Book Section:
Wasserman, H. and Madrid-Morales, D. orcid.org/0000-0002-1522-5857 (2022) The messenger, the message, and the receiver: South African government communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. In: Maarek, P.J., (ed.) Manufacturing Government Communication on Covid-19: A Comparative Perspective. Springer Studies in Media and Political Communication . Springer , pp. 319-333. ISBN 9783031092299

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-09230-5_16

Preferred citation: Wasserman, H., & Madrid-Morales, D. (2022). The Messenger, the Message, and the Receiver: South African Government Communication During the COVID-19 Pandemic. In P. J. Maarek (Ed.), *Manufacturing Government Communication on Covid-19: A Comparative Perspective* (pp. 319–333). Springer Cham.

The messenger, the message and the receiver: South African government communication during the Covid-19 pandemic

Herman Wasserman, University of Cape Town

Dani Madrid-Morales, University of Houston

Introduction

South Africa was the country on the African continent that was worst hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. The total number of confirmed cases reported at the time of writing (January 2022) was the highest number compared to other African countries (Galal, 2022). Apart from the harsh health impact, the country's economy was also hit hard. Ninety percent of businesses reported that their turnover during the pandemic was below the range they were used to before the outbreak of the pandemic (Galal, 2022). The socio-economic impact of the pandemic on South Africa was expected to be severe and long-lasting. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was expected to decline sharply and not recover even by 2024; unemployment was foreseen to increase dramatically as a result of the effect of lockdown restrictions; and aggregate household income to fall sharply (UNDP, 2020, p.19). The hardest hit are unskilled and semi-skilled workers with low levels of schooling who are most likely to work in the informal sector (UNDP, 2020, p.20). Overall, the pandemic's impact is likely to further exacerbate the already severe income inequality in South Africa, and is estimated to

further impede the country's progress towards Sustainable Development Goals, in particular those goals relating to particularly regarding poverty, health, education, employment and inequalities, with women, especially those in female-headed household, expected to bear the brunt of the impact (UNDP, 2020, p.20).

Compared to countries in East or West Africa, the South African economy was also highly impacted by the spread of the Omicron variant of the virus, which was first identified by researchers in the country in late 2021, with no evidence that it also originated in the country. Multiple countries, particularly those in Europe and North America, banned flights from South Africa and neighbouring countries, further damaging the economy. These flight bans were widely seen as unfairly discriminating against South Africa, and had a devastating impact on particularly its tourism industry which is vital to its economy as it is responsible for around 18% of total employment (Seydi, 2021). An estimated $12.6 million in tourism revenue was lost in one city, Cape Town, alone (Seydi, 2021).

Given this severe impact on both South African society and economy, the country's government had to face steep challenges in communicating its crisis response to the public—both domestically and internationally. Soon after the first case of Covid-19 was confirmed in the country, President Cyril Ramaphosa started with regular televised addresses to the public (which later became known as 'family meetings', Feltham, 2021) mainly used to announce different lockdown levels based on infection rates. Daily updates on infections, recoveries and, later, vaccinations, were provided through news media and social media channels. In these communiques, government demonstrated a commitment to scientific data and drew on the rhetoric of solidarity and community to encourage South Africans to work together to overcome the pandemic. However, it also received criticism for its one-sidedness as these televised meetings did not allow for questions or interactions with journalists (Feltham,

2021). Trust in government communications received a big setback in 2021 when the Minister of Health, Zweli Mkhize - a former medical doctor - was implicated in a corruption scandal around the awarding of a COVID-19 communication contract and relieved of his position (Fihlani, 2021). This came at a time when the vaccine rollout in the country was hampered by procurement, administrative and communication challenges. The scandal, known as the 'Digital Vibes' scandal in reference to the company who secured the contract, was seen to symbolize the low trust South Africans have in their government's ability to provide crucial health information to its citizens (Cotterill, 2021). The scandal added to a long list of corruption scandals involving the South African government, leading to what observers called a 'trust deficit that exists in terms of people's attitudes to the state' (Cotterill, 2021).

The distrust in governments' COVID-19 communication that followed the Mkhize case, came against a background of long-lasting low levels of trust in institutions by most South Africans. According to data from the Afrobarometer, Africa's largest social and political values surveys, the number of South Africans who do not trust at all the government, the courts of law, or the President has been increasing every year since the surveys were first conducted in 1999. While, in 2002/2003, 18% of respondents said they did not trust the President at all, the number climbed to 27% in 2016/2018. Similar increases can be seen in levels of distrust towards the courts of law (from 16% to 22%) and the ruling party, ANC or African National Congress (from 26% to 36%).

Drawing on data from online experiments and surveys conducted in South Africa during the peak months of the COVID-19 outbreak, this chapter will provide an overview of the communication processes followed by the South African government, and public attitudes towards the South African government's handling of the Covid-19 crisis. Before reporting on

these findings, it is necessary to provide some background about the particular context within which these communication processes took place.

