# Social Media and its Impact on Young Men & Women's Political Participation in Fiji

**Glen Finau**[*]
*University of the South Pacific, Fiji*

**Romitesh Kant**
*University of the South Pacific, Fiji*

**Jope Tarai**
*University of the South Pacific, Fiji*

**Jason Titifanue**
*University of the South Pacific, Fiji*

ABSTRACT

Fiji's youth population (18-35 years) is around 37%. Since the Fiji military coup in 2006, the media has been working within stringent and at times impossible conditions. In essence, factors such as the Media Industry Decree hindered media attempts to holistically report political events. As such, the youth have been exposed to only one dominant set of interests the 2006 coup. However, despite this limitation, in amongst others, there have been spaces for which opposing and critical information has been made publicly accessible. In the early days of the coup it was through blogs (Walsh, 2010; Foster, 2007). As Fiji's transition to democracy materialized in 2012, social media has evolved as the 'new and safe' space and public sphere for political discourse. It has been noted that citizens can actively engage information which may be restricted in traditional media, due to the constraining political and media conditions. The claims that young people are politically apathetic and are neglecting their duty to participate in many democratic societies worldwide have been rebutted by a growing number of academics over the recent years (Loader, 2007; Marsh, O'Toole, & Jones, 2007). Without doubt many youth have indeed become disillusioned with

traditional, mainstream political parties and with those who claim to speak on their behalf. But this should not be misconstrued as a lack of interest on the part of youth with the political issues that influence their everyday lived experience.

**Keywords**

*Social Media, Young Women, Youth, Fiji, Women's Political Participation, Fiji Elections*

**\*Corresponding author:**

Postal Address: Glen Finau, the Faculty of Business and Economics, the University of the South Pacific, Laucala Campus, Suva, Fiji
Phone: +679 3232091; Mobile: +679 9060107
Email: finau_g@usp.ac.fj

# INTRODUCTION

The 18-35 age group that was projected to be part of the voting population in Fiji's 2014 election were anticipated to be 47%, out of which 75% were voting for the first time (Gonedau, 2012). Essentially this was the youth voting bloc, majority of whom, were to make their voices heard, through their vote. Since the Fiji military coup in 2006, the media has been working within stringent and at times impossible conditions. In essence, factors such as the Media Industry Decree hindered media attempts to holistically report on election related events. As such, these first time voters have been exposed to only one dominant set of interests for over seven years. However, despite this limitation, in amongst others, there have been spaces for which opposing and critical information has been made publicly accessible. In the early days of the coup it was through blogs (Walsh, 2010; Foster, 2007). However, as preparations and campaigning for the September 2014 elections materialized, social media has evolved as the 'new and safe' space and public sphere for political discourse. It has been noted that citizens can actively engage information which may be restricted in traditional media, due to the constraining political and media conditions.

This evolving dimension of digital citizen engagement, poses new insights into Fiji's 2014 elections of how social media was utilised by candidates and voters, which exact demographic was engaged and other general observations during the elections. The claims that young people are politically apathetic and are neglecting their duty to participate in many democratic societies worldwide have been rebutted by a growing number of academics over the recent years (Loader, 2007; Marsh, O'Toole, & Jones, 2007). Without doubt many youth have indeed become disillusioned with traditional, mainstream political parties and with those who claim to speak on their behalf. But this should not be misconstrued as a lack of interest on the part of youth with the political issues that influence their everyday lived experience. Social media can also enable other marginalised groups such as women to participate in the political process. Both women and youths form a significant portion of Fiji's voting population but traditional Fijian culture, both iTaukei and Indo-Fijian, generally subverts women and youth political participation. Social media therefore provides an alternative platform where women and youth can be informed about political events and also put forth their views.

Participation in social movements, rallies and protests, and political activism all point to the possible shift of traditional models of representative democracy as the dominant cultural form of engagement by alternative approaches increasingly characterised through networking practices. Political identity and attitudes of youth are as a result seen to be increasingly shaped less by their social ties to family, neighbourhood, school or work, but rather by the manner in which they take part and interact through the social networks which they themselves have had a significant part in

constructing (Loadera, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014). In the age of Social Networking Sites (SNS) like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, political engagement through social media is becoming easier than ever. For members of the millennial generation, where interconnectedness is driven by likes, shares, and retweets on social media sites, politicized discourse often goes viral, perhaps at the cost of meaningful engagement with the topic at hand.

*ICT, Social Media and Youths*

While ICT and social media are comparative recent technological introductions to the Pacific, their use as seen from World Bank (2014) statistics has been increasing at an exponential rate. Such advancements in information communication technologies (ICTs) are changing how people express and engage themselves in democratic and political processes. This is especially true for the youths who are increasingly using ICT's and social media. Increasingly many youths today are consumers of social media such as Facebook and Twitter as the main sources of information, using these tools to share interests and information including political views. As a result, social media has become a valuable tool in rallying youths thereby supporting their political engagement (Fox & Ramos., 2012).

Fiji's media landscape has been exposed to rapid changes in recent years. This change comes from a range of sources: technological innovation and service improvement, the introduction of new and enhanced services, alterations and restrictions to the political economy of media production, and the changing nature of users' response to the technological capacities afforded to them. One of the most interesting developments in recent years has been the introduction of "social media". Social media is defined by Bruns and Bahnisch as "technologies to provide space for in-depth social interaction, community formation, and the tackling of collaborative projects" (2009: 1). These technologies reform and recreate user and audience communities around new and existing media. As much a social as a technological phenomenon, social media is significant in considerably intensifying the extent to which once-passive audiences are able to engage with media producers and fellow consumers.

*Gender, ICT and Social Media*

While numerous studies recognize the potential of ICT's in promoting development and promoting governance, benefits of ICT has been disproportionately distributed both within and between

countries. This "digital divide" indicates the differences in allocation of resources and capabilities to access and effectively use ICT's for development and governance that exists between countries, sectors and socio-economic groups (Sandys, 2005). It has been noted that a "gender divide" exists, reflecting the lower numbers of women accessing and using ICT compared with men (Roux & Dalvit, 2014) (Antonio & Tuffley, 2014) (Huyer & Sikoska, 2003) (Friedman, 2005).

There are case studies and anecdotal evidence that demonstrates that ICT can and are empowering women in many societies. Studies for example have shown how ICT has opened up possibilities for women entrepreneurs to access global e-business platform (Heeks, Arun, & Morgan, 2004) (Schaefer, 2007). There also have been studies which look beyond economic empowerment and illustrating how ICT's have been used by women for political organization and participation. ICT facilitates meaningful participation and make female voices heard, as proven by the role of digital networks in feminist movements (Ng & Mitter, 2005) (Harcourt, 1999).

*Snapshot of social media use in Fiji*

With almost 47% of registered voters in Fiji being youth, the 2014 elections in Fiji saw the use of online social media campaigning becoming a major form of electioneering in order to appeal to this youth demographic (Finau, Kant, Tarai, & Titifanue, 2014). There are almost 858,000 (96% penetration rate) active mobile phone users, 300,000 internet users (33% penetration rate) and 260,000 active Facebook users (29% penetration rate) in Fiji (Cave, 2012) . Figure 1 below provides an updated snapshot of Fiji ICT statistics as at Jan 2014.
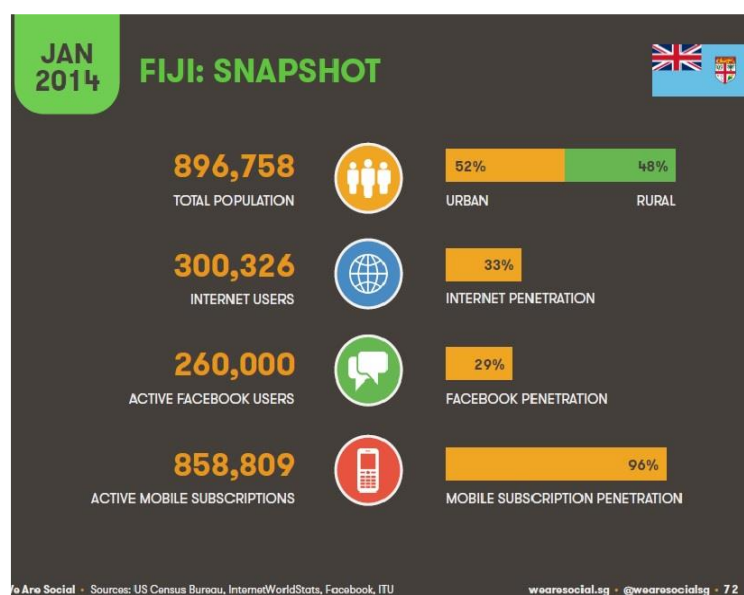


**Figure 1. Fiji Snapshot (Source: InternetWorldStats)**

Usage of social media as an alternative means to express opinions and share information has been growing in Fiji since 2009 when restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly were imposed. Media censorship prohibited traditional media from reporting on many issues around democracy, human rights and governance, the Internet became an important source of news. Blogs such as Coupfourpointfive, Croz Walsh's Blog, Raw Fiji News and Intelligentsiya started providing political commentary and news that could not be provided through traditional media platforms in Fiji (Cave, 2012) becoming an important tool for accountability and transparency. So much so, the Government hired an international public relations firm, Qorvis Communications, to set up its blogs and social media accounts such as @FijiPM, @FijiAG and @FijiRepublic to ensure that its views were also promoted in the online sphere (Cave, 2012). The Ministry of Information set up its own Facebook page, updating government-friendly information and photos on a daily basis.

In the lead up to the 2014 elections, four of the five major parties registered: National Federation Party (NFP), Social Democratic Liberal Party (SODELPA), People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the FijiFirst Party, had a social media political campaigning strategy. The capitalisation of online campaigning through Facebook can be seen through the concentration of the content that these specific parties have been sharing and discussing online (Finau, Kant, Tarai, & Titifanue, 2014). This is most especially evident with the Independent candidate, Roshika Deo, with her, *"Be the Change Campaign"*. Her campaign has also been seen to involve sharing and discussing matters online, while also challenging issues in the wider public sphere. Even some candidates who belong to parties have opted to also have their own individual pages. These include the likes of Biman Prasad, Party Leader of the National Federation Party (NFP) and Voreqe Bainimarama, Party Leader of FijiFirst Party, who have individual Facebook pages apart from the of their political party pages (Finau, Kant, Tarai, & Titifanue, 2014).

