following

...Uganda has been good to me. It's lovely people, it's culture, and it's beauty.
[#IChoosePeaceUG](#) [#UgandaDecides](#)



RETWEETS 48 LIKES 45



10:47 PM - 28 Jan 2016

McCombs, 2004 has also stated that in most cases, the first and second level agenda setting go hand in hand since objects (issues) and attributes can be combined in media messages and in public thoughts and conversations. In looking at this tweet, there are two aspects of agenda setting that manifest. That is the issue of calling peace through the #IChoosePeaceUg hashtag and the attributes attached to the tweet by the description of Uganda as a great country with lovely people, good culture and beautiful place to be.

Unlike the pre-election period, on the election day, news media demonstrated less agenda setting effects. For this period, overall ordinary citizens set the agenda in terms of determining which issues needed more attention for political discourse on the Twittersphere as seen in Table 08. Topics/issues tweeted by citizens that garnered the most attention in form of retweets included –

election results; vote rigging; media censorship; media censorship; election mismanagement; voting coverage and call to action.

Table 8 Twitter topic retweets on Election day

Topic/issue	Journa- list	News Media	Ordinary citizen	Political Activist	Political Comment- ator	Political Organiza- -tion	Political Party	Politi- cian	Presidential Candidate
Call to Action			98	4	0	25	0		0
Election mismanagement	378	936	1,506	1144	0	43	95	10	0
Election monitoring	0	0	25	32	0	0	0	0	0
Election Results	1,453	1671	4,152	990	439	15	22	17	0
Election Violence	1,328	2,785	1,809	432	0	183	0	43	0
Media censorship	734	964	2,292	100	114	1,106	0	39	174
Vote rigging	686	1,192	3,038	348	88	50	57	0	0
Voting coverage	108	313	894	229	45	44	61	0	61
Total	4,687	7,861	13,814	3,299	686	1,466	235	109	235

The most retweeted tweet was that of an ordinary citizen announcing election results at one of the polling stations. This tweet alone received 315 retweets, 110 favorites and 24 mentions. See tweet below.

*“REAKING NEWS: Kiseka Market Results KB: 428M7: 01
Kiseka market guys still looking for the one guy that voted for M7 #UgandaDecides”
@WalA™x*

Two more similar tweets by ordinary citizens showing defeat of the incumbent also received attention by other actors.

“You guys, there's a polling station in Kyengera where Mibirizi got 16 votes and Sevo got 13 ,#UgandaDecides” @Rukwengye received 135 retweets, 50 favorites and 19 mentions

“Celebrations in gulu after counting at the last Polling Station where KB has won at all polling stations including Barracks” #UgandaDecides, @UsamahMpindi – received 107 retweets, 41 favorites and 163 responses

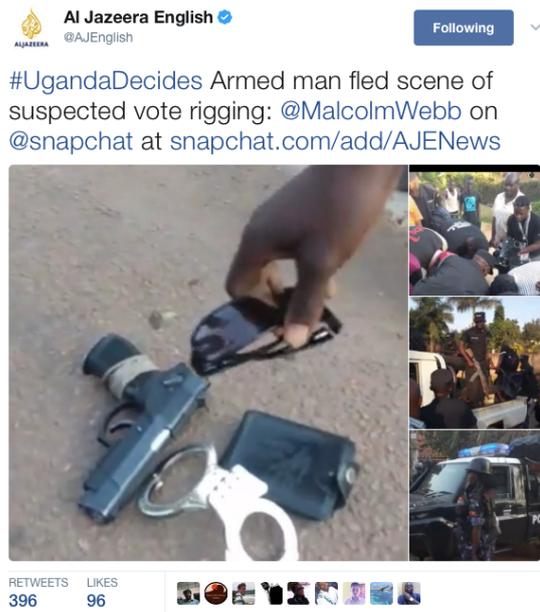
The issue of election results was also prominent on the public agenda as seen in the opinion polls conducted before the elections. The poll cited failure by the incumbent to hand over power as one of the “main fears” during the election (Research World International Limited, 2016). It is therefore with no surprised to see tweets from ordinary citizens reporting about election results.

Ordinary citizens also set the agenda when it came to reporting on vote rigging on the election day. A tweet about voter rigging from an ordinary user also gained considerable retweets and mention by a news media.

See for instance tweet below: -



In another tweet on vote rigging, News media is seen referencing a tweet from an ordinary citizen reporting about vote rigging. See for example this tweet from Al Jazeera.



