Xenophobic responses on social media: the case of Donald Trump

Political Communication and Xenophobia on Social Media

COURSE: Master Thesis in Media and Communication Science, 15 ECTS
PROGRAMME: International Communication
AUTHOR: Lotte Forsberg
TUTOR: Susanne Almgren
EXAMINER: Florencia Enghel
SEMESTER: Spring 2018
ABSTRACT

Writer: Lotte Forsberg
Title: Xenophobic Comments on Social Media: the case of Donald Trump
Subtitle: Political Communication and Xenophobia on Social Media
Language: English
Pages: 30

President Trump’s communication style is different than his predecessors and his colleagues in the political arena. He mainly communicates through social media, whether it is with other presidents, his followers or enemies. Moreover, Trump’s style of practicing politics is often referred to as populism. One of the features of populism is the sympathy for nationalism or xenophobic nationalism (Mudde 2013;2014). Therefore, this study tries to find out whether there are differences in xenophobic comments on the three main social media platforms of Donald Trump – Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. In total, thirty comments were analysed classified amongst the three social media platforms and divided into the category of either ‘political’ or ‘non-political’. Findings show that the relation between Trump’s social media pages and xenophobia are related to intergroup anxiety and negative stereotypes (Stephan and Stephan, 2000). Furthermore, this study does not prove that there are differences in xenophobic comments between a political and a non-political post. However, it does conclude that Trump’s Facebook was the only social media platform that did not show any xenophobic comments, compared to the other two social media platforms that were analysed.

Keywords: xenophobia, social media, Donald Trump, politics, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter
Introduction

This study tries to connect three main concepts. First, the study has a focus on social media, which in this study implies Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Furthermore, the concepts of digital communication related to politics and xenophobia will be of importance. The binding factor between these concepts is Donald Trump. In this study, they will be explained and analysed through theoretically driven examples. The study has the intention to understand and analyse reactions underneath the posts of Donald Trump in relation to xenophobia. Communication styles used by Trump himself are analysed extensively and it is therefore interesting to analyse the responses he gets from his audience. Hence, one can argue that this is related to political communication and therefore political communication will also be taken into account. Also, political communication is often less about the political science itself, but more about how psychology, sociology and economies influence the role of communication in the political system (Bennet & Iyengar, 2008).

Long before the elections 2016, Donald Trump was a well-known and successful American businessman. He made a name for himself through real-estate and had a lifestyle filled with glitter and glamour. This all changed when he decided to run for president in 2016. He surprised friend and enemy with his victory and became the 45th American president. Without any political experience, he is different from his predecessors, especially concerning the way of communicating with his audience. His favourite means of communication is Twitter. Some scholars argue that Twitter is a good/suitable platform for two-way communication, because it is more interactive, dialogic, authentic and credible (Pleil, 2007; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007). Also, through social media, one is able to reach a large public, wherein the transmitter and receiver are able to answer in their own time or place (Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007). It is therefore easier to use than classic media in order to fade the boundary between two communication styles: interpersonal and mass communication (Schultz, Utz and Göritz, 2011).

However, according to some critical scholars, Twitter is increasingly faced with the image of an elite culture (Fuchs, 2013; Marwick, 2013). This implies an unbalanced relationship between users with powers and an extensive social media reach (such as Donald Trump) and the ‘mass audience’ – the followers (Marwick, 2013). According to Crawford (2009), the majority of the Twitter-users is a recipient of content that was originally sent by the small Twitter-elite. She argues that when many messages on Twitter will be scanned quickly and do not get any further attention at all, this is described as background listening. To summarize, it can be concluded that there are diverging views when it comes to communication on social media and in particular on Twitter.
1.1 Political communication

There are many definitions of what political communication is. This study is partly based on the definition of Denton and Woodward (1990): “Pure discussions about the allocation of public recourses (revenues), official authority (who is given power to make legal, legislative and executive decision), and official sanctions (what the state rewards and punishes)” (p. 4). McNair (2016) adds to this definition that it is not only about written statements, but also visual communication such as, for example, the way someone is dressed or a logo.

Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) define three stages in the era of political communication. The first one starts after World War II. This was the era wherein individual voters had long-lasting political party identifications (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999). The majority of political communication was subordinate to strong and stable political institutions and beliefs (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999). Several researchers (Tarde, 1903; Lazarsfeldt et. al, 1948) conclude that citizens had little capacity to make independent choices about, among other things, politics. The view of the individual was shaped by the group members, which seems to indicate that the media had less to influence them (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008). The communication was therefore mainly based on an interpersonal level.

In the second era, the 1960’s, the media – and especially television – was the main medium for political information. It is assumed that the information was delivered to a more or less passive and homogeneous public (Crozier, 2007). This changed in the last decades, consequently leading to the need for political parties to work harder and learn new strategies to get attention. The parties thought out several strategies to get into the news. As a result, the parties were required to present campaign themes and could not speak directly to the public anymore (Mayhew, 1997). Due to the enormous popularity of the television, the long-lasting political identification turned into a more short-term interest, such as the interest for political campaigns or the resignation of a minister (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008).

The third era commenced with the rise of the internet and social media. It is also the era where people do have less real-life conversations with each other, but tend to spend more time online, consuming and giving comments related to the public debate. One of the most influential philosophers in this field is Habermas (1989). He has conducted a theory named: ‘power-free dialogue’. It is an idea wherein an open society based on deliberation is comprised. It implies that a real-life debate is more valuable, inferring when a person can actively participate instead of mainly consuming information. Also, the symbol of the presence of only one big authority figure slowly disappears. This is due to a great majority of – at least in the Western world countries – citizens who are almost always connected to the internet. It thus changed the way
how people received political information. Consequently, there is less time for politicians to defend themselves against their audience, due to the expectation that they tell the media right away what happened (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008). Many scholars conclude that the media is inherently linked to the political institution nowadays (Cook 1998; Ryfe 2006).

1.2 Social media

Social media is often used as a term for new media that requires interactive participation (Manning, 2014). Images or posts of ordinary people at spontaneous moments seems to be shared extensively through social media. It tends to connect with the emotional side of the user, who can make it a viral phenomenon (Enli, 2009). The media has become more unrealistic due to manipulated images and news, causing a growing desire for authenticity and uniqueness (Dovey 2000; Guignon 2004; Baudrillard 2008). It is therefore that social media is the selected platform for politicians to communicate on nowadays (Pew Research Center, 2016). Some studies show that followers of politicians on social media are mostly male and younger than 35, and – not insignificantly – most likely at the end of the political spectrum (Newman et. al, 2017). Trough social media, more and more citizens refer to politicians as an ‘authentic political leader’ or ‘reliable’ (Enli, 2015). One of the most important aspects for a politician on social media is related to self-presentation. They can decide for themselves how they present themselves instead of being portrayed by journalists (Enli, 2015).

1.2.1 Facebook

In 2017, the total daily use of social networking by users worldwide was 135 minutes (Statista, 2017). Research of Social Media Today (2017) concludes that a person spends an average of 35 minutes per day on Facebook. It is the most visited website on social media, with 2.2 billion monthly active users in the fourth quarter of 2017 (Statista, 2017). Facebook was designed to facilitate online communities. Also, Facebook consists of personal profiles that each include a real user name (first name and last name), contact details, level of education or employment information. Scholars found out that Facebook-users most likely tend to communicate with other users that share the same values and demographics. Other scholars found out that Facebook-users seem to be more honest in their online self-representation, because their online profile is closely linked to their offline profile (Jacobson, 2014).