The context for government communication

The South African government's communication with the public around the Covid-19 pandemic was largely facilitated by the news media, in particular television broadcasts. For this reason, it is important to understand the background against which this mediation takes place.

Spreading trustworthy information about the COVID-19 virus, non-pharmaceutical interventions such as mask-wearing and hand-washing, as well as information about vaccinations was important to help mitigate the severe impact of the pandemic on South Africa. Yet this communication was made more difficult by the socio-cultural context. With eleven official languages, the country has high linguistic diversity, yet the regular television broadcasts in which Pres Ramaphosa outlined his government's response to the pandemic, were all conducted in English. The task of translating this information into other South African languages was taken up by CovidComms SA, a group of volunteers who sought to bring health information to South Africans in their own languages and in a simplified, easily understandable format (Cotterill, 2021).

South Africa enjoys a high degree of media freedom, safeguarded in the Constitution as part of a general guarantee of freedom of expression as part of a Bill of Rights (South African Constitution, 1996). Since the advent of democracy, these guarantees have enabled a public sphere characterized by robust debates, even if it sometimes led to tensions between a critical media and over-sensitive government (Wasserman, 2020). The advent of digital and social media have broadened the terrain upon which engagement between the public and government can take place. There has been a rapid growth of online news sites, which largely

exacerbated the trend towards greater concentration and conglomeration in the South African media, with some exceptions in the form of donor-funded specialty news platforms, such as the health news website Bhekisisa, which further rose to prominence during the pandemic (Finlay, 2021).

Online news sites have increasingly become major sources of information and influential spaces for public debate, but also for the circulation of disinformation, with concerns about exposure to disinformation growing, especially on WhatsApp and Facebook. According to the Reuters Institute's Digital News Report 2021, these platforms, which were the most used networks for any purpose in the country in 2021. Overall, daily newspaper circulations continue to see a decline, while some online news platforms like *News 24, Bhekesisa* and *Daily Maverick* have become sustainable outlets – some relying on subscription or membership, and others on donor funding (Roper, 2021).
Nevertheless, trust in news media has been on the rise in recent years, with the online news site *News24* occupying the top place among trusted news brands (shared with the BBC) – 73% of South Africans consulted the platform weekly. The most trusted offline brand was the private television channel eNCA, while the ability of the public broadcaster SABC to reach diverse audiences was hamstrung by severe staff cuts (Roper, 2021). The digital divide in the country persists despite the growth in digital and mobile platforms, giving radio an important role to play in communicating health information, especially in indigenous languages (Cotterill, 2021). Because access to media is especially a problem in rural areas, information was communicated to citizens living in these areas at in-person gatherings or by health workers working in local communities (Cotterill, 2021).

Trust in news overall stood at 52%, but trust in news on social media was much lower, at 29% (Roper, 2021). Trust in news overall stood at 52%, but trust in news on social media was much lower, at 29% (Roper, 2021). Trust in news overall stood at 52%, but trust

in news on social media was much lower, at 29% (Roper, 2021). Trust in news overall stood at 52%, but trust in news on social media was much lower, at 29% (Roper, 2021). Trust in news overall stood at 52%, but trust in news on social media was much lower, at 29% (Roper, 2021).

Trust in news overall stood at 52%, but trust in news on social media was much lower, at 29% (Roper, 2021). So significant was the fear about the risks posed to to trustworthy information during the Covid-19 pandemic, leading the South African government to include restrictions on false information in its regulations as part of the State of Disaster declared at the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020 (and which was still in force at the time of writing). According to these regulations, spreading disinformation about Covid-19 is deemed a criminal offence, which carries a penalty of a fine and/or imprisonment. Significantly in the context of government communication, this regulation also extends to spreading deceptive information about "any measure taken by the Government to address COVID-19" (South African Government 2020).

Government communication

From the outset, the discourse employed by the South African Government drew on the language of solidarity, community and unity. In his first national address after the declaration of the State of Disaster, President Ramaphosa articulated these values in his multilingual closing sentences, repeating the phrase from the National Anthem, 'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika', meaning 'God bless Africa', in several of the official languages:

> *In the days, weeks and months ahead our resolve, our resourcefulness and our unity as a nation will be tested as never before. I call on all of us, one and all, to play our part. To be courageous, to be patient, and above all, to show compassion. Let us*

never despair. For we are a nation at one, and we will surely prevail. May God protect our people. Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika. Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso. God seën Suid-Afrika. God bless South Africa. Mudzimu fhatutshedza Afurika. Hosi katekisa Afrika

The South African Government's Department of Communication set up an 'information war room against the pandemic' which attempted to communicate a 'unified and consistent message' to 'keep South Africans informed of government rules and regulations and to adhere to what is expected of them in various stages the lockdown period' (Mputing, 2020). This communication strategy included a variety of channels and platforms, including health messages in pamphlet form, written in local languages, public radio stations, loud-hailers and text messaging (Mputing, 2020). The Government's Department of Health also established a Risk Communications and Community Engagement Working Group that involved a range of non-governmental organizations, civil society groups and academic researchers. This group produced a weekly Social Listening Report, highlighting rumours, conspiracy theories and false information circulating in communities, and refuting it. This report was (and still is, at the time of writing) published on the Department of Health's website and circulated on social media. The Department of Health also published daily updates on infections, deaths, recoveries and vaccinations, which were published widely on social media and news media platforms.