The inevitable rise in rural to urban drift has allowed more people to come within internet access range, especially within the urban centres. These changes brought about by the affordable costs to internet access and the increase in globalisation of information technology provides opportunities for political campaigning in Fiji. As a result, voters have easier and greater access to the campaigning candidates and political parties. There now exists a new dimension to political campaigning in Fiji, which involves online campaigning, specifically through Facebook. Previous elections in Fiji did not have a heavy online opportunity to make an attempt at winning over voters, unlike the 2014 elections.

*Social media and political participation*

Social media facilitates increased access to opinion making and sharing online. Some forms of social media channels such as Twitter have shown themselves to be active spaces for elite-public interactions (Chen, 2012), while others such as Tumblr have demonstrated themselves as valuable places for "gate-watching"[1] while channels such as Facebook have become useful sites for micro-activism; formation of alternative spaces for democratic discussion.

While social media use is strongly associated with younger people, the political users of social media are a more age diverse group. As the underpinnings of social media (sharing, peer-communication, visible media consumption) become increasingly accepted by the general population, this tendency is likely to continue.

*Classifying Participation in Social Media*

Over the past decade, we have witnessed a massive growth in the use of Social Media, primarily thanks to social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. Almost all Internet users now interact with social media in some way. While some contribute new content, others prefer to simply browse it and occasionally post comments, reviews or bookmark their favourite content for later. Whatever the case, social media has had a huge impact on the way we use the Internet to socialise, educate ourselves, do business, and so much more.

Social networking sites, through advancements in information technology and communications have decentralised brands and audiences, creating a new class of digital creators, curators, and watchful observers. Citizens of social media transcend time and space, shaping new opinions and carving out a niche audience in ways only a globally network can provide.

Forrester Research interviewed 4,500 adults and 4,500 youth in late 2006 to better understand social media audiences approach technology and classify various levels of social media involvement. Forrester analysts identified six levels of social media participation in ascending levels of sophistication: inactives, spectators, joiners, collectors, critics, and creators (Li, Bernoff, Fiorentino, & Glass, 2007).

*The Critic*

The person who responds to content posted by others. Posts ratings and reviews of products and services, comments on blogs and forums and contributes to articles in a wiki.

*The Collector*

---

[1] Coined by Alex Bruns, gate-watching refers to the collaborative production of online news publications.

The person who organises content for themselves or others using RSS feeds, social bookmarking and photo or page tagging.

*The Joiner*

The type of person who joins social networking websites like Facebook and Twitter and maintains multiple profiles.

*The Spectator*

This type is probably the most common – The person who reads blogs, views user-generated videos, reads online forums, listens to podcasts and frequently searches for user reviews and ratings.

*The Inactive*

The person who is online but in no way participates in any form of social media. This person does not post anything or read anything which is user-generated content. This type is becoming rarer as more websites integrate elements of social media into their website.


**RESEARCH DESIGN**

The study employed a mixed method methodology that employed both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The primary research method was the use of social media analytics and this was supplemented with semi-structured interviews political candidates and survey data with University students. The use of multiple methods will provider richer and greater insight into how social media was utilised by youth and women during the 2014 Fiji General Election.

*Social Media Analytics*

The research examines the degree to which political parties and candidates have adopted and utilised Facebook as a platform for political campaigning, data was thus garnered through an analysis of the Facebook pages utilised by political parties as well as the pages utilised by individual political candidates.

A quantitative approach was employed whereby the Facebook pages of the political parties and candidates was analysed by creating quantified summaries of the various aspects relevant to political campaigning on an online platform. A number of methods were utilised to glean and analyse the necessary data.

Having identified the relevant Facebook pages utilised by political parties and individual candidates, the analysis of the Facebook pages was then carried out. This took place over a 1 month

period from the 21$^{st}$ of May, 2014 to the 17$^{th}$ of June, 2014. The analysis took place during this period as this was shortly after the key political parties had registered and had begun to launch their websites and Facebook pages. An earlier launch of the analysis would have meant that fewer political pages would have been available for analysis and rendered the analysis and findings inconclusive. Thus carrying out the analysis during the aforementioned timeframe allowed a richer analysis that was inclusive of a greater number of political parties and candidates.

The levels to which political parties/candidates interacted with voters on their Facebook pages were assessed by means of a social media analytics tool named 'Fanpage Karma'. This tool acted as a means to analyse the Facebook pages of political parties and candidates and derive various categories that provided insights into the extent to which the pages were utilised for political campaigning.

The first category was the numbers of fans (Likes) the page had. This permitted an insight to the number of people who had subscribed to the Facebook page for the purpose of the extent to which the fans of the page were '*Talking About*' the Facebook pages of the political parties and candidates. In addition, the tool allowed an analysis of the amount of engagement that fans had with the page. Basically this referred to how often fans would 'like', 'comment' or 'share' the various posts on the page. This method proved highly efficacious as it provided a clear means of quantifying the amount of engagement taking place on a page. 'Post Interaction' was another category provided by the analytics tool. The analysis tool derived this category by analysing all records of the various posts on the page. The analysis tool then collated the minimum amount of comments, likes and shares made by individual users, thus providing a suitable minimum baseline of the amount of interaction that took place on the page. An additional category derived through the analysis tool in relation to the amount of engagement and post interaction that took place on the various pages was the service level of the page. Service level refers to the number of times the Facebook page responds to comments and posts by its fans. This category enabled a quantification of the extent to which political parties and candidates were able to interact with the fans of their page and thus allowed an analysis of the extent to which political parties and candidates were utilising Facebook as a platform for political campaigning.

*Interviews*

A total of 15 interviews were carried out with political candidates and party members. The questions posed to them related to the role that social media resources (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc.) played as an elections campaigning tool during the course of their campaign.

The interviewees selected were women and youth political candidates. In addition to this, interviews were also carried out with women and youths who played a role in facilitating the social media element of their party's campaign.

This research is geared towards examining the role that social media can play as a tool for empowering women and youths in their political awareness and involvement. In addition to this, extant literature suggests that social media provides a platform for disenfranchised groups such as women and youth to air their views and grievances. Given that Fiji does not have a strong history of having many women or youth leaders, the research sought to examine whether social media resources were offering a platform which women and youth candidates could utilise to diffuse their political views and ambitions to the voting population. As a result, interviewing youth and women political candidates enabled the research to gain an insight into the potential role that social media tools could play in empowering and promoting the campaigns of women and youth candidates. Furthermore, previous research carried out by the team into social media and political involvement indicated that social media acted as a means to cut the 'red tape' that seemed to hinder voters interacting with political candidates. The nature of social media is as such that the general public are able to directly posit direct questions to parties and candidates as opposed to traditional question and answer sessions at rallies. The research was thus keen to assess whether such features of social media played a role in the campaigns leading up to the 2014 elections.

In addition to this, the interviews also enabled the research to examine whether there was any particular unique social media strategy and tactics that a candidate or party was employing for the purpose of maximising their social media presence and outreach. The research wished to examine how political candidates were utilising the resources offered on social media sites to disambiguate the various political messages and agendas that they wished to diffuse to the voting public. For instance candidates who utilised Facebook as a campaigning tool were asked on whether their social media presence comprised of them posting 'statuses' to disseminate information to the public. Or whether they primarily made use of Facebook to share images and videos portraying activities that they or their parties were undertaking.

*Survey*

The purpose of the study was to explore the role of social media on youth and women participation in the political process. The study employed a multi-method approach to explore this complex phenomenon (Yin 2009). One of the methods utilised was the survey approach. Surveys are a useful method to elicit responses from a wide array of respondents (Groves, Fowler Jr et al. 2009).

An online survey was administered using the popular online survey website: Survey Monkey. The survey was administered to students currently enrolled at the University of the South Pacific (USP). A student list was compiled with the following filters:

- First Year Students currently enrolled in an undergraduate program
- Age within 18-35 (Youth group)
- Nationality is Fijian

USP students were selected because of the following reasons:

- USP is one of the three tertiary institutions in Fiji. Individuals who reach tertiary institutions in Fiji would be well educated and thus should be able to make rational decisions and also discern information before making political decisions. USP was chosen as it is has the highest enrolments of tertiary students in Fiji and has a broad range of students from the Fiji group. University of Fiji for instance has a large proportion of students who are from the Western group of Viti Levu.
- USP also has one of the most reliable and fastest Internet services in the South Pacific. Thus USP students would have readily available access to Internet and social media sites.
- Lastly, given the researchers' affiliation with USP it was also easier to gain access to the USP student list and also to administer the survey.

The final list had a total number of 8,656 students. The survey questionnaire was designed through review of the literature. The initial set of questions were also derived via consultation with the research group and further refined. A pilot test was conducted with a group of students undertaking a 100 Level accounting unit. The pilot test was merely to evaluate the survey and identify if there were any conceptual or grammatical errors with the survey. After the pilot test, the final survey was sent to the students on the 1st week of March, 2015. A second reminder was scheduled for the 2nd week of March and a third and final reminder scheduled for the 3rd week of March. The survey had a brief introduction informing respondents on the purpose of the survey. The email also explicitly mentioned the voluntary nature of the survey and that students were not required to complete the survey if they did not want to. The survey also reassured the students that there would be complete anonymity and that the data would be analysed in aggregate.

The structure of the final survey was as follows:

Section A –     Access to Internet and devices that could access the Internet

Section B –     Beliefs on the reliability of traditional media vs social media

Section C – Views on political affiliation and engagement in the political process on social media

Section D – Perceptions of social media and its impact on the government

Section E – Facebook political page/group membership and activity

Section F – Political party Facebook page/group membership and activity

Section G – Demographic Data (Age, gender, ethnicity, etc.)

At the conclusion of the survey, a total of 269 responses were collected. **Table 1** below provides descriptive statistics of the survey respondents:

| | |
|---|---|
| Total Sent | 8,656 |
| Total Responses | 269 |
| **Response Rate** | 3.1% |
| | |
| **Age** | |
| 18-20 | 39% |
| 21-25 | 46% |
| 26-30 | 12% |
| 31-35 | 3% |
| **Gender** | |
| Male | 54.1% |
| Female | 45.9% |
| Transgender | 0% |
| **Ethnicity** | |
| iTaukei | 60.8% |
| Indo-Fijian | 28.1% |
| Part-European | 3.7% |
| Part-Chinese | 1.8% |
| Rotuman | 5.5% |
| Other | .1% |

**Table 1. Survey Demographics**

The response rate from the surveys is quite low. The low response rate could be attributed to the following reasons:

- The political sensitiveness of the survey. Students may feel reserved to answer the questions as it poses questions that ask students for political affiliation and also views on the government.
- Students may not be interested in the politics of Fiji and thus would feel that they could not contribute meaningfully to the survey.
- Some students may have assumed the survey to be spam mail.
- USP students are constantly inundated with USP mail daily and may have missed our survey email request.