Pew Research Center states that during the presidential election of 2008, 10% of the Americans used Facebook for political communication (Jacobson, 2014). Since 2012, Facebook is a standard medium for political campaigns, but it was also a platform that turned out to be the main source for Internet memes. The political discussions on Facebook increased in 2012 due to the United States campaign. At that point, the discussion on whether social media should
post messages that are in some way politically biased came up. However, scholars Rainie and Smith (2012) found that Facebook-users who discuss politics with their online friends on Facebook, may reconsider their opinions when they are in contact with someone who’s values are mostly the same (Rainie & Smith, 2012).

1.2.2 Twitter
Twitter is a social media platform for microblogging, with a limitation of 140 characters per message – Tweet (Johnson, 2014). According to Statista (2017), Twitter had 330 million monthly users in the last quarter of 2017. Users of this web application can Tweet links, as well as pictures or videos and are able to make use of #hashtags. This is a keyword and must be used with the ‘#’ sign before the word. Anyone active on Twitter can find this particular #hashtag. Based on research among American social media users, Pew Research Center (2016) states that Twitter is more popular among users who have received higher education. Also, 42% of the Twitter users said that they are daily visitors and 23% indicates that they visit the platform more than once a day (Pew Research Center, 2016). The possibilities are either to have a private or public account, the latter indicating that everyone can read your Tweets and write Tweets to your account.

Twitter has been used by several politicians worldwide for political communication. Especially during elections, Twitter is a popular forum for political representatives and other political influencers (Park, 2013). Also, partly due to the hashtag, Twitter has been complimented for the ability to bring people together, connect them and engage them all with the same political goals and ambition (Christakis & Fowler, 2009; Salkowitz, 2010).

1.2.3 Instagram
Furthermore, the last social medium that will be discussed in this study is Instagram. This social medium had 800 million users in the last quarter of 2017 (Statista, 2017). The main focus of this platform is sharing photos among other Instagram users. They have the possibility to share their photo in the way they want, for example by editing a filter on their picture (Glantz, 2014). It is also possible to like, comment and follow other users and just like Twitter, there is a distinction between a private and a public account. More than half (59%) of Instagram users is younger than 29 years (Wade, 2018).

It seems that political candidates are most likely to use Instagram to connect with their voters (Glantz, 2014). The use of Instagram in the political field is a relatively new phenomenon. Obama and Romney were the first ones in 2012 who started using Instagram as a way for political communication, to give the voter a more “behind-the-scenes” look (Liebhart &
In general, Instagram users are only able to see posts from other users that they follow. It is therefore that Instagram could be more as a means for discussion and investment with followers who already support the politician, rather than changing their mind and gain more support for his/her campaign (Glantz, 2014).

1.3 Xenophobia

The definition of xenophobia that will be followed in this study is the following: “Xenophobia is a psycho-logical state of hostility or fear towards outsiders” (Reynolds & Vine, 1987, p. 28). In Ancient Greek, xenos means ‘strange’ and phobia ‘fear’. According to Van Amersfoort (1982), xenophobia derives from the battle between migrants and the host community in times of economic crisis. From the point of view of the native citizens, the migrants are in competition for housing or a workplace. Xenophobia is linked to nationalism and ethnocentrism, sharing the characteristics of belief in the superiority of the nation state over others (Licata & Klein, 2002; Schirmer, 1998).

With social media, it is incredibly easy to spread hateful material that is visible for millions of people. Also, it provides a platform for radicalization and promoting xenophobia (Oksanen et. al, 2014). One could say that, related to this theme, there is a great difference between the traditional media and (new) social media. A good example of this is that after New Year’s Eve 2015 in Cologne, a night on which there was a lot of turmoil around a big quantity of sexual assault accusations, all immigrants were depicted as the perpetrators of this crime (Kleist, 2017). The biggest part of the criticism consisted of incomprehension towards the slow response of the traditional media and not being explicit about the nationality of the perpetrators – the latter due to the fear for being portrayed as ‘anti-refugee’ (Kleist, 2017). In contrast, social media is pre-eminently the right platform to avoid the traditional gatekeeping (Harry, 2017). Therefore, social media is nowadays widely used as a platform where one with a-typical ideas can express himself and find an audience. However, this also has a downside. Due to the lack of authority on social media, anyone can broadcast himself without any regulation, also working the other way around. Often a conversation is misunderstood and it is easy to begin an argument, or spreading facts that are either false or not completely true (Harry, 2017). In summary, social media is a perfect place for people who want to spread their xenophobic ideas with the world, due to the lack of regulation and the ability to reach people all around the globe.

1.4 Structure

In this chapter, this thesis has provided an introduction on the field of political communication, social media and xenophobia. The following chapter will elaborate on this.
Next, the research aim and questions will be presented. Thereafter, the previous research that has been conducted on the three concepts (political communication, social media and xenophobia) will be analysed. In the next chapter, the theoretical framework on the concepts of social identity and integrated prejudice will be explained. The sixth chapter describes the method and materials that have been used for the purpose of this research. Lastly, the final chapter will provide the analysis and the concluding discussion, as well as a few suggestions for future research.
2. Background

To put in general terms, this study intends to draw the link between digital communication – related to politics – social media, and xenophobia, and aims to understand what impact these three can have on one another. Hence, one has to understand the field of – digital – political communication. Moreover, the three social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, will be illustrated. Finally, the relation between xenophobia and Donald Trump’s social media pages will be explained.

Donald Trump’s direct communication style through Twitter is different than former presidents. Even though social media has more influence in political communication, the direct way Trump uses it, is new. With this new Twitter-communication style, he introduced a new era in political communication (Enli, 2017). Trump is seen as a populistic leader, and for a populistic leader, charisma is a helpful way to communicate with the audience (Barr, 2009). He is very active on his social media accounts, in particular Twitter, engaging with the public. Whether it is the president of North-Korea, The New York Times, or the victims of a shooting incident, he approaches them via the same medium. Also, he wants to emphasize the image of being an a-typical president, who is different in many ways and says what he thinks (Enli, 2007; Hwang, 2016).

As mentioned before, the main social media used by Trump to communicate directly with his audience is Twitter. But this does not mean he does not use other social media. He is also active on Instagram and Facebook. To put it into perspective: he has almost 50 million followers on Twitter, almost 25 million Facebook-likes and followers and 8,4 million followers on Instagram.

Trumps’ way of practicing politics is a way of populism. Mudde (2013; 2014) suggests that populism always has three common features: anti-establishment, authoritarianism, and nativism. In particular the latter – nativism – is interesting for this study. In general, populists are characterized by their sympathy for nativism or xenophobic nationalism. This means that people are uniform, consequently leading to the exclusion of people from other cultures by nations or states (Inglehart & Norris, 2016).

Not seldom is Trump’s rhetoric being linked to xenophobic ideas, especially against Mexicans and Muslims. This is also due to his own pronunciations. Trump has his own views on how the US should deal with for example Muslims (Haynes, 2017). Last year, he claimed that all citizens of mainly Muslim countries (first seven, later six) should be banned, and thereby also suggests
that they are potential terrorists (Haynes, 2017). As a result, it could be interesting to dig into his top three social media accounts – Twitter, Facebook and Instagram – to compare them with each other and find out whether one attracts more xenophobic comments than the other.
3. Aim and research questions

The research objective of this thesis strives towards an understanding of xenophobic responses of social media users on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. It is important to research the links between the two concepts – social media and xenophobia – and what they have to do with each other. Therefore, the study focuses on – and analyses – the comments underneath the social media posts of Donald Trump.

This study aims to investigate how the responses of social media users posted underneath Donald Trump’s social media posts relate to xenophobia. The comments will be compared to the other social media platforms, to find out whether there are differences related to xenophobic comments. Finally, a division will be made between the political and non-political posts, comparing them with one another. Therefore, the following research questions will be asked:

1. How do responses on Donald Trump’s social media posts relate to xenophobia?

2. What are the differences in responses when comparing a political related post and a non-political related post?

3. What are the main differences in responses between the three social media platforms?
4. Research review

This chapter will give an overview of the studies in the field of the following three concepts: political communication, social media and xenophobia. Since political communication on social media – digital communication – is the main research field, this chapter will start with an overview of studies that show how social media – in particular Instagram, Twitter and Facebook – is used by politicians to communicate with their audience. After that, the third concept ‘xenophobia’ will be linked to digital political communication. The research review has been structured in themes related to the three concepts.