Given the severity of the pandemic in South Africa, and the several challenges that the government had to face, the question arises how the general public viewed the government's handling of the Covid-19 crisis, and where they went to find information about the pandemic. Our study therefore asked the following research questions:

A further, related question pertains to the sources of information about the pandemic – where did the South African go to find trust information about Covid-19, and how did government fare as a source of trusted information in relation to other sources?

- RQ1: What were the South African public's views of the South African government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic?
- RQ2: What were the South African public's general attitudes towards Covid-19?
- RQ3: Where did South Africans go to find information during the pandemic?
- RQ4: What information sources did South Africans trust the most?

Methodology

Data for this chapter was collected between May 24 and June 5, 2021. Facebook and Instagram users located in South Africa were invited to participate in an online survey via paid advertisements placed on said platforms. The survey consisted of two parts. First, we surveyed 1,585 South Africans to understand their general attitudes towards COVID-19, as well as their information seeking behaviour during the pandemic. They were also asked about their most trusted sources of information and their views of the South African government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A smaller number of respondents (N = 1,180) went on to take part in an online experiment that sought to determine the effectiveness of social media messaging strategies to promote vaccination, as well as the role that messenger characteristics play in shaping the effectiveness of these messages. Our focus with the experiment was to determine whether messages that came from governmental institutions were received by audience as more credible than those that came from political parties.

Because of the nature of the data collection process – and online survey with participants recruited through social media, particularly Facebook – our sample skews old

(35% of respondents are over aged 60 or over), urban (63% reside in Gauteng or the Western Cape) and female (73%). This bias in the sample is reflected in other demographic characteristics of the participants. The majority are English speakers (54%), with a significant number of respondents also identifying Afrikaans as the language the speak the most at home (22%). In terms of political affiliation, a large number of survey respondents (41%) are supporters of the Democratic Alliance (DA), the main opposition party in South Africa. Only 13% of our sample identifies as an ANC voter. Because of the characteristics of the population that we were able to recruit, all our analyses below control statistically for all these relevant demographic variables.

COVID-19 News Consumption Practices

Research in South Africa and in other parts of the world during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic indicated that citizens turned to established news sources for information on the virus, remedies, and government responses. Previous research has also shown that South Africans have a high interest in news, with legacy media like television and radio still ranking the highest on the list of offline media consumed by South Africans, followed by newspapers - although the latter has been experiencing a steep decline. During the COVID-19 lockdown period, South African news websites saw a steep increase in traffic. Against this background, we asked South Africans whether they use certain media sources to get information about COVID-19.

Given the high use of online media during the pandemic, as well as the prevalence of disinformation on social media, our study targeted social media users, but also asked questions about their general media use. We found that, in general, the majority of respondents (Figure 1) still consulted established news media sources like television (85.6%), radio (79.2%) and newspapers (online 58.3%, print 73.4%) more than they did social media,

with the exception of Facebook, which had a high usage (85.1 %), followed by WhatsApp (67.5 %). Google was also a popular platform to obtain information from (85.3 %), but other social media platforms like TikTok (19.6 %), Twitter (29.2 %), Instagram (26.6 %) and YouTube (45.6 %) were much less popular sources of information. It is important to acknowledge here that, since the data for this study was collected through social media, values for social media use for information purposes might be higher in our findings than among the general population, including those that are not on social media and, therefore, could not take part in our survey.