However, despite the low survey response rate, a total of 269 students responded to the survey. We believe that this is sufficient for conclusions to be drawn. Statistical theory dictates that the sample size must be greater than 30 for statistical conclusions to be drawn (Dixon and Massey 1969). Furthermore, data from social media analytics and interviews would also complement the data collected from surveys.

## DISCUSSION

*Political Campaigning*

As described in the methodology, two social media analytics tool were utilised to collate and divide data to specific categories. These categories include the following; Likes – Fans, Talking about, Engagement, Post Interaction, Service Level and Posts per Day[1]. The users need to be consistently updated with posts and it is seen that there is a certain level of engagement which is definitely required. Therefore, it can be derived from the results that the other categories need to be brought along into balance with the amount of fans a Facebook page has. The need for balance within these categories is evident when assessing the political parties' pages individually. Table 1 below presents a summary of these categories by political Facebook page.

| Fan page | Party | Fans | Avg. Growth | Engagement | Post Interaction | Service Level | Response Time | Posts per Day |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FijiFirst | Fiji First | 39,989 | 6.4% | 8.5% | 2.4% | 34% | 5.5 h | 3.5 |
| Frank Bainimarama Is The Man | Fiji First | 16,675 | 1.3% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0% | - | 0 |
| Roshika Deo - Be The Change Campaign | Roshika Deo | 14,391 | 8.0% | 1.4% | 0.8% | 77% | 12 h | 1.7 |
| Fiji First Party | Fiji First | 10,208 | 19.7% | 9.2% | 14.3% | - | - | 0.6 |
| Fiji First Party | Fiji First | 10,192 | 8% | 11.2% | 15.0% | 34% | 9 h | 2 |
| Support Fiji PM Frank Bainimarama | Fiji First | 9,890 | 6.6% | 20.1% | 11.0% | 69% | 9.2 h | 1.8 |
| National Federation Party | NFP | 9,295 | 11.0% | 8.7% | 2.0% | 51% | 8.8 h | 4.3 |
| Sodelpa | SODELPA | 6,710 | 7.9% | 15.8% | 7.1% | 27% | 5.9 h | 2.2 |
| Sodelpa Fiji | SODELPA | 4,221 | 2% | 44.0% | 5.7% | 31% | 1.6 h | 7.7 |
| Mick Beddoes | SODELPA | 4,211 | - | 6.1% | 18.9% | 50% | - | 0.3 |
| Make it Fiji First | Fiji First | 4,073 | 4.2% | 1.8% | 2.6% | - | - | 0.7 |
| One Fiji Party | One Fiji | 3,586 | 1% | 3.3% | 2.0% | 26% | 7.2 h | 1.7 |
| Sodelpa National Youth Council Forum | SODELPA | 3,106 | 6.4% | 25.8% | 10.9% | 8% | 0.02 h | 2.4 |
| Sodelpa Fiji Discussion | SODELPA | 1,538 | - | 1.1% | 6.1% | 14% | 4.8 h | 0.2 |
| Fiji United Freedom Party | FUFP | 841 | - | 0.6% | 1.0% | - | - | 0.6 |
| Fiji Labour Party | FLP | 266 | - | 9.8% | 7.4% | 30% | 28 h | 1.3 |
| Support NFP | NFP | 251 | - | 17.8% | 124.5% | 0% | - | 0.1 |

**Table 2 Summary of Facebook Statistics**

From the table above, it is clear that Frank Bainimarama's campaign was in full force online with FijiFirst's official page outranking the others totalling 39,989. Bainimarama's campaign fills in four of the top five page fan base totals. These include, FijiFirst, Frank Bainimarama is the man, Fiji First Party and Support Fiji PM Frank Bainimarama, while in the third spot was Roshika Deo – Be the Change Campaign.

*Multiple page Approach*

The first observation derived from this data is a "multiple page approach", which is apparent across a number of political parties. This is where a party utilises more than one page to campaign and promote its interests or its party leader. A multiple page approach accumulates as many fans or subscribers as possible, across a variety of appeal. Therefore, a campaign maximises its audience and possible voters. This is clearly seen when totalling the political party pages as they accumulate

an increasing audience across varying pages. A wider audience would mean a wider reach to campaign and engage as many voters as possible. Some political party representatives like those of NFP, have indicated that it was not intentional to have multiple Facebook pages. According to Gounder (Political Social Media Campaiging for National Federation Party Of Fiji, 2014) the National Federation party's varying pages were a result of the individual candidates, own initiative in having to maximise their social media campaigning efforts. Regardless of whether specific parties planned to use multiple pages or not, the existing pattern, corroborated by the expanse of reach and data, proves the utility of utilising a multiple page approach. *Table 5* documents the maximised audience numbers, witnessed in having multiple pages for campaigning. As shown below the five pages campaigning for FijiFirst accumulated a total of 80,835 subscribers, while SODELPA had a total of 19,786, with Roshika Deo – Be The Change Campaign amassed a total of 14,391. The top two political parties, FijiFirst and SODELPA both had massive audience numbers attributed to the multiple pages that each party had utilised.

The second most popular Facebook page after the FijiFirst pages was "Roshika Deo – Be The Change Campaign." Roshika Deo was the first to leverage Facebook as part of her social media strategy.

> *"Social media had a great reach with Fiji's population, especially women and the younger generation. Social media sites such as Facebook provided a space where these often marginalized groups could discuss issues pertinent to them. Facebook was also a medium they felt more comfortable to express themselves."*

Despite their early social media success, Facebook popularity did not translate to electoral success. However, PDP came close to securing a seat and Roshika Deo won 1,055 votes. Quite an achievement for a lone independent who lacked the financial resources and backing as compared to the political parties.

Instead the 2014 general elections were dominated by the "Fiji First" party. The party also adopted a multi-page Facebook strategy with different pages portraying different dimensions of the party's leader: Frank Bainimarama. This was also in line with their traditional media approach as Television, Radio and Newspaper advertisements also focused on the party's leader. Facebook just complemented the existing Fiji First's traditional media political campaigning. However, a female Fiji First political candidate adopted a more traditional approach to political campaigning that focused on developing relationships with the community:

> *"..the men are in our communities they look up to women. Because in any development plans in the communities it is the women that gets things done. It's the women that gets this done. But they have to understand and appreciate this. And for you young girls if you want to go into politics, this is the time to work with the community. You have to establish yourself within the community so that people or the voters vote for you."*

In terms of engagement levels, these were quite low and it could either be that voters were not commenting on posts or that the Facebook administrators were not responding to the posts made by voters. In most cases, engagement was considerably higher for those political candidates that initiated conversations and responded to voters' comments on a timely basis. Some voters also indicated that some of their posts were deleted as it was critical of the political party. One interviewee stated that most visitors to her page did not engage with her in a positive way:

> *"...my page was frequented by a lot of people also by trollers. I mean I also had someone interview me and they said oh we used to troll your page. I think for me the only engagement on my page was that you joined the wrong party. But that was a comment I got over and over again even when I was interviewed on TV, I got that change your party leader then we'll vote for your party. Alternatively I had to join another party. But that was like the*

*demand eh? But I had to explain to them what it is. The page that I had which is the public page will soon change, I will make it into a labour youth active page."*

*Internet Accessibility*

The majority of youths in the Sample have access to devices that can access the Internet. 88% have adequate access to the Internet with only 6% indicating that they do not have adequate access to the Internet. A similar percentage also indicated that they access Internet on a regular basis (87%). In terms of affordability, only 51% believed Internet costs were affordable. With regards to making political comments on the Internet, the majority of youths (48%) indicated that such an activity makes them uncomfortable, with 25% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.
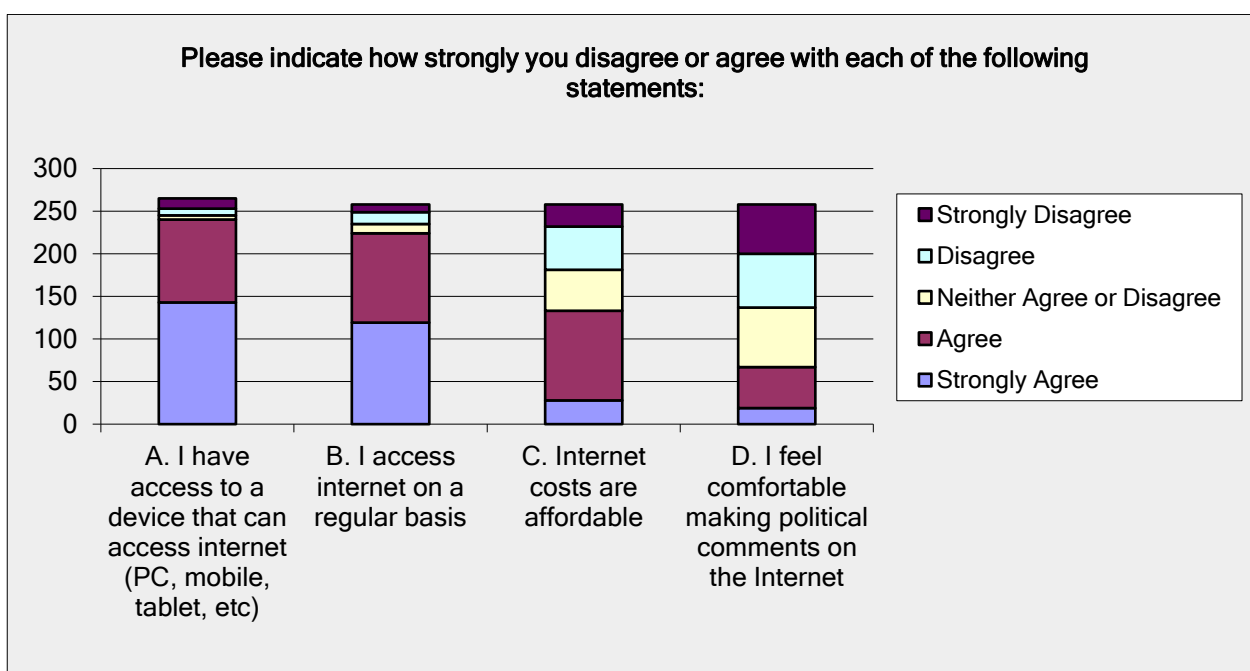


Figure 2. Internet costs, accessibility and frequency of use

This highlights that youths in Fiji are reserved to making political comments on the Internet. And is understandable given Fiji's ageist culture where youths are not encouraged to voice their opinions and "should only speak when spoken to."