The main search criteria for the studies concerning digital political communication on social media were the following keywords: digital or online communication, social media, politics, political communication, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. As social media is a relatively new phenomenon, other previously conducted studies with a focus on digital communication instead of social media are included, in order to ensure a wide range of research related to the topic.

4.1 Digital political communication on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram

4.1.1 Digital political communication during elections

One of the most important time periods for politicians to communicate through internet or social media with their followers and potential voters is during a political campaign. However, this does not automatically mean that everyone can or will be reached. The study of Stier et. al (2018) shows that people who use the internet – and social media in particular – for political purposes have specific political interests, although politicians use the internet as a medium to reach a mass audience. The research was set up during the German federal elections in 2013. As mentioned before, Instagram is the youngest social medium in the list of Facebook and Twitter. It is also the medium that is used the least for online campaigning during elections (Filimonov et. al, 2016). Filimonov et. al (2016) analyse the usage of Instagram by politicians during the Swedish national elections in 2014. The study reveals that the purpose of using this particular social media platform was mainly broadcasting, rather than mobilization. Initially, campaigning on Facebook was set up for interaction with followers and potential voters. However, in the case of presidential candidate Obama’s Facebook, during the elections of 2012, it showed that people more often comment and interact on policy-oriented posts, than on posts that promoted the campaign (Justinussen & Gerodimos, 2015). Considering the growing use of social media for political aims, the study of LaMarre and Suzuki-Lambrecht (2013) examines the effectiveness of Twitter as a platform for congressional campaigns. The study reveals that
candidates Twitter use increased their odds of winning. It also indicates that the key of a Twitter success in an election campaign lies in developing a large and engaged audience (LaMarre & Suzuki-Lambrecht, 2013). However, Adams and McCorkindale (2013) conducted a study that focuses on the Twitter communication style of the presidential elections of 2012, in which the candidates who were active on Twitter failed in creating a substantive conversation with their followers and potential voters. It seems that there are great advantages in communicating digitally during elections, provided that a substantive discussion is held. Moreover, Gibson and McAllister (2006) conclude that the impact of an online campaign has on the electoral support a candidate receive is significant. They claim that web campaigning plays a part on the winning strategy. But, where on the web and on which social media platform the campaign is held and political communication takes place, is mediated by the digital architecture of a platform or website (Bossetta, 2016). It can be argued that the functionality, network structure, algorithmic filtering and datafication model is of importance in the political campaign strategy on social media. This case study was focused on the 2016 US presidential elections.

4.1.2 Digital political communication not related to an event

It can be argued that online political engagement has a strong link with offline political participation (Conroy et. al, 2012). Conroy et. al (2012) conducted a survey among American university students on whether they promote online political engagement. However, Enli and Skogerbø (2013) discovered that Norwegian politicians used social media as a communication tool not only for marketing purposes, but also for a dialogue with their audience. Still, results show that there is no relation between the political knowledge of a person and the online participation in political groups. This is due to the low level of online political discussion (Conroy et. al, 2016). Facebook was more popular for marketing use and Twitter was used more in a dialogue way, in comparison with Facebook. The latter is the main point of the research of Yang et. al (2016), who conclude that Twitter is a good manner of conversation for American opposition politicians with their public. Yang et. al (2016) examined more than 100.000 Tweets of the former president Obama and the fifty State Governors and concluded that Republicans and Democrats tend to be more or less equally active on Twitter. Furthermore, they found that Obama had a distinctive agenda-setting strategy, that was neither related to Republicans or Democrats. It seems that American politicians with an extreme ideological agenda-setting tend to benefit more from Twitter than their opponents (Hong, 2013). This puts even more emphasis on the ideological position of a politician as it is therefore even clearer who they represent and who not. The studies that were analysed give a general view on the way how politicians use Instagram, Twitter or Facebook, either during the campaign or on a regular basis. It seems that Twitter is more useful for politicians for a
dialogue with someone and Facebook is more popular for political marketing strategies. Instagram is new in the environment of political communication and is therefore more useful for an audience who is already interested in the politician, than to convince the followers. Moreover, it seems that it is difficult to attract persons who are not interested in politics by digital political communication.

4.2 Digital communication and xenophobia

The studies related to digital communication and xenophobia were found by the following search criteria: xenophobia online or digital xenophobia, social media. Despite the fact that a wide range of content was available regarding the development of xenophobia in the last decades, it was less easy to find studies that covered both features – online and xenophobia – in their research. While conducting the previous research, it turned out that scholars were more focused on digital xenophobia during an event than online xenophobia that was not related to a case-study or an event.

4.2.1 Digital communication and xenophobia related to an event

The rise of social media is inherent to the rise of xenophobia on the internet, for the reason that there is a great opportunity to reach a big audience and attract other sympathizers who share the same ideas. Online xenophobia is an alarming trend, because there are no limitations. Comments and thoughts can be shared with people from all over the world, with all the negative consequences of such (Oyedemi, 2015). With respect to online xenophobia, challenges arise by fundamental differences between Europe and the US. The same speech may be allowed in one of the two continents, whilst it is prohibited on the other (Rorive, 2002). The American law states that “racist and xenophobic propaganda are constitutionally protected as varieties of controversial political speech. Public authorities are therefore forbidden from interfering in the content of such communications” (p. 1). The current major social media platforms are American, follow the US law. Questions raise about on one hand, the responsible use of the internet and the protection of basic human rights and on the other hand, maintaining the freedom of speech on the internet and providing a place for public debate on difficult issues (Rorive, 2002).

Knoblock (2017) analysed the post about ‘Ban the Muslims’ (BTM) on the official Facebook-page of Donald Trump through critical discourse analysis, to find out whether this post attracts xenophobic responses. Findings were that commenters described Muslims as “others”, meaning different than Christian Americans. Also, they were described as dangerous, aggressive and linked to terrorism. Commenters also mentioned that the Muslim culture is subordinate to the American. To conclude, the people who reacted on the post, believed in their
own superiority (Knoblock, 2017). By US law this is not prohibited, due to the freedom of speech and the prohibition for public authorities from interfering in the content (Rorive, 2002). There are other studies that show similar results, regarding online anti-Muslim hate, discrimination, prejudice and other threats (Awan, 2014). The offenders presented some key motivations and reasons behind their racist comments. Awan (2014) argues that the problem with the low level of online abuse reports, is a lack of awareness among people on whether something is online abuse or not. As an example, the foreign Singaporean talent migrants were exposed to online xenophobia by native Singaporeans (Gomes, 2015). Singaporeans used the foreign talent migrants as an emotional call for more attention to attack the government regarding their own concerns for their economic future. As a result, the Singaporean society became a more political environment. Although the following might not be an example of digital communication, it does show that, blaming immigrants for economical setbacks is not a new phenomenon (Lar, 2007). Another example is the West African independence, often governmental failures and economic recessions were blamed on (illegal) immigrants. It seems that immigrants are more often victim of xenophobic comments and accusations than the native population (Gomes, 2015; Lar, 2007).