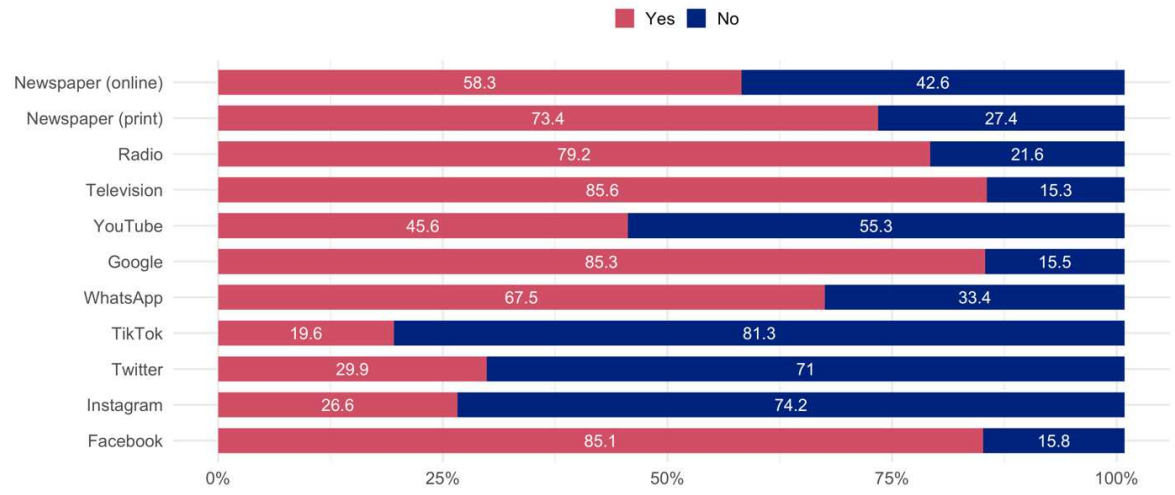

Figure 1. COVID-19 News Consumption Habits in South Africa

If we aggregate data on news consumption in two groups, “legacy media” (TV, radio, print and online newspapers) and “digital/new media” (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google, WhatsApp, Tik Tok and YouTube), we can see that there are quite significant differences. The average use of traditional media to get information about COVID is around 74%, while digital/social media stands at 51% across all groups. In other words, when it came to getting information about the pandemic, South Africans appeared to rely mostly on “traditional” media sources. This phenomenon is no different than what has been observed in other parts of the world. In the South African case, as we outlined earlier, the high number of TV

viewership might also be explained because the government decided to use television as a primary medium to convey relevant information about the virus to the population,

We can further break down these data by demographic groups. Overall, there was not a big difference between male and female respondents in terms of their preference for media outlets, with a slightly higher preference for Twitter among males than females. Age was not a major determinant of preference for media outlet, although some social media outlets (notably Instagram, TikTok were more popular as a source of information about COVID-19 among younger users (18-29 and 30-39) than older cohorts. There was a slight preference for printed newspapers among users with some university education, and for radio among users with only secondary education. More users with home languages other than Afrikaans and English said they prefer radio and television as sources of information about COVID-19 than Afrikaans and English speakers.

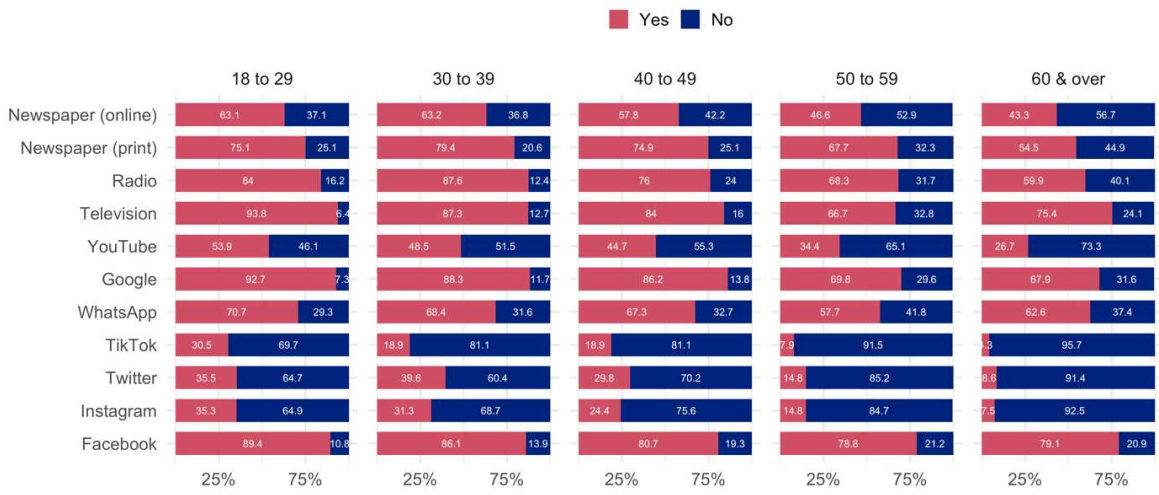

Figure 2. COVID-19 News Consumption Habits (by age group)

<u>COVID-19 and Trusted Sources of Information</u>

In the context of an increased perception of the prevalence of disinformation in society, trust plays a very significant role in successfully communicating health-related information. We asked survey participants how much they trusted COVID-19 related information that comes from 12 sources, including news media, institutions, acquaintances, and others. We found that, overall, medical doctors and the World Health Organization were the most trusted sources of information, followed by radio and television. News websites, family, and the South African government were less trusted, but still more trusted than social media, friends, community leaders, celebrities, and faith leaders. In the charts below, blue tones are associated with higher levels of trust, and red tones with lower levels of trust.

To compare these data more easily across actors, we can create an index ranging from 0 (lowest level of trust) to 3 (highest level of trust). On this scale, the overall trust in these 12 sources of COVID-19 related information is 1.8. Overall trust in media sources (including TV, radio and news websites), is 2.0, while the overall level of trust for institutions (i.e., WHO and SA government) is 1.7, even though, as shown below, South Africans say they trust information from the World Health Organization (WHO) substantially more than information that comes from the South African government in general. Respondents who intend voting for the ANC or EFF tended to trust the government's communication more than supporters of other parties.