Furthermore, the data revealed that Facebook was the most popular social media website with 92.1% of respondents being members of the page. Twitter, the world's second most popular social network site used for political purposes was fourth (38.8%). YouTube (47.6%) and Google circles (46.3%) were 2nd and 3rd respectively. The reason for the popularity of YouTube and Google circles was due to USP using google apps for student emails and also YouTube and Google circles do not consume a student's internet quota. This is as some lecturers using YouTube videos as teaching materials. Whereas Twitter and Facebook will use up a student's monthly Internet allowance. The

Internet Quota system was introduced in USP because of too many students using the limited PCs in student labs for Facebook and not for study or learning purposes. In fact, Facebook has now been blocked during the day in USP.

## I feel comfortable making political statements online

| Scale | Response | Male | Female |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | Strongly Agree | 0.075 | 0.073 |
| 4 | Agree | 0.236 | 0.155 |
| 3 | Neither Agree or Disagree | 0.255 | 0.260 |
| 2 | Disagree | 0.227 | 0.252 |
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 0.207 | 0.260 |
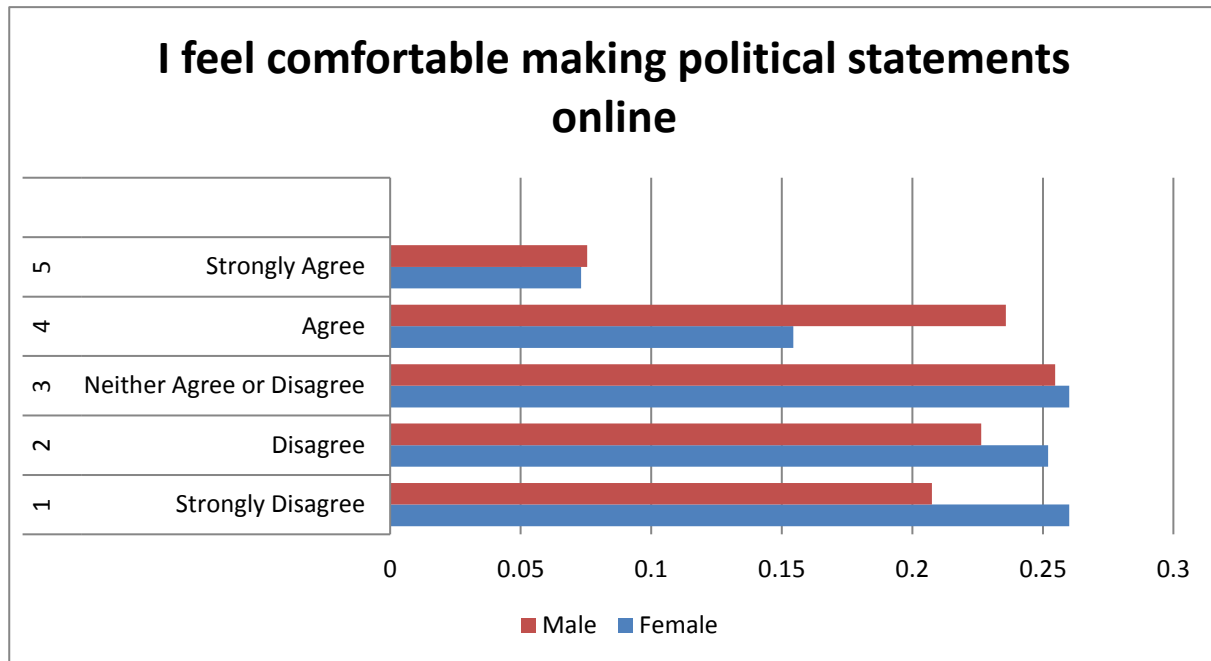
When asked if they felt comfortable making, more young women (51% for women as opposed to 43% for men) either strongly disagreed or disagreed indicating that they did not feel comfortable making political statements online. This is indicative of the fact that the patriarchal nature of the Fijian society is transposed online. It is also evident that women face bullying on the internet. *There is scope for more research into this.*
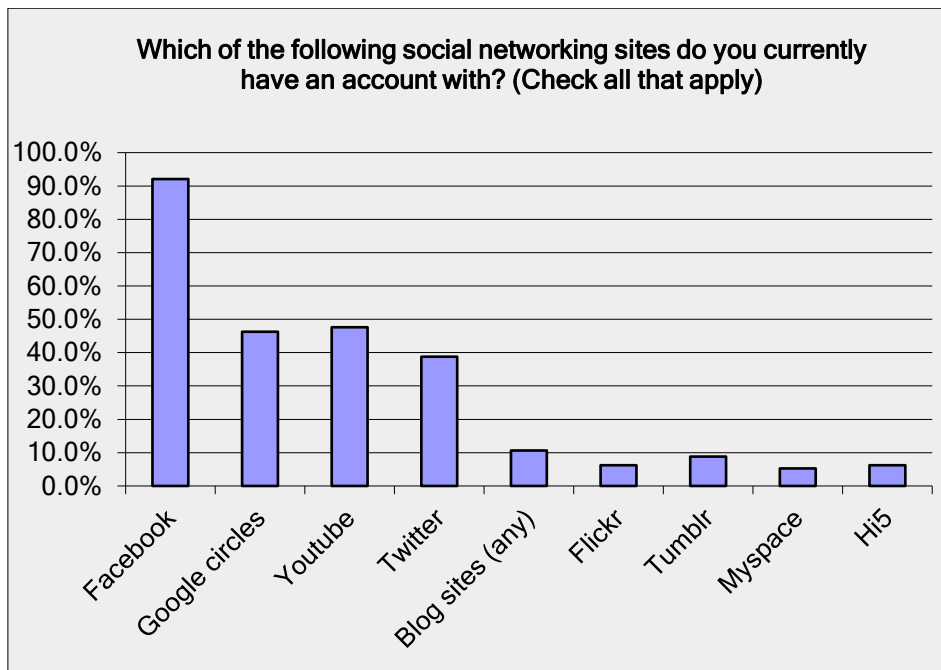
**Figure 3. Social Media Preferences**

Overall, the findings reveal that most youth within the sample can access Internet and do on a regular basis despite the perceived costs associated. However, most youth do not feel comfortable making political comments on this medium.

*Traditional Media vs Social Media*

With regards to questions related to traditional media vs social media, most youth believed traditional media to be more reliable than social media with 64% believing that information published on traditional media to be reliable. However when posed the same question regarding completeness, only 30% believed that information published on traditional media to be complete. 87% also indicated that they use traditional media as a source for political information.

In comparison to social media, only 32% believed information published on this medium to be reliable and 24% believe it to be complete. A significantly lower proportion as compared to traditional medium. However, 51% indicated that they use social media as a source for political information.

Overall, the results indicate that traditional media such as newspapers, radio and television are perceived as more reliable and complete as compared to social media. And this is echoed by the sentiments of four respondents who made the following comments:

*"Social media can play an effective role in political discussion and participation, but must include factual honest and neutral information rather than having unreliable and biased opinions being presented."*

*"...In my opinion, social media is not that reliable because sometimes the news and posted materials are like 'false alarms'. Social media can be one of the most comfortable ways and means of communicating information especially between the government and the general public bust sometimes while browsing through, it feels as if the news or any other information viewed CAN be altered also.."*

*"It would be kind enough if the social media do not exaggerate stories that will cause any kind of misunderstanding."*

*"Social media 'encourages' discussions and such but most of everything I've seen online regarding politics is all just disgruntled people just saying things which are unverified and vulgar and rude and just defeats the notion of 'discussion, participation and engagement."*

*"I think that social media does not have anything to do with the above mentioned stuff. I believe radio, TV, newspapers are more informative in providing a better understanding of the above mentioned stuffs."*

The comments above highlight youths' perceptions on information on social media as largely unreliable and lacking credibility. This is because anyone can post anything on social media without someone else reviewing the post as in the case of an editor in traditional media. "False alarms" and fake stories can be easily conjured up on social media. Furthermore, individual biases always exist and this can make youths suspicious over the neutrality of comments on social media. However, some also feel that social media provides a platform that allows youth to freely express their views without censorship. The following respondents also had this to share:

*"Social media has a huge impact on the viewers and readers. I believe that people would believe anything that comes on social media especially television news and radio news since these are the outlets that most people have access to. People have become ignorant to question the news and few don't have internet access to further information cannot be*

*gained and they have to rely on others' words. Social media's role is to be fair and relay both sides of the argument; their job is to give as much as reliable and truthful information they can to the readers or views and have them make a decision on the matter. Youths of today's generation have access to information, all sorts of it and it is up to the social media to portray the right information to have them engaged in a positive manner."*

*"It has encouraged freedom of expression. Individuals have been able to voice out their opinions and beliefs."*

*"While social media plays an important role in facilitating political discussion, it is often difficult to go through hundreds of comments to find only a few that actually contribute positively to the discussion; you need to be really discerning and analytical to understand the point of view of a lot of the commentators in relation to the issue, you rarely get a balanced opinion from one person and that is a concern as people who read these statements will take them at face value without considering the reasoning behind them. There is also always he potential to be misconstrued as with all communication that isn't face to face. The condition of anonymity that social media affords leads to careless comments that can incite ill will; it is also difficult to take these pole to task overs such comments. However, it is an important awareness raising tool; it allows us to learn about issues we might not otherwise have heard about. Sometimes we are able to follow both sides of the debate, do more research and decide our own opinions. Another issue would be trying to use views on social media to support a certain stance or in research. It would be difficult to verify or even try to quantify opinions....but it is helpful to use as a starting point!!"*