4.2.2 Digital communication and xenophobia not related to an event

As is known, social media are the transmitters for thoughts, ideas and messages towards people all around the world. However, as Nadia et. al (2017) put it: “Social media are about YOUR life, what you like, what you feel and they cater towards what you prefer by constantly monitoring your online behaviour” (p. 67). They argue that social media does not show us the ‘real world’, but a world that we like, where all like-minded people are gathered together. Everyone reinforces their own reality rather than participating with other views. This also happens with the Twitter-account of Donald Trump. Claims have been made that Trump has popularized the term ‘political incorrectness’ – also known as fake news – which normalizes racist framing of immigration. Due to Trumps popularization of the political incorrectness, white racist people are more comfortable sharing their racist thoughts, not being aware of their own racial mind-set (Shafer, 2017). It is a good example of the current situation outlined above by Nadia et. al (2017). Not only being exposed to the same sort of messages, but also the extensive use of a particular platform can increase a racial mind-set. Studies show that an increased use of Facebook, may lead to more acceptance of negative racial messages (Rauch and Schanz, 2013). Also, users who tend to spend more time on Facebook are more exposed to the influence of messages with racial content. It seems that when young people (9-16) are exposed to this type of messages with xenophobic or racial content, are most likely adolescents with mental health problems. Also, girls are in the majority to visit these websites (Racatau, 2013). The study of Littler and Feldman (2017) shows no apparent relationship between
regular use of Twitter and Facebook and immigration concerns. It can be argued that there is a distinction between leaving a xenophobic comment when personal information is public and when it is online shielded through for example a private account. Munger (2016) concludes that when a Twitter-user has an anonymous Twitter-account, it contains notably less messages with racist content. However, this was not the case when personal information of a user was visible in the profile. There was actually an increase in radical comments, according to the visibility of personal information on a social media account.

4.3 Conclusion previous research

It can be concluded that digital political communication usually occurs on Facebook or Twitter and less on Instagram. However, this does not mean that there is no political communication on Instagram, but it happens to take place during the elections with an audience that is already interested in the politician. Facebook is better platform for political marketing strategies and Twitter is more useful to conduct a dialogue. It can be concluded that spending time on the same social media can increase a racial mind-set and that this lead to more acceptance of negative content (Rauch & Schanz, 2013). Also, the extensive use of a particular social media platform is a reason for increasing a racial mind-set, that can ultimately lead to more sympathy towards online xenophobia. A side-note in this conclusion is the presence of a public or private profile (Munger, 2016). It is concluded that an anonymous Twitter account contains less racial messages than a Twitter account where personal information was visible.
5. Theoretical framework

This study draws upon a critical discourse analysis of xenophobia. Therefore, the concept of xenophobia is taken as a basis for this research.

5.1 Social identity theory

Several scholars have researched the phenomenon ‘xenophobia’. Tajfel’s (1981, 1982) social psychological approach is that xenophobia means the division an individual can make, to the world which they belong (Silverman, 1992; Wrench & Solomos 1993). Tajfel (1979) introduces social identity theory, a theory about how people present themselves in intergroup contexts. According to Tajfel (1979) the definition of social identity is: “The individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership” (p. 292). The feeling of belonging to a certain group gives us an important source of pride and self-esteem. Also, being part of a group gives one a sense of belonging and a place in the world. Thus, groups could be divided into ‘them’ – out-groups – and ‘us’ – in-groups. It happens that, in order to improve their self-esteem, in-groups discriminate against out-groups (Tajfel, 1979). There are three processes that can create this in-group or out-group mind set (Tajfel & Turner, 1979):

1. Social Categorization: in order to identify and understand people, we categorize them. Those categorizations could be as follow: fat, thin, long, short, white and black, etc. It is possible for an individual to belong to several groups, as one can be fat, long and white at the same time. We can understand things about ourselves and others when we know to what category we/they belong to (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)

2. Social Identification: in fact, when one belongs to a certain group, he tends to adopt the identity of this group. This means that the norms of that group are common sense and there is a high probability that as a member of that group – one behaves within those norms. As a result, emotional significance will develop to that identification and as mentioned earlier, the self-esteem of a group member depends on this identification (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)

3. Social Comparison: after putting ourselves in an in-group, the comparison with another (out-)group will be made. It seems that the in-group tries to show the best side of themselves as opposed to others. Furthermore, the members of an in-group try to emphasize the negative parts of an out-group. It can be argued that this is a form of increasing the self-esteem and explains prejudice and discrimination towards other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).
It can be argued that the social identity theory can be valuable in analysing the responses underneath the posts of Donald Trump. Due to the fact that this theory has a great focus on in particular in-groups and out-groups, this is of importance for a further analysis of the reactions. Xenophobia and the concepts of ‘in-groups’ and ‘out-groups’ are tightly linked to one another. The three processes described above can make it easier understanding how people in ‘in-groups’ and ‘out-groups’ can feel about themselves and others.

5.2 The integrated theory of prejudice

The study conducted by Stephan and Stephan (2000) states that in particular perceptions of threats are important for the development of prejudice and fear of the out-group. The main idea of this study is that people in general receive chances which then motivates them to behave or not. According to this theory, first two perceptions of threat can be conducted, that have an impact on later behaviour.

Personal threat: is when someone assumes that his or her identity is threatened and there is a need to protect and secure this identity. It can also be called a ‘self-directed threat’, it often leads to “save face” and has a lot to do with standing up for yourself (Ellemers et. al., 2002; Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002). Also, a central point in the social identity approach – and thus personal threat – is the impact social groups has on individuals.

Intergroup threat: Scholars Riek et. al (2006) use the following definition: “as a general definition for intergroup threat occurs when one group’s actions, beliefs, or characteristics challenge the goal attainment or well-being of another group”. It is largely equal to personal threat only that it is aimed to a group and not only one person. Social competition is one of the reasons a group can feel threatened. When two groups are fighting for the same resources – tangible or intangible – (Riek, Mania & Gaertner, 2006) they find themselves motivated to defeat the other group for the resources, so it can maintain the identity and ‘win’ the resources. Through this situation, negative thoughts and attitudes concerning the other group maintain (Aberson & Gaffney, 2008).

It has been found that when someone does not feel threatened, he does not feel motivated to protect themselves or his group. Without a treat, an individual will not act or react (Redmond, 2012). Drawing further on the theory of prejudice, four types of fear are important: realistic threats, symbolic threats, intergroup anxiety and negative stereotypes (p. 25).

1. Realistic threats: the in-group has the feeling that the out-group is a threat for the economic and political power of the in-group, and threatening to the physical and
material well-being of the in-group. It is not only the actual threat, but also the perceived threat.

2. Symbolic threats: this involves difference in morals, values, beliefs, standards and attitudes between the in-group and out-group. These symbolic threats mostly arise because an in-group is convinced of the correctness of their own norms and values.

3. Intergroup anxiety: people feel threatened if they are forced to deal with people from the out-group, because they are afraid for the negative consequences for themselves. Also, they are scared to be confronted with something unknown and they feel uncomfortable with that. It threatens their self-image, because being confronted with something unknown could cause an unpleasant or even shameful situation.

4. Negative stereotypes: when people of an in-group need to deal with people of an out-group, the stereotypes they have towards the out-group could generate feelings of anxiety. It is therefore the in-group that avoids interaction with the out-group. Thus, stereotypes maintain.

The integrated theory of prejudice can be used in order to subdivide the threatened feelings an individual may have. The categories represent another form of threats or anxiety. Thus, using these four categories during the analysis, it may be easier to understand what kind of triggers there are. Especially triggers for a certain feeling of threat or anxiety and how this affects the relations between in-groups and out-groups.

5.3 Political post and non-political post

This study analyses a political post and non-political post. A political social media post is defined as a post related to politics. As referred to earlier in the introduction, Bennet and Iyengar (2008) stated that political communication is less about the political science itself, but infers more how psychology, sociology and economies influence the role of communication in the political system. A political related post is thus everything that can be identified as the latter. A non-political post is everything that does not fit into the definition of Bennet and Iyengar (2008).
6. Methodology

To answer the three research questions, discourse analysis will be used. This approach fits best when it comes to how a text relates to the reality in relation to the structure of a text. This chapter explores discourse theory, elaborating on its characteristics in a detailed manner.