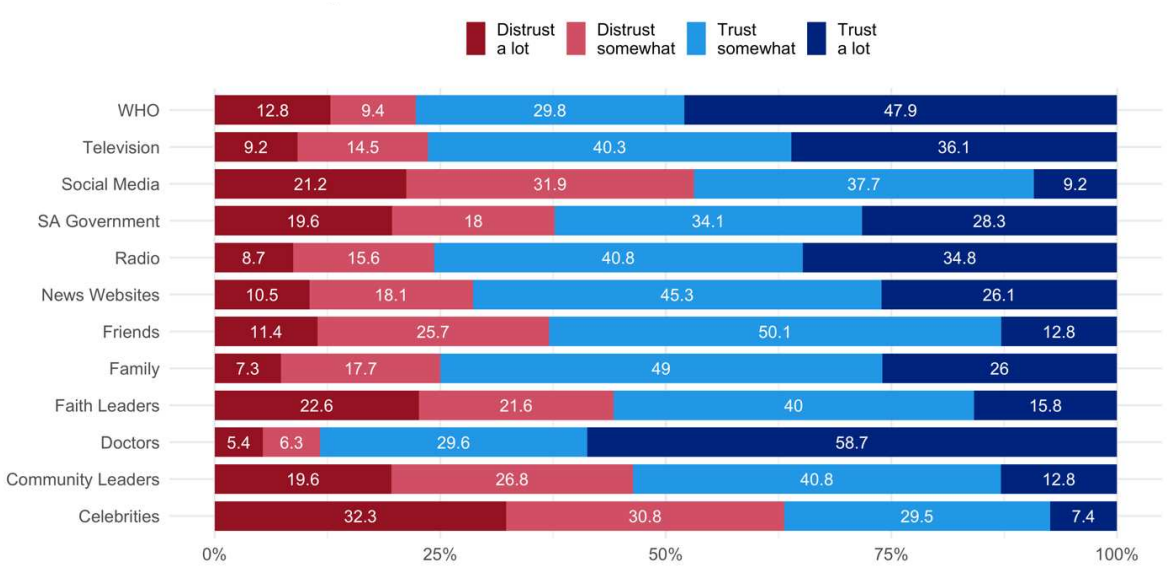

Figure 3. Trust in Sources of Information About COVID-19 in South Africa

When broken down by different demographics, we see little difference between males and females in the levels of trust in different information sources. Younger users put slightly more trust in the WHO than older users, while older users tend to trust family more as sources of reliable information about Covid-19 than younger users.

Attitudes towards and Responses to COVID-19

To explore South African's attitudes towards the COVID-19 outbreak, we asked them about their perceived risk of COVID-19. The vast majority said they were not too worried (23%) or not worried at all (63%) about the risk. Risk perception differed by demographic groups. To understand how these differences operate, we built a regression model, that also considered people's overall trust, media consumption practices and personal experience with COVID-19. Participants identifying as males appear to be less likely to perceive COVID-19's risks than those identifying as females. The same can be said of younger South Africans and those with lower educational levels. On the other hand, higher levels of information seeking–whether on

social media or through traditional media– as well as higher levels of trust overall are associated with higher perceptions of personal risk.

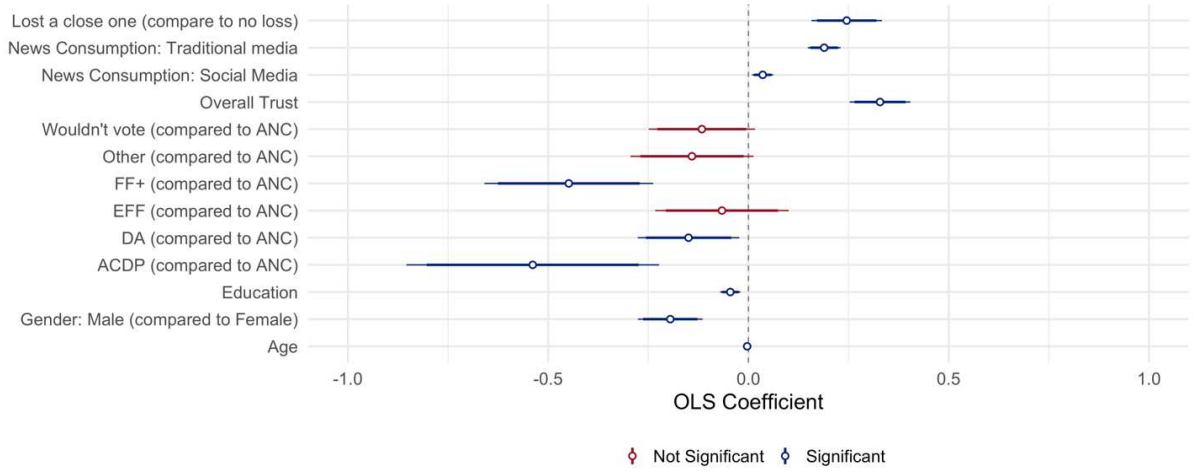

Figure 4. OLS Regression Coefficients on the Support for the Government's Response to COVID-19 in South Africa

Lastly, our survey asked participants about their evaluation of the South African government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We found that the majority of South Africans disapprove of the government's response. These levels are lower than those we found in another study one year earlier, where those approving the government's response were in the majority. This may indicate a deteriorating level of trust in the government, or a decrease in trust linked to other issues such as the vaccine rollout which is now higher on the news agenda. Media consumption did not appear to have an impact on the evaluation of the government's response. Two factors pop up clearly in the model. Higher levels of trust in general are associated with more positive evaluations, while political affiliation to any party, other than the ruling ANC, is associated with more negative evaluations.