*Youth Political Participation*

It was encouraging to observe the ratio of youth sampled that exercised their democratic right in the 2014 Fiji Elections with 76% voting.
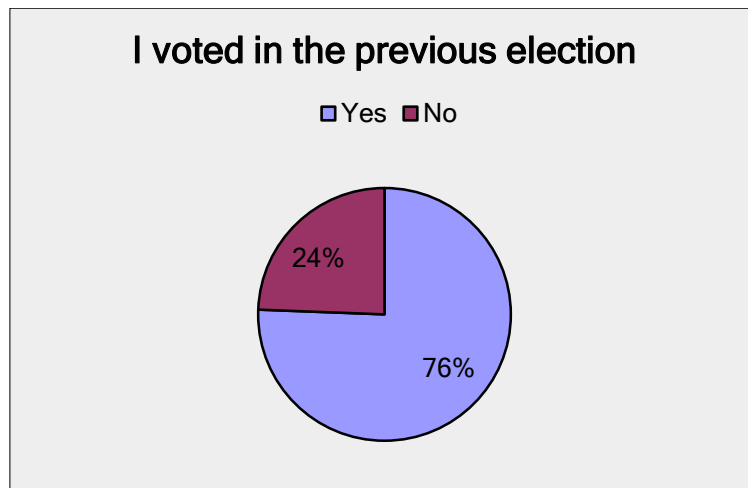
**Figure 4. Voting**

Given Fiji's ageist culture and the gap between the 2014 election and the last election, it was interesting to gauge the nature and extent of youth political participation in Fiji. The study found that 52% of students surveyed had liked/joined a Facebook political page/group of a political party/candidate during the Fiji elections as shown in the Figure 5 below.
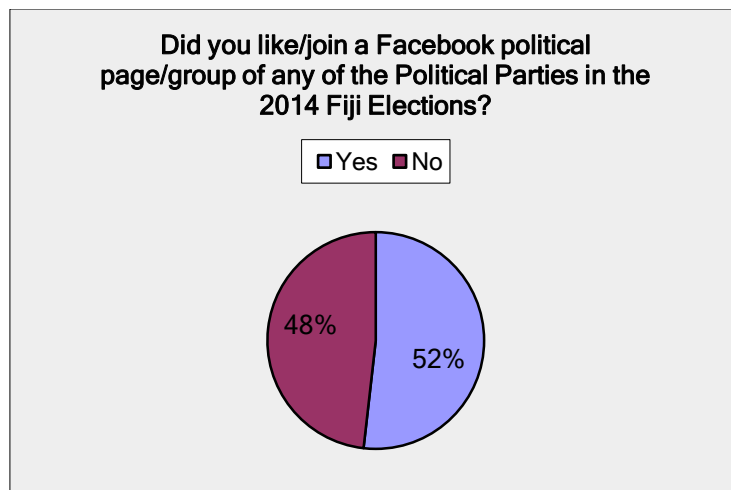


**Figure 5. Facebook Political Pages Likes**

The data on Facebook political pages membership as shown in the Figure 6 below provided an interesting parallel to the actual election results with the majority of respondents, members of Fiji First (42%), SODELPA (34%) and the National Federation Party (12%). The data provides evidence of a strong correlation between Facebook political party membership and eventual electoral success. This could serve a useful barometer of public opinion in future elections.
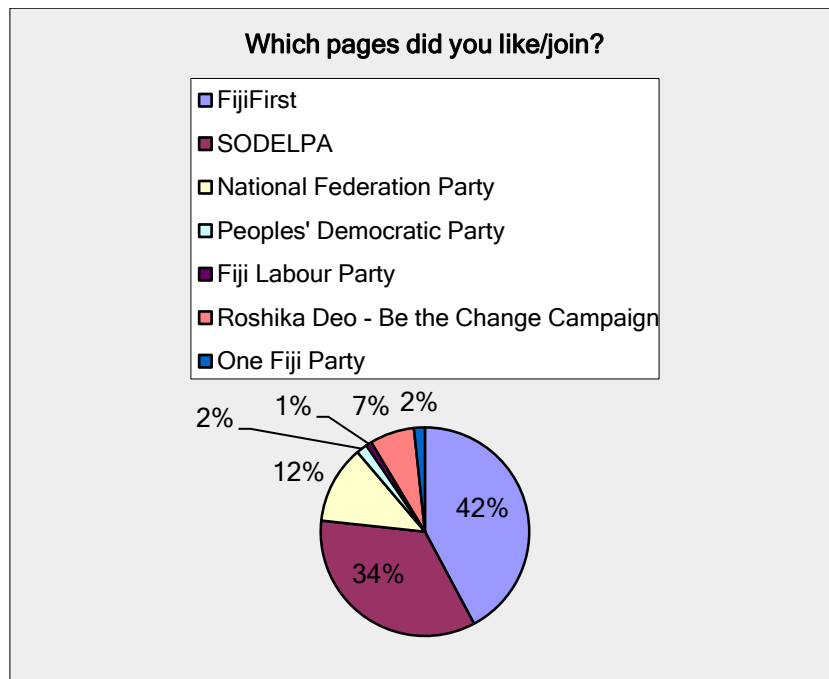
**Figure 6. Facebook Political Pages**

The reasons for following these Facebook pages were also interesting with 55% following these pages as they supported the party and 42% used the page to be informed about announcements and news related to the party, with the remaining 3% unsure of their reason.

The Social Media analytics page also captured data on number of fans per Facebook political page. Figure 7 below presents data on the total number of fans for each political party page.
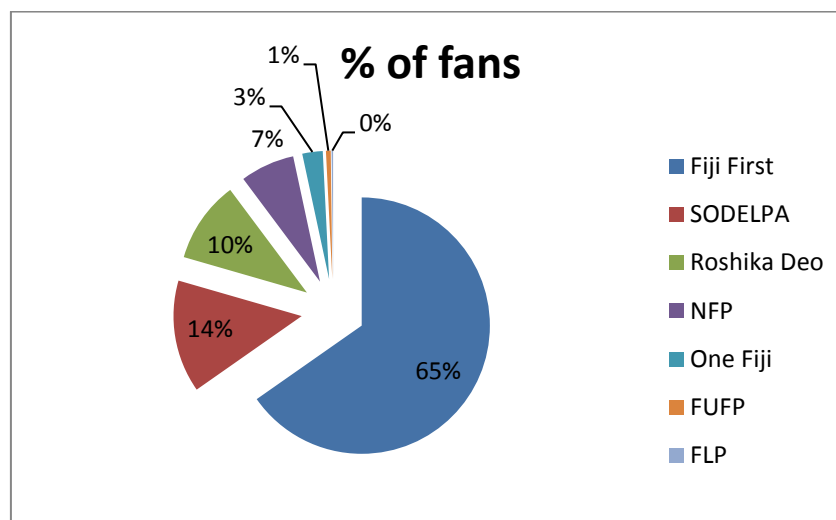


**Figure 7. Facebook Political Pages - Fans**

While parties had their own political campaigning pages, there were other pages which were in existence and established to discuss political issues in Fiji. These pages we termed "Facebook

political pages." Leading up to elections memberships of these pages, dramatically increased and discussions focused on the elections.

**Why did you join these pages/groups?**

- ☐ I supported this party
- ■ I wanted to be informed about the Party's news and annoucements
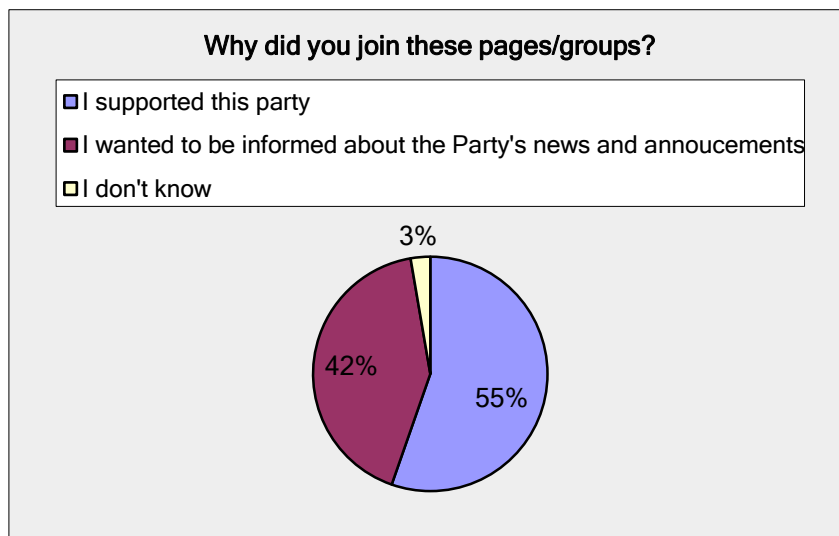- ☐ I don't know

3%

42%

55%

Figure 8. Motivations for joining pages

Membership to these pages indicates that youth are interested in being informed about political events and news and some discussed issues and engaged in debates on these forums. Interestingly, more youths were members of Facebook political pages (65%) as compared to political party pages. Lastly, it was interesting to note that one respondent selected the other option and commented "Because the leader of this party is my chief." While the Bainimarama Government has attempted to remove race-based voting and chiefly-based preferencing, some respondents still vote based on provincial allegiances.