6.1 Theory of CDA

There are several methods that can be used for text analysis. But this study draws further on the work of Fairclough (1995): critical discourse analysis (CDA). Many scholars in the field of CDA emphasizes the need to research the creation process of a text and how a text has been coded (Wodak & Meyer, 2001; Richardson, 2007). What all the scholars have in common is the view of language as it shapes the society and is shaped by society (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The process of CDA infers: identities, representations and relations. Those three concepts are the basis for understanding and analysing a text. The critical part in ‘critical discourse analysis’ is, according to Bourdieu (1982), the connection of language and the effect it has on power. Power is a broad term, but in this context, it illustrates the power within a text. Some words are common-sense and thus have a different approach on power than others. CDA assumes that power is assigned and practised through discourse (Machin & Mayr, 2012). According to Fairclough, CDA is openly committed to political intervention and social change (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p.258). CDA is mainly based on the ideas of a few scholars: Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak and Teun van Dijk. However, there is not just one approach on CDA, but there are several.

Several scholars, specialized in the theory of CDA, are used in this thesis in order to analyse the comments. Three concepts play a main role: naming and describing, negation, and representing time, space and society (Fowler 1991; Chapan 2006; Richardson 2007; Jeffries 2007; Jeffries 2010). Naming and describing (Jeffries, 2007) is highly focused on the manner of how writers refer to particular referents. Defined by Jeffries (2007): ‘naming and describing looks at the ways in which speakers and writers refer to particular referents – these can be things or people in the world around us, or more abstract concepts’. Referents can be everything in the world, such as a car, a woman or flowers. Text writers have the opportunity to influence the readers opinion, especially when the comment is not checked for false statements. It can be argued that several commenters tell untruths and it is therefore that is chosen for the text analysis of naming and describing (Jeffries, 2007). If the way in which a writer refers to a referent can colour the readers’ view, it is called negation. Jeffries (2010): ‘the use of a negative particle, negative pre-modifier or semantic negativity’. It is likely that there will be a great presence of negative words, both towards president Trump and towards his
opponents. Due to the presence of in-groups and out-groups who want to emphasize the negative characteristics of another. Negations are often recognizable by the negative particles. The final analytical tool that is being used is strongly connected to the concept of ‘time, space and society’ (Chapman 2006; Fowler 1991; Jeffries 2010). The linguistic term here fore is ‘deixis’, meaning words that are changeable, such as ‘you’, ‘tomorrow’ or ‘last year’. It is defined as follow: ‘deixis refers to the words (and phrases) in a language that allow a speaker or writer to locate their utterances in time and space and human society.’ The specific meaning they get depends on the context of the text. It gives the text writer the freedom to create a particular image of a world that may not be the whole image. Hence, there is chosen for this analytical tool, because there are high expectations that commenters will try to emphasize one particular side of the world, while there is no attention for the other side.

6.2 Text analysis
The majority of the comments under the social media posts are reactions to other social media users. Therefore, qualitative analysis was chosen. Qualitative content can consist of all sort of recorded communication, in this case: text (Mayring, 2000). Scholars Becker and Lissmann (1973) divided the content into two levels: theme and main ideas of the text, which means the primary content, and the context information, which is referred to as the latent content. Mayring’s (2000) approach shows the importance of the focus on empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts. By using text analysis in a qualitative way, the researcher agrees that the findings will not be generalizable.

6.3 Qualitative research
Often, qualitative research is defined as exploratory research. This means that it tries to give the reader a guide for understanding of underlying opinions, reasons, motivations and convictions. Furthermore, this type of research is also used to gain a deeper understanding of the problem or thoughts. One can conduct a semi-structured or unstructured qualitative data sample. What applies for all the types of qualitative research is that the sample is typically small. Also, qualitative researchers are often interested in behaviour or how people see things (Hammersley, 2013). Therefore, this study is defined as qualitative research. The reactions underneath the posts of Donald Trump are a certain form of behaviour and may reflect how one sees the world.

6.4 Data and sample
Due to the enormous amount of data content, but a limitation of time, two events will be examined. The sample includes one political event and one non-political related event. The
sample consists of the top five-commentss of two similar social media events displayed on the three social media pages. The collection of data is a selected quantity of thirty comments. One of the two selected events is the political related post of the North Korea deal with US and the non-political related post of Donald Trump and his wife wishing everyone a Merry Christmas. The two events were chosen because the posts were for the most part similar on all the three platforms. Only the Merry Christmas post on Twitter is a video, while it is an image on Facebook and Instagram. To ensure the consistency, top-comments that include observations about the spoken text in the video were not included in the analysis. Furthermore, both events show clear indications of being a political related and non-political related source. The top ten Facebook and Twitter comments were automatically generated, but Instagram does not have this type of sorting. Thus, the top comments on Instagram were manually collected.

6.5 Data analysis
The next step in the process of data collection is the classification of data. The main point of qualitative text analysis is to provide the audience a more insightful and thoughtful reading, which helps to look at the text from a new perspective. Linguistics Jeffries (2007; 2010), Richardson (2007), Chapman (2006) and Fowler (1991) conducted several language-related themes for text analysis. For this study, the following themes were used: naming and describing (Jeffries 2007; Richardson 2007), negation (Jeffries, 2010) and representing time, space and society (Jeffries 2010; Chapman 2006; Fowler, 1991). These three themes were chosen because they are the most suitable for understanding and analysing the comments. This study tries to find how Donald Trump’s social media posts are related to xenophobia. The first research question is highly focused on this. Differences in xenophobic comments will be analysed following the research question whether there are differences between a non-political post and a political post. Also, the differences in comments among the platforms will be analysed following the question about if there are differences related to xenophobic comments.

6.6 Reliability of the research
The most heard criticisms on qualitative research are that, firstly, qualitative research is often subject to a personal impression and thus biased. Secondly, it lacks reproducibility because there is an inseparable link between the research and the researcher. Therefore, there is no guarantee that a different researcher would come to the same conclusions. As a matter of a fact, a qualitative study gives a lot of information about little content (Mays, 1995). However, this study kept this in mind throughout the analysis of the text and always had the objective of creating a strong theory-driven study and discuss conclusions. Additionally, in the most suitable situation, all available comments should be studied. Yet, this is often not a preferred method, partly due to – for example – time pressure, whereby a limit is set to the selection
As previously stated, the sample of data was carefully gathered to make sure that the three social platforms and a (non-)political post were representative. To conclude, this study tries its best to ensure the reliability and validity of the data and theories used. Therefore, literature, theories and methods were efficient in order to answer the research questions and aim of the study.

6.7 Limitations of the study
This study has been conducted over a time period of two months. Therefore, some limitations occurred. One of the limitations is the small amount of data. Hence, results cannot be generalized. Furthermore, the top comments that were analysed give a general idea of the scope of the reactions underneath the posts of Donald Trump, but cannot guarantee the tone of the other comments that were not taken into account. For a more complete study, one can argue that a more extensive analysis about either several posts or more responses towards the posts is required.

6.8 Material

6.8.1 Political post: North-Korea and US deal
The original North-Korea Tweet was shared on the three different social media platforms and pictured as a Tweet on the 9th of March 2018 (see appendix 1). Trump insinuates that the US and North Korea discuss the possibility of making a deal between the two countries. Also, he suggests that this is in favour for the whole world. During the analysis, this Facebook-post had gotten 77,000 likes, had been shared more than 5,500 times and had gotten over 7,500 comments. On Twitter the post got over 125,000 likes, was shared more than 25,000 times and almost 18,000 users left a comment. Lastly, the Instagram-post was liked over a 200,000 times and received almost 5,500 comments. There is no share-option on Instagram. The comments will be analysed first through CDA where after the chosen theories will be encountered.