Testing COVID-19 Messaging Strategies Across Political Actors

The second part of this project involved an online experiment in which participants saw one of four versions of a Facebook post that included a video encouraging citizens to get vaccinated. Each of the four versions of the Facebook post was made to look like it had been posted from a different account. Two of these accounts were from political parties in South Africa (ANC and DA), and two were institutional accounts (WHO and South Africa's National Department of Health).

All four posts included the same video, which was designed to look like a #ViralFact message such as the ones distributed by the World Health Organization's Africa Infodemic Response Alliance (AIRA). The video combined two messaging strategies, "humor" and "fear". In selecting this message, we ran a pilot-study during which 4 versions of the message were tested. The three other videos were excluded from the experimental design because, in the pilot study, they did not appear to activate the messaging strategies that were intended to be in use (version 1 combined "hope" and "fun", version 2 mixed "fear" and "civic duty", and version 3 used "hope" and "civic duty").

Upon seeing one of the four messages (randomly assigned), experiment participants were asked two behavioral intention questions (sharing intention - whether they would share the message they had just seen and their willingness to get vaccinated) and one question to assess the credibility of the message.

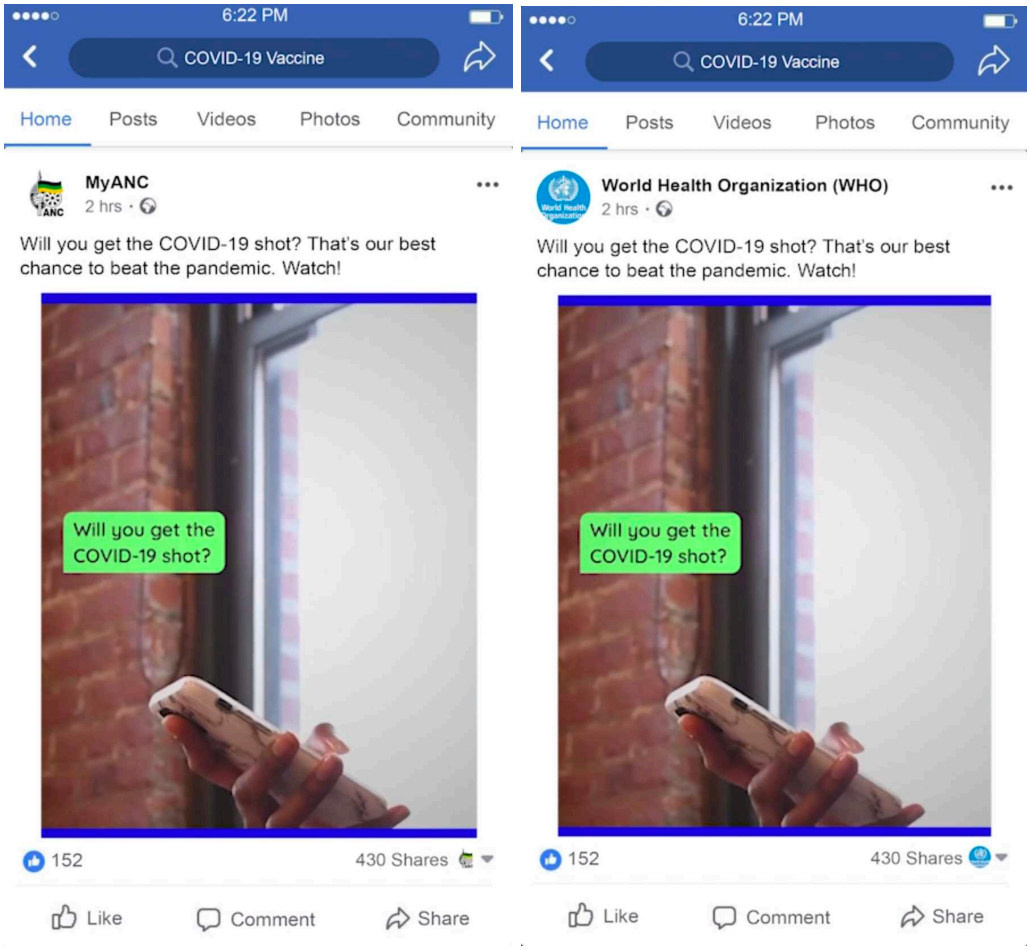

Figure 4. Sample Images Shown to Experiment Participants

Political Parties and Institutions as Health Messengers

The experiment found no significant differences in individuals' willingness to get vaccinated across the four versions of the post. In other words, seeing a message from a particular source (WHO, DA, ANC, SA Government) did not make citizen's more or less likely to get a vaccination. The lowest score, $M_{ANC} = 4.31$ (on a scale from 0 to 6), was among those who saw the post that was made to look like it came from the ANC's Facebook page. Messages that looked like they came from the DA or the National Department of Health increased the likelihood of users saying that they would get vaccinated. However, the difference with the other groups were not statistically significant ($M_{DA} = 4.65$; $M_{WHO} = 4.42$; $M_{NDH} = 4.64$). In Figure 16, the wider the graph, the larger the number of people who selected a given score.