**Are you a member of a Facebook political page?**
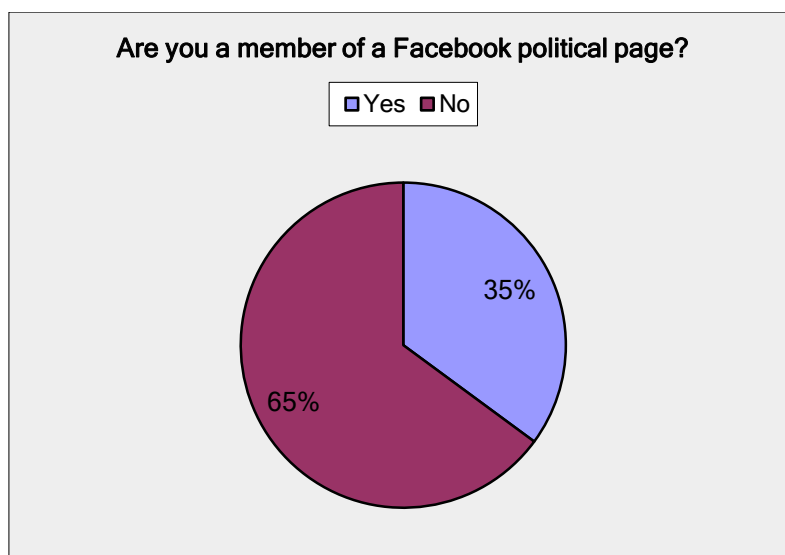
☐ Yes ■ No

35%

65%

Figure 9. Facebook Political Page Membership

The most popular Facebook Political Page was Letters to the Editor Uncensored (60.3%), followed by Fiji Democratic Forum (39.7%) and Fiji Political Discussion Group (36.8%).
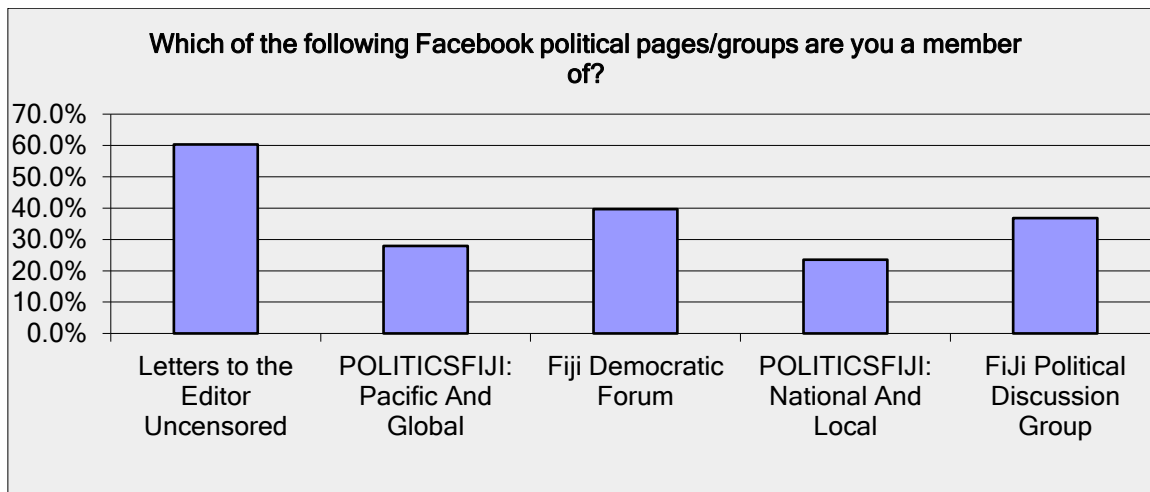
**Figure 10. Specific Membership**

Youths visited these pages primarily on a Weekly basis (62%) and some on a monthly basis (21%) with few visiting these pages daily (17%).
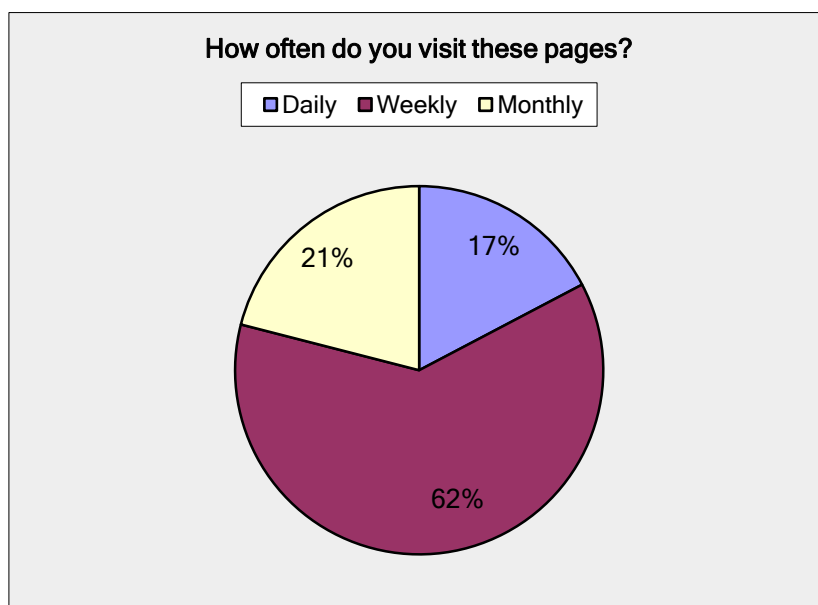


**Figure 11. Frequency of visits**

In terms of activities conducted, most respondents (76.3%) *Liked* posts or comments while some (60%) just viewed posts and comments. This supports the literature on spectatorship which states that most social media users do not participate in political social media conversations but merely "watch from the outside." People are interested in the discussions but do not want to contribute due to fear of being criticized for their opinion. With respect to actual contribution to social media conversations, most respondents simply commented on a post (45%). Only 22.5% of respondents actually engaged in a debate on social media.
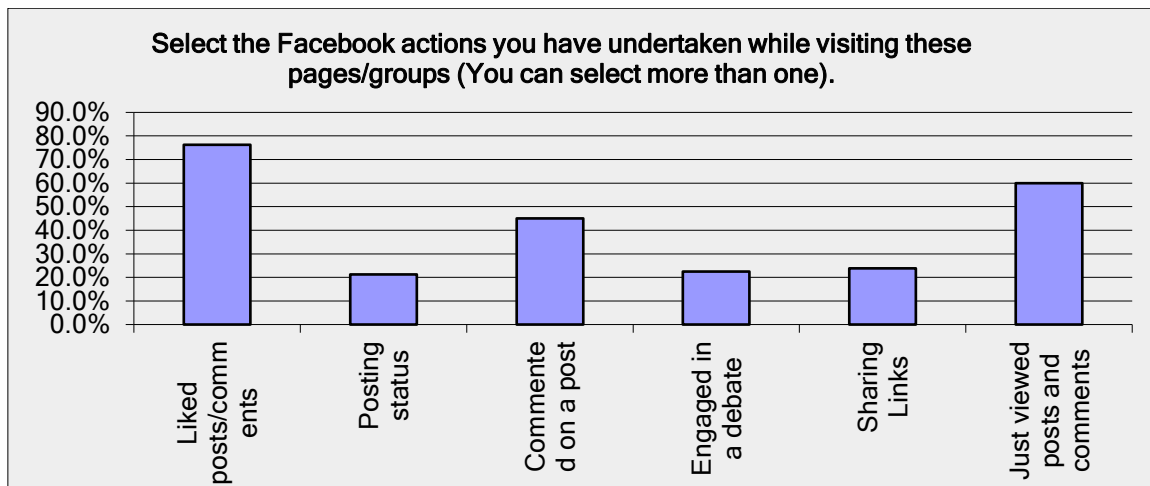
**Figure 12. Types of Activities**

*Social Media and its impact on women and youth political participation*

The following questions sought to explore perceptions regarding the impact of social media on women and youth participation in the 2014 Fiji Elections. The first question asked respondents whether they believed that the Facebook political pages/groups influenced their voting decisions. Although 32% of respondents were neutral, 45% (26% - agreed + 19% - strongly agreed) believed that membership to these pages influenced their voting decisions. This statistic provides credence to social media's effect on voter preference in Fiji.
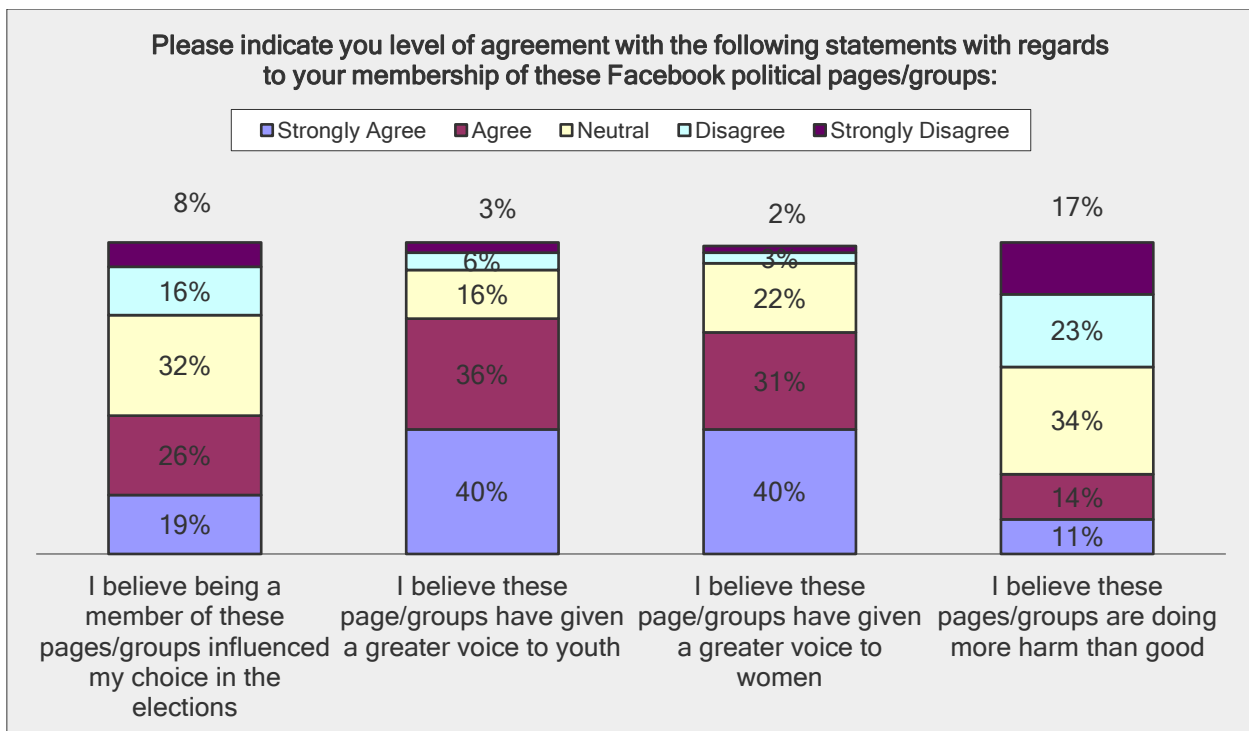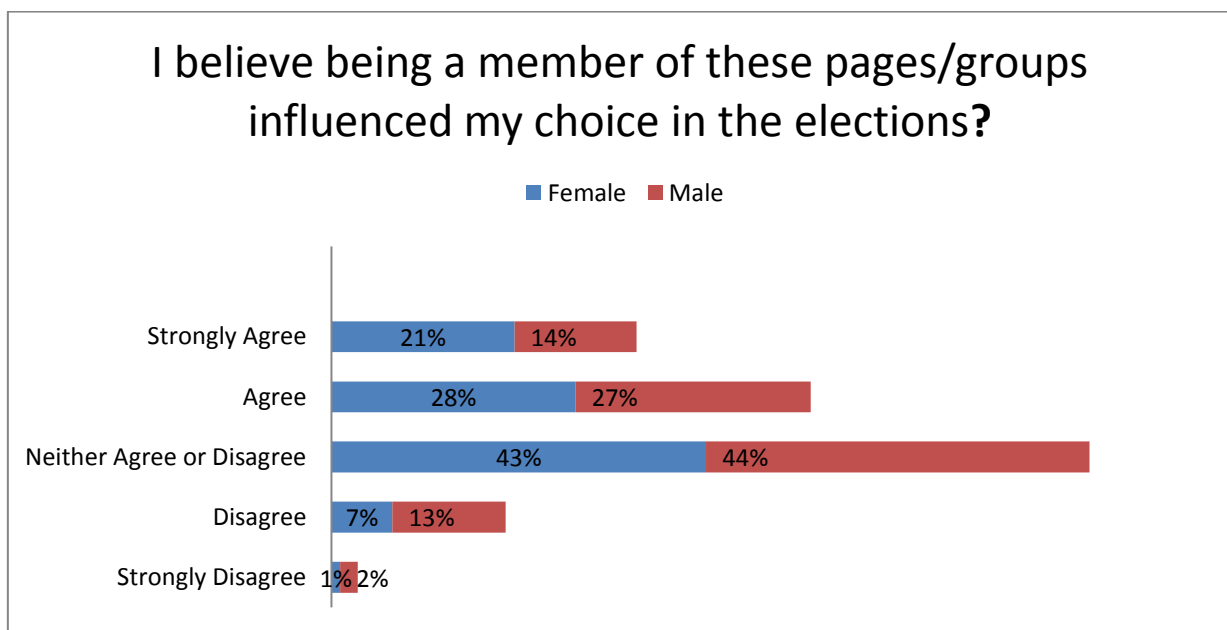