6.8.2 Non-political post: Christmas greeting
The original Merry Christmas greeting was posted on Facebook and Instagram as a picture and on Twitter as a video on the 25th of December 2017 (see appendix 2). It is a photo of the president and his wife, holding hands and well dressed up. The caption of the picture only says: Merry Christmas! By time of analysing, the Facebook post got 577,000 likes, was shared almost 31,000 times and got more than 50,000 comments. The Twitter post got more than 200,000 likes, was shared almost 50,000 times and received 33,680 comments. Finally, the Instagram post was liked almost 330,000 times and got almost 9,500 comments.
7. Analysis

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The analysis summarizes the findings of the critical discourse analysis.

7.1 North Korea peace deal with US

The comments were divided between several different findings: (1) discourse that showed fear and anxiety toward North Korea, out-group one; (2) the opponents of Donald Trump, consisting of people who make negative statements towards the supporters; (3) the comments concerning text writers who are pro-Trump and make statements that are positive regarding the president, and finally (4); negative comments towards Trump, or anti-Trump people.

The criteria used for ‘out-groups’ and ‘in-group’ are based on the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1979). Belonging to a group gives one a sense of belonging. As Tajfel puts it: “The individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership” (p. 292). Therefore, groups can be divided into two sorts: ‘in-groups’ – us – and ‘out-groups’ – them.

Out-group one: North Korea

An example that was found in the Instagram comments related to fear towards North Korea was: “We can't believe him (Kim-Jong-Un) since he is no way God fearing person”. Another example that emphasizes the fear towards this outgroup is the sentence: “It is really a wonder how you are tackling Kim (Jong-Un) for creating a peaceful world”. It is an example of a negative stereotype (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), that the leader of North Korea is inferior to Donald Trump, because Trump can ‘tackle him’. Moreover, the following sentence that was commented on Trump’s Facebook post, also includes fear or anxiety towards North Korea: “First concerns are for your safety, President Trump! Take every precaution necessary to ensure your well-being and safety. We need you. Your job in this Nation is far from being done!” It suggests that the president is in danger and that the danger is related to North Korea.

Finally, on Trump’s Twitter, the comments about North Korea were slightly more positive and less associated with fear or anxiety. An Instagram comment shows similar effects: “I pray for God’s hand of divine protection over you as you continue to lead.” It suggests that Trump needs protection while he is negotiating with North Korea. This is a form of intergroup anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) that illustrates anxiety towards something unknown. The final (Facebook) comment related to out-group (Tajfel, 1981, 1982) North Korea draws an overall conclusion that Kim Jong-Un cannot refuse the peace deal: “Someone finally showed North Korea what a real leader is. No longer can they make threats they know they can’t carry out because the administration will give them what they want. Nope. America has real
leadership now and I think Kim Jong Un is smart enough to see he has no choice but to comply.” It is an example of the social comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), where this text writer tries to emphasize the negative parts of the out-group in order to improve his self-esteem. The comment entails negative stereotypes (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) towards the North-Korean leader. It suggests that Kim Jong-Un is subordinate to Trump, because he has to conform to the rules of Trump.

Out-group two: rivals of Donald Trump

One of the text writers on Facebook chose to present democrats as “worst bunch of crying democrats”. The reader gets the impression of the writer’s opinion regarding democrats, which is a negation (Jeffries, 2010). Another Facebook commenter stated that “it will be like a repeat of the election, be fun to see the socialist media melt down having to admit you’re awesome”. It suggests that the text writer belongs to the in-group (Tajfel, 1981, 1982) of Donald Trump, because he is cynical about the socialist media that does not support Trump. This text writer makes a negative statement against the out-group ‘socialist media’, what can suggest that he wants to increase his self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Also, the next Facebook comment is clear in dissociating from the opponents of Trump and can be divided into the group of ‘social comparison’ (Tajfel & Turner, 1979): “We Trump supporters aren’t so uneducated now are we, libbies? We are smarter than you think we are”. Interesting is the negative stereotype (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) – ‘uneducated’ – he uses to identify himself. An Instagram-commenter wrote that “people are listening to the fake media. If they did research they would know you are here for the country and the people”. It suggests that there are two sorts of media, the ‘real’ and ‘fake’ one. Where the text writer himself belongs to the group of ‘real media’ and is a Trump supporter, people who listen to ‘fake’ media are therefore automatically Trump rivals and an out-group. The Trump-supporters are convinced by the correctness of their own views against the statements of the Trump-opponents and this can be seen as a form of symbolic threats (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Symbolic threats often arise when an in-group is convinced by their own values and/or correctness.

In-group one: pro Donald Trump

It is striking that Donald Trump and his actions are often presented as a nominalisation (Machin & Mayr, 2012), something that cannot be argued against. As one of the Facebook-commenters puts it: “World peace, economy on the rise, immigration reform, lowest unemployment rate in history, tackled multiple natural disasters, places America FIRST in everything he does”. Also, the following Facebook comment: ‘There is no doubt that America made the right choice electing Donald Trump to be our president and I strongly believe he’s going to be reelected’ is a pro Trump statement. It can be argued that the suggestion is raised
that this commenter might have the feeling that the out-group – opponents of Trump – is a realistic threat (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) for the economic and political power in the in-group. The statement of the text writer about the re-election of Trump causes doubts about trust in the out-group. Also, it is a social identification (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) with the in-group of pro-Trump supporters. Emotional identification is often visible in statements like these, as this comment includes an emotional loaded statement: ‘I strongly believe’. The final Instagram comment is highly positive about Trump and also consists of an emotional identification (Tajfel & Turner, 1979): “I feel confident and comfortable that you will handle our side of matters as good or better than anyone else on this planet would”. This comment emphasizes the in-group of Trump supporters with the words ‘our side of matters’.

**In-group two: anti-Donald Trump**

A Twitter comment that was anti-Trump: “There is no deal, you idiot. There is no meeting. Your own White House admitted today that your North Korea policy is exactly the same as that of President Obama. The only difference is that Obama is smarter, more popular and better looking than you’ll ever be” consists of a clear view of the writer's opinion, which is presented as a fact. Also, the statement 'your own White House' indicates that the writer wants to dissociate himself from this to demonstrate that he does not belong to the same group as Trump. The statements in this comment are an example of symbolic threats (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), as the writer is convinced by the correctness of his own morals, values and beliefs. It is also a social comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) where the in-group emphasizes the negative sides of Donald Trump. The Instagram comment that shows similar results: “Here another example of your country’s policy to create another war with another country for no reason. I mean seriously what is the reason, what are the arguments? Peace is so far away from war. Your country is the worst” is merely focused on the negative sides of Trump, rather than on the positive sides of Obama. However, it can be argued that this comment has more characteristics of intergroup anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). When Trump is doing something right – such as making a peace deal – it can feel like a threat for people who are Trump-opponents. They are forced to deal with a president, because there are no more – or less – arguments to be his rival, and they feel uncomfortable with that.

**7.2 Merry Christmas greeting**

The comments in this section were divided into the central findings, discourses that showed fear or anxiety towards out-group one – Obama. This implies the fear of the in-group – Trump supporters – towards Obama. The second in-group contains both the rivals of Donald Trump and supporters of Obama. The next analysed theme are comments concerning text writers who are pro-Trump and make statements that are positive regarding the president. The final out-
group are the opponents of Donald Trump. This out-group consists of people who make negative statements towards opponents of Trump.