This @AJEnglish tweet was retweeted 396 times with 96 likes. In this tweet, I again see aspects reversed agenda setting, where an ordinary user’s tweet sets the agenda for news media.

Retweets from News Media on election day

On election day, the news media was seen to set the agenda in reporting about election violence. This finding was seen in the pre-election, where the top issue on Twitter agenda was election violence.

The top three tweets under this issue reported about the arrest of Kizza Besisye coming from the accounts of @BBCAfrica, @ntvuganda and @dailymonitor. See Table 9.

Table 9 Top News Media retweeted accounts on Election day

Twitter account	User name	Tweet text	No. of Retweets
BBCAfrica	BBC Africa	Uganda's main opposition candidate Kizza Besigye arrested, his party says https://t.co/Gqy1beiG6O #UgandaDecides https://t.co/C74JfdAsrm	302
ntvuganda	NTV UGANDA	Kizza Besigye has been arrested by Police in Naguru for unclear reasons	259

		#UgandaDecides https://t.co/MbscDnXsNs	
DailyMonitor	Daily Monitor	@kizzabesigye1 has been arrested by Joint Police in Naguru @abubakerlubowa #UgandaDecides https://t.co/HVxieA7fGG	212

In this part of the analysis, news media is seen to influence the political discourse by sharing news about the arrest of one of the presidential candidates, thereby manifesting first level agenda setting effects especially around the issue of election violence. Election violence is one of the most cited issue during elections period in Uganda (Gibb, 2012; Africa Research Bulletin, 2016). Its thus with no doubt to see it manifest on Uganda’s Twittersphere during this election period.

Most Retweeted issues from other actors on election day

As I already mentioned, Twitter activity on election day saw emergency of new actors other than news media organizations, journalists and citizens in the political discourse on the platform. One way to look at this is to consider the shutdown of social media platforms including Twitter, which could have motivated these actors to show their deviance to the directive. Borrowing from previous research by Ausserhofer and Maireder, 2013, who found the platform increasingly becoming popular with professions operating around political issues. The same could be said for Uganda.

Chapter Seven

7.0 Conclusions and recommendations for future research

7.1 Conclusions

The agenda setting theory holds that the media sets public agenda by choosing salient issues. The theory predicts high positive correlation between the media agenda and the topics on the public agenda (McCombs, 2014). In this study, I sought to examine the agenda setting effects of Twitter usage during the 2016 presidential election by asking the question of “*Who set the agenda for political discourse on Twitter during the 2016 Uganda presidential elections through the #UgandaDecides?*” Results, however indicate different actors were involved in determining the issues on the Twittersphere agenda during the 2016 Uganda election.

In first level agenda setting, the news media must set the public agenda but this was not the case as presented in the results analysis of this thesis. The first level agenda setting effects were mainly manifested during the pre-election period. It's clear that the news media set the agenda by influencing the topics for discussion as determined in the number of the retweets, received from their tweets.

However, on Election Day, news media agenda setting role was weakened as they came second to influence the topics discussed on the Twittersphere. Instead, a new actor - ordinary citizens was seen to influence what topics/issues set the agenda for political discourse. This finding is not less different from research conducted on Twitter, which shows that platform can be empowering as it acted as a space for ordinary citizens to participate in political discourse.

Further, the differences in agenda setting effect of news media during the pre-election and on the election day could also be attributed to the social media blockade imposed by the communications regulator – the Uganda Communications Commission. On February 17, 2016, the eve of the 2016 elections, access to Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and mobile services was blocked by telecom providers under instructions from the regulator in the pretext of protecting national security (BCC News, 2016). Given the decline in media freedoms in Uganda as highlighted in section 2.2 of this thesis, I can argue that news media were afraid of violating the government's directive therefore deeply affecting their level of influence on the Twitter for this period.

However, the defiance exercised by Twitter users on the election day by continuing to use the platform can be applied to McCombs, 2014, argument of the blurring lines introduced by new media in the people's everyday communicative aspects. More so, it can be argued that despite the absence of the news media in determining what to focus on for political discourse, people will find means to engage in conversations that are meaningful to them even if it means violating directives set by those in power. With this, I resonate with Shirky, 2011, who argues that government attempts to control

social media use are not likely to succeed in the long run as social media are “long-term tools that can strengthen civil society and the public sphere” (Shirky 2011, 32).