**Figure 13. Perceptions on impacts**

We also asked the questions pertaining to perceptions on *Whether Social Media was providing women and youth a voice?* The result provided strong evidence on the impact of social media with

40% strongly agreeing to the statement for both women and youth. In terms of total agreement, more believed that social media had given youths a greater voice (76%) while women were not so far behind with 71%. One respondent shared the following:
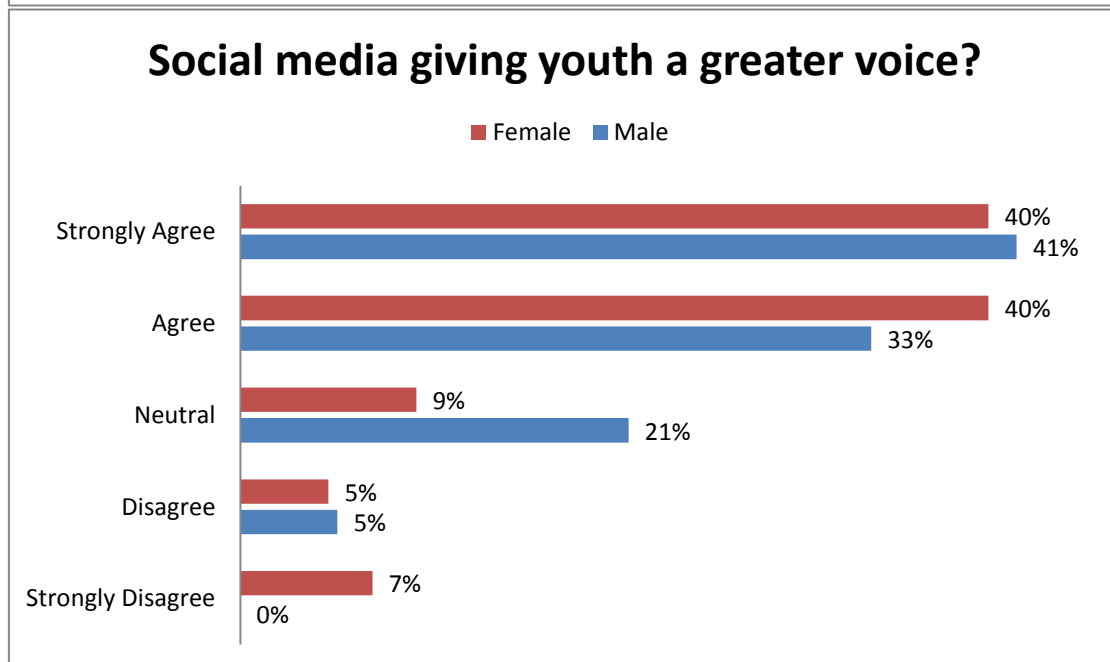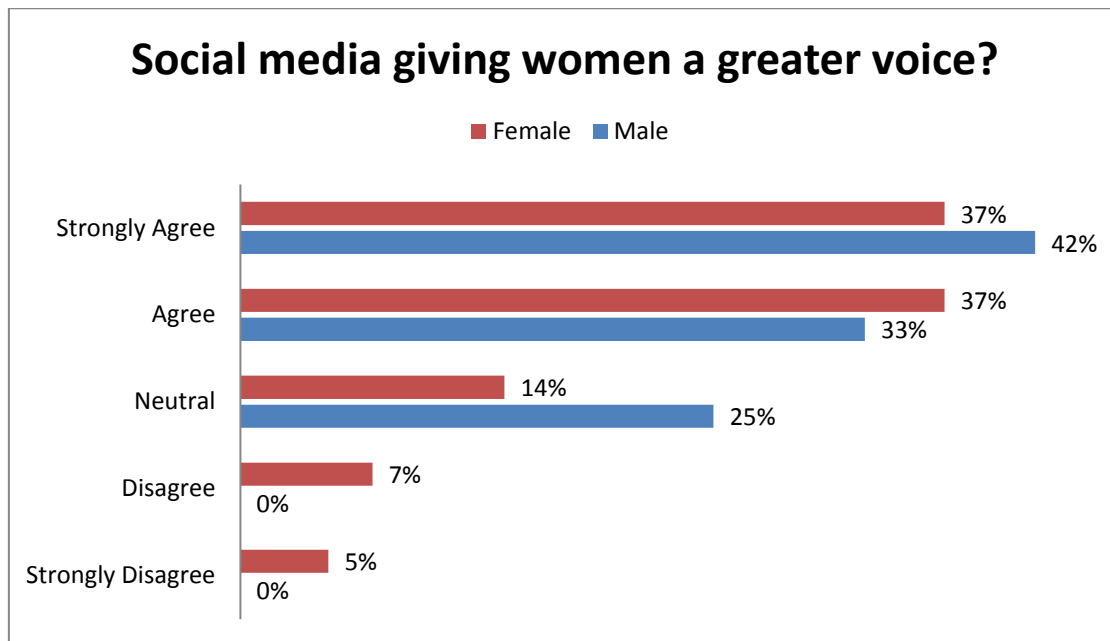
> *"I think what comes out from social media posts are HEART ROOTED and OPINIONATED... but whether it has an impact on youth and women in Fiji depends solely on whether they actually have an account in any of the social media networks or not... But for those that do, they would see that social media sites are freely inclusive whereby anyone regardless of their gender or age are given that freedom of expression.."*

The last of the questions in this set sought to enquire *Whether Social Media was doing more harm than good?* A large proportion of respondents were undecided with 34% being neutral. But the majority of respondents disagreed with the statement (40% - 23% +17%).

While social media has its negative aspects, most youth perceived it to be useful in facilitating discussion regarding political issues. Figure 14 below was derived from social media analytics and shows the top 10 posts by reactions of fans for a particular period.

## I believe being a member of these pages/groups influenced my choice in the elections?

■ Female ■ Male

| Category | Female | Male |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 21% | 14% |
| Agree | 28% | 27% |
| Neither Agree or Disagree | 43% | 44% |
| Disagree | 7% | 13% |
| Strongly Disagree | 1% | 2% |

More young women generally felt that being members of political pages on Facebook played a role in making a decision on whom to vote for than men (49% for women compared to 41% for men). This result indicates the power social media is playing and can play in informing and facilitating informed discussion.

## Social media giving women a greater voice?

**■ Female  ■ Male**

| | |
|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | Female 37% / Male 42% |
| Agree | Female 37% / Male 33% |
| Neutral | Female 14% / Male 25% |
| Disagree | Female 7% / Male 0% |
| Strongly Disagree | Female 5% / Male 0% |

## Social media giving youth a greater voice?

**■ Female  ■ Male**

| | |
|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | Female 40% / Male 41% |
| Agree | Female 40% / Male 33% |
| Neutral | Female 9% / Male 21% |
| Disagree | Female 5% / Male 5% |
| Strongly Disagree | Female 7% / Male 0% |

Generally more than three quarters of both men and women stated that social media affords both young people and women a greater voice in politics. 74% of women and 75 % of men strongly agreed or agreed that women are given a greater voice, while 80% or women and 74 % of men strongly agreed and agreed that social media provides young people with a greater voice. Many youth [and women] in Fiji 'are seen but not heard', where decision-making is almost exclusively the domain of the elder males (Vakaoti, 2012).

Some of the respondents had to say this in support of the statement that social media provides youth and women with a greater voice:

*Social media is a platform where young people are most comfortable, especially because they are able to connect with friends, family and people they can engage in discussions with.*

*Naturally with some cultural and political influences discouraging them to speak up outside of the cyber society, they could use Facebook, Twitter and so on to express themselves without fear of censorship.*

*Social media has encouraged most of the people to speak freely about their opinion for having some political discussion over the social media that they used frequently…*

*It is perhaps the only outlet for youths in matters relating to politics. Youth, given their comfortable nature with social media, tend to use it for discussion on anything and everything, including politics. Any dictatorship of any level should rightly feel threatened by it – just look at the Arab spring.*

*Youth of today and women see social media as a mean to raised their voice, concerns, and address issue and to other related issues. So the important, proper use of social media today is very important. As this forms of social media can bring about positive change in our country if only used in the proper way.*

*Social media is very powerful today, I think it would have a more wide reach today in terms of engagement of Youths as they have access to internet almost anywhere now, moreover by participation of a wider range of youths from different backgrounds and experiences there would be an effective discussion and ideas on political basis and current issues for Fiji.*

*Social media is useful especially given that our society is one that is patriarchal. Yes women of today are educated or are more aware of their rights but there are still many who are afraid of openly challenging male-dominated decision making processes/decisions or to speak out against or for a cause. Social media has given these women a platform to do this. It is acting like a launch pad into actual face-to-face discussion, women are now brave enough to comment, like, share or discuss on forums and this bravery can transpire into physical action.*

Significant difference is noticed with those who either strongly disagreed or disagreed. 12% of women respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed when compared to men that social media does not provide a greater voice to women. As for social media providing youths with a greater voice, 12% of women and 5% strongly disagreed and disagreed with the statement. This result was particularly interesting for the purposes of the research, however, given the research limitations of time and funding further investigations could not be carried out with regards to this. However this opens up space for more investigative research to be carried out to verify why more women are skeptical about the power of social media to provide a greater voice to youths and women.