Outgroup one: anti- Obama

One of the biggest out-groups of Donald Trump is the one of the opponents of former president Obama. A commenter writes the following on Facebook: “Ever NOTICE that Obama had NO RELATIVES, cousins, Uncles, Aunts, brothers COME and spend Christmas or any HOLIDAYS and not even HIS WIFE... WHY? No family... because HE is NOT from the USA and SHE is a NOT what you think she is....”. The text writer here tries to represent an alternative reality (Jeffries, 2010). It is full of negative stereotypes (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). According to this commenter, Obama cannot be an American, because he is a black man and black people cannot be Americans. Those negative stereotypes are maintained because the in-group (Trump supporters) avoid interaction with the out-group (Obama supporters). One has to take into account that this is also an example of social comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Besides the fact that the commenter does not show the positive parts of his own in-group, he emphasizes the negative parts of the out-group, which is a form of prejudice and discrimination.

In-group one: anti- Donald Trump in relation to Obama

The Tweets: “Obama had 1.2 million likes on his Christmas Greeting (smiley)” and “Obama’s Christmas greeting is at 1.3 MILLION why is yours only 186K?” insinuates that Trump is less popular than the former president and highly emphasizes the in-group (anti- Donald Trump) and out-group (pro Trump). It also emphasises that Trump is less popular, which is thus an example of social comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) between the in-group and out-group. Also, the Tweet: “The White House looked so much better when the Obama’s were there. I guess money can’t buy class” is an example of the same in- and out-group. However, it also maintains a negative stereotype: money can’t buy class. The author writes that ‘money can’t buy class’, which means that as long as he is convinced by this, the commenter will avoid interaction with people who have money, due to the assumption that they do not have class.

In-group one: pro Donald Trump

An example that illustrates the in-group pro Donald Trump is the following Facebook comment: “He only sleeps 4-5 hours a night and he always look great. He doesn’t look tired or haggard. Always up and ready for more. Our First Lady has such a beautiful soul as well as a big heart for children. As well as beautiful on the outside”. At first sight, this comment does not seem to have any underlying expressions, but when having a closer look, it seems that this comment can be divided into the sub-group of symbolic threats. The text writer is completely convinced that Trump and his wife are doing the right things and that nobody
should argue against that. The opinions are presented as facts. The use of ‘we’ or ‘our’ assumes that there is a ‘collective’ other, that is opposed to the shared ideas (Oktar 2001; Eriksson & Aronsson, 2005). This phenomenon is also visible in the following Tweet: “We are Truly Blessed that you are Our President! God Bless you and Our First Lady. We Love You Both. Thank you!” In this comment, it becomes a bit vague who ‘we’ is. It might mean the Trump-supporters, but perhaps the text writer means all Americans. However, it is clear that the commenter made a distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

Outgroup two: anti-Trump

The following Facebook comment: “He’s getting things done as long as he isn’t blocked by those that still don’t want to accept that they lost” is an example of a symbolic threat (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). It seems as if the commenter is convinced by his own view and correctness, that is, that Trump is being blocked by his opponents. This opinion is presented as a fact, which makes it even harder to argue against. The next Facebook comment can be divided in the subgroup of negative stereotypes (Stephan & Stephan, 2000): “Please in regard to the UN, cut much more money from this criminal organization since thanking you”. The negative stereotype of the UN – according to this commenter – is that it is a criminal organization. But, a more obvious explanation is that the UN generates feelings of anxiety or fear in the commenter, therefore reasoning to avoid interaction with this out-group.

7.3 Analysis and research questions

With the support of the analysis of the two posts, this chapter tries to give an answer the three research questions. Hence, it was of importance to analyse the responses underneath the two posts and how they differ from each other – political post vs. non-political post and between the three social media platforms. The chosen theories – the integrated theory of prejudice and the social identity theory – were used as a deeper explanation of the meaning of the responses commented by social media user’s underneath Trump’s social media platforms. As the thirty comments have been analysed by CDA and explained by the theories, it will be possible to answer the first research question. The structure of the analysis was divided into two sub-chapters: the analysis of responses underneath the political post and the analysis of the non-political one. It was therefore easier to conduct the information that was needed for the research question concerning the differences between a political and non-political related post. In order to answer the final research question, it is of importance to analyse all the relevant responses that were found on all three social media platforms. One can make a comparison between the three social media platforms when all the relevant reactions are taken into account.
8. Conclusion and discussion

In this last chapter, the three research questions will be answered and reflected on in relation with the theoretical framework. Therefore, the results should be explained in the larger theoretical context. Firstly, the question about how the responses on Donald Trump’s social media posts relate to xenophobia will be answered. The analysis has shown that there are several ways in which this happens. First of all, there is a sense of ‘intergroup anxiety’ (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). It can be argued that leaving a xenophobic reaction that belongs to ‘intergroup anxiety’ happens because of the threat to the self-image one can experience when the in-group (US) cooperates with the out-group (North-Korea). Secondly, another relation between Trump’s social media posts and xenophobia has been found in the feelings that generate fear and anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) towards North-Korea. This is referred to as ‘negative stereotypes’. Other negative stereotypes were found towards former president Barack Obama and Trump, wherein the commenters referred to multiple out-groups, often using the social identification or social comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

The commenters tried to identify themselves with an in-group and behave to the norms of that group, or at least to the common and well-known ones. The social comparison was mostly visible when the in-group tried to present their positive sides and emphasized the negative parts of the out-group. Trump-supporters feel threatened when dealing with people from the out-group (Trump-opponents), also being afraid to be confronted with something unknown and they feel uncomfortable with that (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Next, the question of whether there are differences in reactions between the political and non-political post will be answered. It seems that both political and non-political posts have two in- and out-groups: ‘Trump-supporters’ vs. ‘Trump-opponents’, ‘US’ vs. ‘North-Korea’ related to the North-Korea post and ‘anti-Trump’, vs. ‘anti- Obama’ and ‘pro-Trump’ vs. ‘rivals of Trump’. Another striking conclusion concerning the non-political post is that former president Barack Obama is being used towards Trump in a negative manner. The commenters frame Obama as the ‘in-group’ and can be divided into the sub-group ‘symbolic threats’, which involves differences in morals, values, beliefs and standards (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). The final question is of importance when it comes to what the differences in responses are between the social media platforms. It can be concluded that the Facebook top-comments did not show any xenophobic statements that were related to Trump, although the Instagram and Twitter comments did show xenophobic characteristics.
8.1 Xenophobic comments on Trump’s social media?

In the beginning of this thesis, the development of digital political communication and xenophobia has been discussed, with a focus on the three main social media platforms: Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. It has shown that Twitter is a powerful social media platform for politicians during the elections (LaMarre & Suzuki-Lambrecht, 2013), whereas Facebook is more suitable for political related marketing purposes (Conroy et. al, 2016). Instagram is used less for only campaigning, but more for broadcasting the political signal (Filimonov et. al, 2016). The three social media platforms have different target groups and use various communications styles (e.g. Jacobson, 2014; Wade, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2016). One has to consider that Trump’s way of practicing politics often is referred to as populism, and, for populist politician’s, charisma is a helpful way to communicate with an audience (Barr, 2009). According to Mudde (2013; 2014), populists are in general characterized by their sympathy for nativism or xenophobic nationalism. The rise of social media is inherent to the rise of digital xenophobia (Oyedemi, 2015). Therefore, the question arises how Donald Trump’s social media pages relate to xenophobia.

To answer this, it is important to have the populistic communication style of Trump in mind, as well as how he distinguishes himself from his rivals. In contrast to his competitors, Trump is using social media to the fullest. Those two features – a populistic communication style and the dominant role on social media – are the main reason that Trump is the designated person for attracting xenophobic reactions. There is enough evidence to argue that a distinction in xenophobic comments between the different social media platforms can be found. It seems that the Facebook page of Donald Trump attracts less xenophobic orientated reactions than the other two social media platforms. Furthermore, one can conclude that there are no differences concerning the political- and non-political post found in xenophobic comments. Nevertheless, this thesis has shown that the two main reasons why commenters leave xenophobic reactions has to do with intergroup anxiety and negative stereotypes.