The emergency of ordinary citizens in setting the agenda during election day was indicative of the case of reversed agenda setting emerging in this study. This goes to show that in the changing media environment and new power relations are emerging between different actors, the traditional agenda setting theory that the news media sets the public agenda needs to be revisited. In reverse agenda setting, the public is seen to set the agenda for media by telling media what issues they should focus on. The absence of agenda setting from the news media on election day is indicative of the weekend ability of mainstream media to influence the public in the social media era.

In both study periods, the use of Twitter by news media that was categorized to include traditional media – TV and radio, and newspapers is indicative of their recognition of the new opportunities provided by social media. Moreover, the findings also show that despite operating in restrictive media environment, both media and public can use twitter as a participatory platform.

7.1 Reflections for future research

In this thesis, I focused on Twitter as a public space for deliberation and participation and applied the first level agenda setting theory to determine whether the news media set the Twitter public agenda. However, as I mentioned in the limitations of the study, the population on Twitter is not entirely representative of the people in Uganda, given the low internet access and limited use of Twitter itself. Nonetheless, I cannot ignore the growing interest in the use of the platform by both ordinary citizens and political elites to discuss political and social issues in the country. From this, two things should be taken into consideration.

First, the research methods could be applied to other social media platforms like Facebook to assess whether the news media sets the public agenda or its agenda setting role is weakened as has been shown in the findings of this study.

Second, while studying Twitter agenda effects, research into intermedia agenda setting needs to be taken into consideration. My research did not focus how different news media relied on other news media to determine the issues for discussion. Future research into this could be applied by focusing on other Twitter features such as the @mention to establish how one medium referenced the other.

Further the hybridity of news media environment where there are using old and new media as part of their news making processes needs to be further explored for the case of Uganda. In this case, intermedia agenda setting could be applied to determine whether the agendas of traditional media such as newspapers and broadcast media reflect those on the Twitter agenda.

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Appendix 1

CODE SHEET

Descriptive Aspects of the Twitter user accounts with #UgandaDecides

- Name of author
- Twitter ID
- Author bio
- Links to their page

Twitter user category

<i>User category</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Journalist	Affiliation to a news media agency	I am an adequate journalist! I fear God, but I report without fear or favour. I work @ntvuganda
News Media	Print media, news blogs, online news magazines, broadcast media (TV and radio)	@ntvuganda Uganda's leading TV station, fast and first reliable, objective and comprehensive news, plus unrivaled...
Ordinary Citizen	Had no affiliation to any of the mentioned categories	@SarahKagingo Founder @SoftPowerPR . 'For God, And My Country' #Uganda, the #PearlofAfrica Kampala
Political Activist	Mention of their role	@SarahBireete Lawyer, Human rights activist, Director-Center for Constitutional Governance (CCG)& Partner, Kamugisha Advocates ~When devil raises dust, God raises the standard Kampala Uganda • twitter.com/sarahbireete
Political Commentator	Mention of their role	Researcher on governance, social accountability, political accountability for @ICTDTax at @IDS UK Interested in governance, public revenue, social accountability, international development, and reducing inequality.

Political Organization	Affiliation to a political organization - Political organization classified as civic organization	<u>CCEDU</u> <u>@cceduganda</u> Promoting the integrity , credibility and transparency of the electoral process. Like us on Facebook via http://facebook.com/cceduganda Uganda • East Africa • ccedu.org.ug
Political Party	Affiliation to a political party e.g NRM, FDC, DP	<u>@FDCAfficial1</u> We salute your courage and thank you for your support and believing in us for fairness, justice and democracy. email: fdcdigital@fdc.ug
Politician	Mention of their role	<u>@SsemujjuNganda</u> Spokesperson <u>@FDCAfficial1</u> Kira Municipality Member of Parliament of Uganda Bweyogerere • parliament.go.ug
Presidential Candidate	Affiliated to a presidential candidate	<u>@KagutaMuseveni</u> President of the Republic of Uganda

Code sheet for tweet topics/issues and tweet examples

Tweet Topic/issue	Category Description	Tweet examples
Call to action	Tweets calling for peaceful election. Tweets featured additional hashtags such as #IChoosePeace #Topowa (Don't giveup);	See: "@ntvuganda Stop this misinformation! There is NO such rally with @AmamaMbabazi in