For example, those who saw the post attributed to the DA said they were “very likely” to get vaccinated a lot more than those who saw the ANC post. The overall high willingness to get vaccinated that we see in this study confirms findings by other researchers and suggests that vaccine hesitancy is not an underlying problem, but that media users have varying levels of trust in different messengers, and that these different levels of trust have an impact on vaccination-related behavioral outcomes.

We did observe statistically significant differences in the sharing intentions of the Facebook posts between the group of participants who saw the video coming from the ANC account, and all other groups. In particular, on a scale from 0 (very unlikely to share) to 6 (very likely to share), those who were shown the post coming from the ANC (M = 3.29) were less likely to share it than those who were told it came from the WHO (3.86), the NDH (3.92) and the DA (M = 3.89). In our previous studies, we established that one of the main motivators for sharing social media posts is to warn other users or create awareness. This link in the current experiment between trust in the communicator and shareability of a social media post may suggest that this motivator of civic duty is amplified by trust in the originator of the message. Further research on this area might provide us a better understanding on whether this mechanism operates across different types of social media messages.

After seeing the Facebook post, experiment participants were also asked about how credible they thought the message was. To do so, they were presented with eight pairs of adjectives and asked to evaluate the post on a five point scale. Overall, message credibility was the lowest among those that saw the Facebook post coming from the ANC’s Facebook page (M = 2.22). Differences were most pronounced when compared to the message coming from the NDH (M = 2.44), than from the DA (M = 2.38) or the WHO (M = 2.32). In conclusion, our experiment suggests that South African media users strongly disapprove of

the way that the government is handling the pandemic and the vaccine rollout, and have overall low levels of trust in the ANC. The experiment further suggests that this trust deficit in the messenger also negatively impacts on their trust in the message itself, and their likelihood to share messages. These findings have serious implications for the government's ability to communicate pro-vaccination information to its citizens.

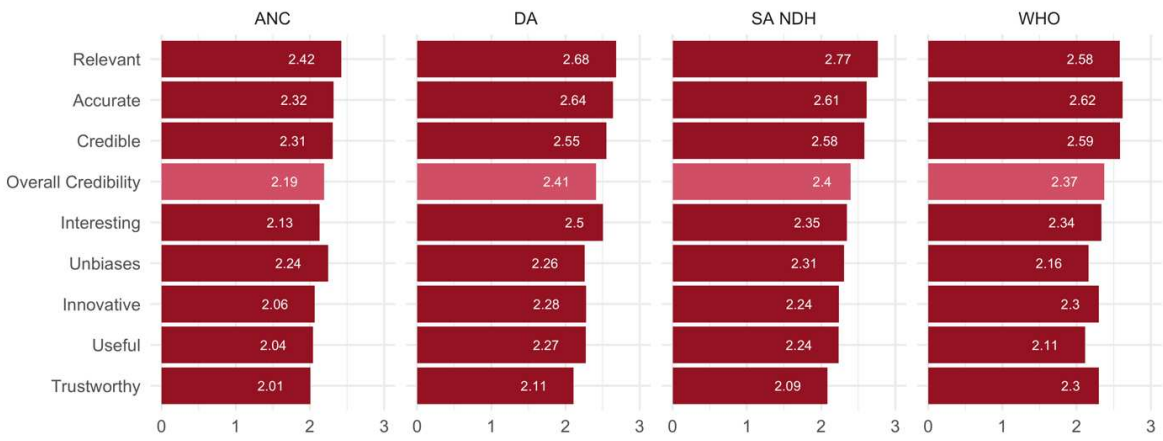

Figure 5. Credibility Evaluation of Messages Across Experimental Groups

Conclusion

Our study, conducted with support from the World Health Organisation's (WHO's) Africa Infodemic Response Alliance, showed that when it came to getting information about the pandemic, South Africans appeared to rely mostly on "traditional" media sources. On average, 74% said they got information about COVID-19 via media such as television, radio and newspapers. The results also showed that approval of the South African government's response to the pandemic had declined from a year ago, when we conducted a similar study. The current survey showed a high level of disapproval: 61% of respondents said they "strongly" or "somewhat" disapproved of the way the government was handling the pandemic, while only 21.1% said they "strongly approved". This has an impact on the effectiveness of messages promoting vaccination. If receivers of pro-vaccination messages

disapprove of the sender of the message, they are less likely to trust the content of the message or share such messages with others. The deteriorating level of trust in the government may be related to the stuttering vaccine rollout in the country, which was high on the news agenda at the time of the study. The rollout plan suffered several setbacks and the government was widely criticised for not meeting its targets. The survey was also fielded at the time when the country's health minister, Zweli Mkhize, was put on special leave while an investigation against allegations of corruption was under way.