**TOP 10 POSTS BY REACTIONS PER FAN**

| Date | Message | Page | Type | Likes | Comments | Shares |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 Sep 2014 | Can Bainimarama answer this? | Support NFP | status | 422 | 113 | 79 |
| 10 Sep 2014 | A STATEMENT FROM THE PARTY LEADER ON THE FEAR-MONGERING CAMPAIGNS, AND THE FACTS. | Support NFP | status | 221 | 69 | 18 |
| 01 Sep 2014 | I will always fearlessly defend The Truth & The People regardless of the consequences to myself. | Mick Beddoes | photo | 3596 | 173 | 46 |
| 08 Sep 2014 | RECLAIMING FIJI! Fiji will be safer in the hands of SODELPA GOVT, you will have a voice, freedom and democracy. You can talk to the govt with an open door policy, a govt that will | Sodelpa Fiji Discussion | status | 713 | 138 | 0 |
| 17 Sep 2014 | Four more years !! #Bainimarama2014 | Support Fiji PM Frank Bainimarama | photo | 4230 | 414 | 146 |
| 08 Sep 2014 | RECLAIMING FIJI RIGHT ON TRACK, HUGE SWING OF VOTERS TOWARDS SODELPA - VOTE 317 FOR A PEACEFUL FIJI! | Sodelpa Fiji Discussion | status | 647 | 82 | 0 |
| 08 Sep 2014 | The time is getting closer and closer - WE WILL RECLAIM FIJI - For our people and our nation. Vote 317, for security, freedom, peace, prosperity and DEMOCRACY! Bai and Kai need to pay | Sodelpa Fiji Discussion | status | 628 | 77 | 19 |
| 04 Sep 2014 | For those of you who are voting for the first time and would have been between the ages of 10-17 when Fiji last had democracy in place, I thought you might be interested to see a quick | Mick Beddoes | photo | 1690 | 143 | 37 |
| 07 Sep 2014 | British Army soldiers sending their support for 317. #toluduavitu Putting Ro Teimumu and SODELPA in parliament is EASY!! just tick or circle 317. Youth are | Sodelpa National Youth Council Forum | photo | 1102 | 84 | 69 |
| 23 Sep 2014 | "I'm deeply honored and humbled that the Fijian people have put their trust in me to lead them into our new and true democracy. I give you my absolute promise that we will govern | Support Fiji PM Frank Bainimarama | photo | 2892 | 173 | 131 |

*Figure 14. Top 10 Posts by Reactions (Social Media Analytics)*

## CONCLUSION

The study is one of the first to examine the role of social media in youth and women political participation in Fiji. Social media in itself is a relatively new phenomenon but is already having an impact on how citizens in Fiji are being involved in the political process.

The study found that most of the youth and women sampled use social media either to be informed about political news, to follow their preferred political parties or to discuss and debate political issues with their peers.

*Social Networking Sites creating a new dimension to political/election campaigning*

SNSs, especially Facebook, are emerging as a means of communication with the previously politically disengaged age and gender demographics. The potential for including marginalized participants in political processes has thus been recognized. By employing Facebook, and the other SNSs, the prospect for an extended voter reach as well as stronger communication between the

candidates and their supporters is becoming a reality. This will aid in the strengthening of the public sphere in a deliberative democracy.

Facebook was the most popular social media page used for political engagement. All political parties had used Facebook as a political campaigning tool during the 2014 general elections. Facebook was also an integral strategy for a young women independent candidate.

Other candidates believed that traditional methods such as greater community involvement played a greater role in their campaigning strategy. This was due to the digital divide that still exists in Fiji where the majority of the population lack access to Internet services. These women political candidates have had to adopt both an online and traditional campaigning strategy. A combination of both proved to be an efficient and effective means to winning votes.

The 2014 election was a great achievement for women in Fiji. Fiji has one of the highest percentages of women in parliament with 8 women elected into parliament in the election. However, while Fiji's average is high in the region, in comparison to other countries such as America, it is still low. But Fiji's achievement should be applauded given that in developing economies it is more difficult for women to succeed in the elections, especially in the patriarchally entrenched Pacific societies.



Figure 15. Roshika Deo with a supporter and social media slogan

*Social media as an emerging conduit for political expression and participation*

Youth and women prefer social media as it provides a space that is emancipatory and empowering especially in a culture which has generally repressed women and youth expression. However, some also believe that social media is merely a platform. Social media provides the space but it is the individuals which shape the role social media plays. Some of the respondents felt that information on social media lacked credibility whereas some believed that the onus was on individuals to be more critical of information on social media. Most believed that individuals should be discerning about the information they view on social media. It can be useful but youths need to exercise caution and judgement when interpreting these information. Furthermore, while some discussions are constructive, some degenerate to personal attacks with strong issues of misogyny and racism. One female political candidate experienced cyber bullying on social media, even receiving death threats. However, this strengthened her resolve.

*Social media, development of a new public sphere and formation of opinion*

Lastly, the study found that youths perceived that social media impacted their voting decision. This highlights the increasing role social media is playing in shaping public sentiment on political parties and candidates in Fiji. Given Fiji's burgeoning youth population – a generation raised on Facebook, the role social media will play in Fiji politics will only grow as IT literacy increases, Internet access expands and Internet costs reduce. It will take some time, and further elections, before a clearer picture emerges.

Due to restrictive media laws and curtailment of assembly and expression since the 2006 coup in Fiji, the emergence of a new public sphere should be seen as an opportunity to increase engagement in the political sphere – especially with regards to the politically disengaged age group (18-35). It should be seen as an opportunity to enhance public input and the development of public opinion across various channels. Therefore, it is imperative that future research should be done in this direction – particularly with regards to the dynamic relationship between SNSs (such as Facebook) and formation of public opinion.

*Social media and changing perceptions about youth, women and civic participation.*

There is a general view that with greater access to ICT and thus social media, alternative spaces are opening up for greater participation of youth and women in expressing political opinions and partaking in debates around politics. The research indicates that there is overwhelming support for the notion that social media is providing these once marginalized groups with a space to politically express themselves.

**REFERENCES**

Antonio, A., & Tuffley, D. (2014). The Gender Digital Divide in Developing Countries. *Internet Futures, 6*, 673-687.

Bruns, A., & Bahnisch, M. (2007). Social media : tools for user-generated content : social drivers behind growing consumer participation in user-led content generation. Eveleigh NSW: Smart Services CRC Pty Ltd.

Cave, D. (2012, November 21). Digital Islands: How The Pacific's Ict Revolution Is Transforming The Region. Retrieved November 31, 2014, from Lowy Institute for International Policy: http://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/digital-islands-how-pacifics-ict-revolution-transforming-region

Chen, P. J. (2012). Social Media, Youth Participation and Australian Elections. AEC Electoral Research Forum. Canberra: Australian Electoral Commission..

Dixon, W. J. and F. J. Massey (1969). Introduction to statistical analysis, McGraw-Hill New York.

Foster, S. (2007). Who let the blogs out? Media and free speech in post coup Fiji. Pacific Journalism Review, 2(13), 47 - 60.

Fox, R. L., & Ramos., J. M. (2012). Introduction: Politics in the New Media Era. In R. L. Fox, & J. M. Ramos., iPolitics: Citizens, Elections, and Governing in the New Media Era (pp. 1-23). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Friedman, E. J. (2005). The Reality of Virtual Reality: The Internet and Gender Equality Advocacy in Latin America. *Latin American Politics and Society, 47*(3), 1-34.

Gonedau, M. (2012, July 15). 47 Percent Of 2012 Fiji Elections Voters Under 35 . Retrieved June 11, 2014, from http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/2012/July/07-16-05.htm: http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/2012/July/07-16-05.htm

Gounder, N. (2014, October 14). Political Social Media Campaiging for National Federation Party Of Fiji.

Groves, R. M., et al. (2009). Survey methodology, Wiley.

Harcourt, W. (1999). *Women@Internet: Creating New Cultures in Cyberspace.* London: Zed.

Heeks, R., Arun, S., & Morgan, S. (2004). *Researching ICT-Based Enterprise for Women in Developing Countries: A Gender Perspective.* Manchester: Institute for Development Policy and Management (IDPM).

Huyer, S., & Sikoska, T. (2003). *Overcoming the Gender Digital Divide: Understanding ICTs and their Potential for the Empowerment of Women.* United Nations: United Nations International Research and Training Institute forthe Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). .

Li, C., Bernoff, J., Fiorentino, R., & Glass, S. (2007). Social Technographics: Mapping Participation In Activities Forms The Foundation Of A Social Strategy. Retrieved April 29, 2015, from Texas Community College Teachers Association: http://www.tccta.org/links/Committees/pub-archive/Social-Technographics.pdf

Loader, B. D. (2007). Young citizens in the digital age: Political engagement, young people and new media. London: Routledge.

Loadera, B. D., Vromen, A., & Xenos, M. A. (2014). The networked young citizen: social media, political participation and civic engagement. Information, Communication & Society, 143-150.

Marsh, D., O'Toole, T., & Jones, S. (2007). Young People and Politics in the UK: Apathy or Alienation? . Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Ng, C., & Mitter, S. (2005). *Gender and the Digital Economy: Perspectives From the Developing World.* New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

Roux, K., & Dalvit, L. (2014). Mobile women: Investigating the digital gender divide in cellphone use in a South African rural area. *Proceedings of the e-Skills for Knowledge Production and Innovation Conference 2014,*, (pp. 401-416). Cape Town.

Sandys, E. (2005). *Gender equality and empowerment of women through ICT. Women 2000 and Beyond.* Retrieved October 25, 2015, from (UNITED NATIONS Division for the Advancement of Women Department of Economic and Social Affairs: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/w2000-09.05-ict-e.pdf

Schaefer, D. S. (2007). Empowering Women Weavers? The Internet in Rural Morocco. *Information Technologies and International Development*, 17-23.

Tarai, J., Finau, G., Kant, R., & Titfanue, J. (2015). Political Social Media Campaigning In Fiji's 2014 Elections. *Journal of Pacific Studies, 35*(2), 89-114.

Walsh, C. (2010). Political blogs on Fiji: A 'cybernet democracy' case study. Pacific Journalism Review, 1(16), 154 - 177.

Vakaoti, P. (2012). Mapping the landscapes of Young People's Participation in Fiji. *SSGM Discussion Paper Series 2012/6*.

Yin, R. K. (2009). Case study research: Design and methods, Sage publications, INC.