	Tweets calling to stop circulation of false information - for instance one of the presidential candidate tweeted to a television station which was reporting of him holding a joint rally with one of his opponent. Tweets calling to stop spread of hate speech.	Yumbe today #UgandaDecides https://t.co/JGzgrU85QQ ”;
Candidate leadership style	Tweets about leadership style, most were referred to the incumbent presidential as a dictator who should not be re-elected	What're Ugandans not saying of #M7 but're burning to scream it out? C'mon say it. Dictator! Dictator! Dictator!; Kalyegira: To imagine that a man like Besigye hasn't played a major role in our govt in last 15yrs is what is wrong w/ Africa #UgandaDecides
Election history	Tweets providing history of Uganda elections. This provided insight into the history of Uganda elections with some providing links to articles about presidential candidates	
Election monitoring	Tweets about candidate campaign schedule; arrival of election observers or commentary made by them about the election. Tweets providing general insight into the elections were also put under this category. Tweets reporting arrival and dispatch of ballot papers	Donations to @kizzabesigye1 across the country: 78 goats, 11 cows, countless chicken, and 96 million. #UgandaDecides https://t.co/JFXhHDo1w6 ; NTV reporters set off to different districts around the country to cover the 2016 general election #UgandaDecides https://t.co/966crygECV
Election results	Tweets reporting about when and how election results will be announced. Tweets predicting the election winner were also put under this category	On Monitor website @ Rushere Pri Sch; M7-760: KB-2. But P/S has only 437 registered voters. Check it

	and those around access to the national tally centre	out & confirm.#UgandaDecides
Election violence	These focused-on cases of police brutality, intimidation and arrest of opposition candidates, supporters and journalists	Uganda's main opposition candidate Kizza Besigye arrested, his party says https://t.co/Gqy1beiG6O #UgandaDecides https://t.co/C74JfdAsrm
Electoral reforms	Tweets calling for change in the electoral systems	
Media Censorship	Tweets reporting on the ban of media from covering candidate campaign trail, hosting of opposition candidates on radio and television and those condemning the ban against use of mobile phones during vote tallying. The electoral commission issued a ban to voters not to use mobile phones around polling stations.	Users in #Uganda are reporting issues accessing Twitter on Election Day. We hope full service will be restored soon. #UgandaDecides
Presidential Debate	Tweet focused on discussion around the first ever presidential debate held in January and February with an additional hashtag #UGDebate16	Dr Shaka Ssali, Dr Suzie Nalwanga, and Dr Joel Kibazo will be the moderators tonight #UGDebate #UgandaDecides https://t.co/U5ZfuG7ITr
Service delivery	Focus on service delivery issues such as health, education, infrastructure, etc. and how candidates were addressing them or not in the campaign	Besigye: Museveni is calling abject poverty and rampant unemployment as 'STEADY PROGRESS' #LiveAt9

		<p>#UgandaDecides https://t.co/kAtxBRyh7o; Nsereko: Steady progress? If we had well-paid doctors before NRM, where's the steady progress today given under-paid doctors? #UgandaDecides</p>
Vote rigging	Tweets on discrepancies on the voter's register and those mentioning cases pre-ticket ballot papers and ballot papers on the eve of the election	<p>Besigye is gonna lead until we go to bed, When we wake, Museveni will be swearing in. #UgandaDecides;</p> <p>Vote rigging! No running from it. It's gonna happen! All sides accusing each other! Go vote anyway. #UgandaDecides https://t.co/6BTiiwezNo</p>
Voter bribery	Tweets on voter bribery by candidates	<p>#Museveni pre-ticked ballot papers Cause #Mayhem In Kabale https://t.co/fALo8IYRfc #UgandaDecides https://t.co/TvJWKPN45O</p>

<p>Voter education</p>	<p>Tweets mainly shared by the electoral commission on election dates, where to vote from and how to contact</p>	<p>#UgandaDecides Besigye urges voters to ensure they've voted by 12 noon and they should wait by the polling station. Go with roasted cassava</p> <p>KIGGUNDU:</p> <p>Voters should go to polling stations with a " Voter Location Slip". #VLS @UgandaEc #UgandaDecides https://t.co/xC4g80gEFF</p> <p>@FDCAfficial1: the law allows voters to stand 20m away from polling stations not @UgandaEc 100m @nbstv @KKariisa #UgandaDecides</p> <p>#VoterTip: Voting on the 18th Feb will take place between 7am - 4pm to allow vote counting before it becomes dark</p> <p>@ntvuganda #UgandaDecides</p>
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