8.2 Relation to previous research

In chapter 4, previous studies related to digital political communication and xenophobia on internet were presented. As Conroy et. al (2016) state, the online political discussion has nothing to do with the level of the online political discussion. This is proven by the xenophobic comments under the social media posts, as analysed in this research. For example, the statement that Obama is not from the US, cannot be taking very serious. Another similar result – researched by Gomes (2015) – was the way in which North-Koreans were exposed to online xenophobia by Christian Americans. It can be seen as an emotional call for more attention regarding their own concerns about safety when US and North-Korea
are on speaking terms again. Furthermore, Shafer (2017) concluded that white racist people are feeling comfortable sharing their racist ideas, due to Trump’s popularization of the political incorrectness. This conclusion has also been found in the analysis of this thesis. Namely, the comment regarding that Obama is not from the US is a comment with a racial character. As previous concluded, Donald Trump’s Facebook did not attract any xenophobic orientated comment, even though fact that more political communication proceeds via this medium (e.g. Jacobson, 2014) than via Instagram.

8.3 Suggestions for further research

It has become clear that more research is needed in the field of political communication regarding Instagram. As Instagram is a new phenomenon in the digital political sphere, little research has been conducted on the ways in which politicians use Instagram for communication purposes. Special attention is needed for the relation between Instagram and xenophobia and the ways in which political communication has an influence on this. Furthermore, it can be argued that it is necessary to examine the influence of xenophobia on social media platforms. Due to the rise of users of social media, the rise of populism all around the world, and lack of regulation, social media platforms can be the future place for spreading hate-related messages. Lastly, one can suggest that a greater amount of data is needed in order to conduct this research, since findings regarding the matter are hard to compare and analyse. A comparison between several politician’s social media platforms – instead of just one – can also be a valuable extension. Nevertheless, the data is valuable and can contribute to the academic knowledge regarding political communication on social media in relation to xenophobia.
References


The deal with North Korea is very much in the making and will be, if completed, a very good one for the World. Time and place to be determined.

3/9/18, 7:42 PM
Appendix 3
Facebook top-comments North-Korea deal

Roy Garcia  World peace, economy on the rise, immigration reform, lowest unemployment rate in history, tackled multiple natural disasters, places America FIRST in everything he does, and in the face of the worst bunch of crying democrats I have ever seen! I don't care if he is yellow, orange, blue, red... give this man a Nobel Prize already!! #MAGA

Stan Piznarski  There is no doubt that, America made the right choice electing Donald Trump to be our president and I strongly believe that he's going to be reelected. America is transforming to be stronger and greater. North Korea is the latest win for him. America will vote for him again.
Dean Johnson When you pull this off you will cement yourself as one of the greatest Presidents of all time, it will be like a repeat of your win of the election, be fun to see the socialist media melt down having to admit you are awesome.

Matt Cain Someone finally showed North Korea what a real leader is. No longer can they make threats they know they can't carry out because the administration will give them what they want. Nope. America has real leadership now and I think Kim Jong Un is smart enough to see he has no choice but to comply. We Trump supporters aren't so uneducated now are we, libbies? We are smarter than you think we are.
Candy LaCroix First concerns are for your safety, President Trump!! Take every precaution necessary to ensure your well-being and safety! We need you. Your job in this Nation is far from being done!!! 💖
Appendix 4

Instagram top comments

jsamuel6460 Mr president sir..I believe you will do your best to make america great again. People are. Listening to the fake media. If they did there research they would know you are here for the country and the people. You are not the president for the money and stealing from the innocent..GOD BLESS YOU!! Keep going

michael.droz Korean reunification would be Nobel Peace worthy - unlike the last prez to win it for what? Seriously bring North Korea back into the fold. Make Korea great again and you win sir. That’s all you need to do and you are a hero! Do it...they want it... give them an option to join the world and they will. I feel it!!!
itsscarolinee This post and comments are ridiculous. Here another example of your country's policy to create another war with another country for no reason. I mean seriously what is the reason, what are the arguments? Peace is so farrrrr away from war. Your country is the worst.

josephmichael7360 President of United States of America really you are great. It is really a wonder how you are tackling Kim for creating a peaceful world. How ever we can't believe him since he is no way God fearing person. Now since he is not physically keeping well there can be change in his attitude.
huevos_rancheros_eatist I like that you are approaching this so positively. I feel confident and comfortable that you will handle our side of matters as good or better than anyone else on the planet would! 🤘️
There is no deal, you idiot. There is no meeting. Your own White House admitted today that your North Korea policy is exactly the same as that of President Obama. The only difference is Obama is smarter, more popular, and better looking than you’ll ever be.
President Trump will solve North Korea and win 520 electoral votes in 2020

President Trump will go down in history with the likes of Mehatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, MLK Jr. and other great peacemakers!
Appendix 6

Top comments Facebook Merry Christmas greeting

BA Brandt Ever NOTICE that Obama had NO RELATIVES, cousins, Uncles, Aunts, brothers COME and spend Christmas or any HOLIDAYS and not even HIS WIFE...WHY? No family... because HE is NOT from the USA and SHE is a NOT what you think she is...

Karen Fels Smet Merry Christmas! What's really amazing is Trump's work ethic. He only sleeps 4-5 hrs. a night and he always looks great. He doesn't look tired or haggard. Always up and ready for more. Our First Lady has such a beautiful soul as well as a big heart for children. As well as beautiful on the outside.
Joseph Kennedy Hard to believe that only a year ago people were thrown in jail for saying "Merry Christmas" but now thanks to Donald Trump we can say anything we want.. except "Diversity," "fetus," "transgender," "vulnerable," "entitlement," "science-based" and "evidence-based".

Austin JamonQuemo Wow, thank you for having the courage to say "Merry Christmas". Apparently there is nothing wrong with your vocal cords to keep you from fighting THIS war. #Vietnam #bonespurs #draftevader
Steven Abell Merry Christmas Mr Trump, i gave you my Vote for christmas last yr i didnt get you anything for christmas this year but in 3 more yrs i will give you my vote AGAIN, after 8 years of obama its all i have left!
ivanamtrump So funny how white Christians think that there is a war on Christmas and that Merry Christmas is being banned. It’s called other religions. Ever heard of it? You know why Muslims don’t say Merry Christmas? The same reason Christians don’t say Eid Mubarak. Try and learn about something other than yourselves, people.
maciasjanell Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you both as well.... thank you for bringing back such grace and elegance to the White House. I pray for God’s hand of divine protection over you as you continue to lead. It’s nice to be able to go to sleep feeling safe again..... knowing you are taking such strides in making us safe again. May God give you the wisdom, knowledge and discernment you need as the leader of this great nation....God Bless.

eddiet1973 Thank you and your family for the many sacrifices you are having to endure from the left to make this country great again and thank you for caring for the forgotten people of this nation. It has been so long since anyone has truly cared for the struggling people. Merry Christmas.
He and his beautiful family are so refreshing. He says what so many are thinking and he’s getting things done as long as he isn’t blocked by those that still don’t want to accept they lost. Blessings that this year will be one of the USA becoming what it should be.

garymodeen God bless you mr. President I will be praying for you and for our situation and our government I know you're doing the best you can
The White House looked so much better when the Obama’s were there. I guess money can’t buy class.

Wanted to keep you up to date; Obama’s Christmas greeting is at 1.3 MILLION, why is yours only 186K?

We are Truly Blessed that you are Our President! God Bless you and Our First Lady! We Love You both 🇺🇸❤️🙏, Thank You!

Thank you for bringing back our American Christmas Traditional Celebrations to the forefront!

Obama had 1.2million likes on his Christmas Greeting. 😄