We were interested in comparing how users would react to the same information coming from different messengers. Specifically, we looked at whether different messengers would result in people being more or less likely to get vaccinated. We also looked at whether users would be more or less likely to share the social media posts depending on where they came from. We found that media users' intentions to get vaccinated weren't particularly swayed by which political party did the posting. In all cases, after seeing the Facebook ad, their intention to get the COVID-19 shot remained very high, confirming findings by other researchers. But when it came to sharing social media posts, users were less likely to say they would share the Facebook post when they thought it came from an ANC account. Users who were told the post came from the WHO, the National Department of Health or the DA were significantly more likely to share the post. The study supports others showing a relatively high rate of vaccine acceptance among South Africans. It also suggests that the content of pro-vaccination messages is important for promoting vaccine acceptance. So is the sender.

The strong disapproval of the government's handling of the pandemic, as well as the overall low levels of trust in the ANC, should be a warning to government communicators that crafting persuasive pro-vaccine messages is not enough. The trust deficit in the messenger also has a negative impact on people's trust in the message itself, and people's

likelihood to share those messages. Our study suggests that the following features characterized the South African communications landscape during the COVID-19 pandemic, and impacted on the South African government's ability to communicate health information to its citizens:

- The South African media played both a monitorial ('watchdog') role and a collaborative role during the pandemic. This means that although the media worked with the government to communicate COVID-19 information to the public, they also held the government accountable for its failures. This scrutiny brought to bear on the government may have contributed to further loss of trust.
- The popularity of President Ramaphosa may have supported the media's collaborative role. His high approval rating may have inclined the media to support his strategy and be less critical of his leadership. Other dimensions of the government's pandemic response (lockdown regulations, corruption, inefficient vaccine rollout), as well as the corruption scandals, prompted the media's watchdog role to dominate
- The pandemic became politicized as a result of internal struggles in the ruling party and opposition parties who saw the government's response as an opportunity to appeal to their own base. This politicization shaped the public sphere within which the government's communication had to make an impact.
- The prevalence of disinformation, circulating largely online and on messaging platforms and amplified by sharing practices, complicated the government's communication efforts. The government's response to disinformation, namely to criminalize it, is controversial for its potential chilling effect on freedom of expression.

The overall result of the above combination of factors is that the South African government's COVID-19 communication took place in a noisy and chaotic context, where it had to

compete for attention against a flood of other messages, and where it had to contend with public distrust in the government's ability to respond to the pandemic efficiently.

References

Cotterrill, J. (2021). South Africa struggles to get Covid messages across. *Financial Times* November 18. https://www.ft.com/content/0eefe8c2-dbd6-429d-8757-d973233cc3e9

Feltham, L. (2021). Pure Politics: 'Family meetings' underline uncomfortable press relationship. *Mail & Guardian.* 29 August. https://mg.co.za/politics/2021-08-29-pure-politics-family-meetings-underline-uncomfortable-press-relationship/

Fihlani, P. (2021). Zweli Mkhize: Ex-South African minister implicated in Digital Vibes scandal. *BBC News.* 29 September. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-58734557

Finley, A. (Ed.) (2020). State of the Newsroom 2019/20. Johannesburg: Wits Journalism https://journalism.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/State-of-Newsroom_2019_2020_30112020.pdf

Mputing, A. (2020). Communications Committees Briefed by GCIS on Covid-19 Programmes. *Parliament of South Africa.* https://www.parliament.gov.za/news/communications-committees-briefed-gcis-covid-19-programmes

Galal, S. (2022) *Number of new daily coronavirus (COVID-19) cases in South Africa as of January 4, 2022.* Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1107993/coronavirus-cases-in-south-africa/

Roper, C. (2021). South Africa. In: *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2021.* https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2021/south-africa

Seydi, C.O. (2021). Southern Africa: Last in line for vaccines, first in line for travel bans. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. https://www.gatesfoundation.org/ideas/articles/omicron-covid-africa-travel

South African Constitution (1996). https://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/SAConstitution-web-eng-0.pdf

South African Government (2020). Disaster Management Act, 2002: Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) of the Act. *Government Gazette.* 18 March. https://altadvisory.africa/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID-19-Regulations-issued-in-terms-of-the-Disaster-Management-Act-2002-18-March-2020.pdf

UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). 2020. *Covid-19 in South Africa. Socioeconomic Impact Assessment*. Pretoria: UNDP. https://southafrica.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/UNDP%20Socioeconomic%20Impact%20Assessment%2520Socioeconomic%2520Impact%2520Assessment%25202020_FINAL.pdf

Wasserman, H. 2020. The state of South African media: a space to contest democracy. *Publizistik* 65: 451-465. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11616-020-00594-4