

# **The Integration of Online Information in Lifestyle Politics**

Young Dutch Citizens' Political Notions and Political Activities

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research aimed to explore how young Dutch citizens get news about the world online and use the information they have in relation to their political participation activities, whether conventional or unconventional political participation. The main focus of this research was on young Dutch citizens' political consumption and how that is linked to their web browsing activities. Therefore, the following main research question was explored: *how is the political consumption of young Dutch citizens linked to their web browsing activities?*

A thematic analysis was conducted after nine in-depth interviews. Furthermore, a new Google Chrome extension, Web Historian (Version 1, 2015), was used as a tool to visualize the participants' web history to provide an in-depth analysis of their web browsing activities in relation to their political consumption. The participants were asked through a survey to enter the project in which they had to send their web history data. Hereafter, they were asked to participate in an interview in which they also reflected upon their visualizations to achieve more in-depth results.

The main findings in this research stated that young Dutch citizens actively use online news to inform themselves about politics. Social media is a big contributor to their news consumption, however their social media use was not linked to information about political consumption, in particular 'boycotting'. On the contrary, it was linked to their information consumption regarding traditional politics and election time. Another finding regarding election time, is that the participants often use Voting Advice Applications (Stemwijzer.nl) to assist them in their final decision. Furthermore, this research found that the participants do not avoid information due to political beliefs, rather seek for opposite political views. The only thing that is avoided are immorally and unethical images or videos under the participant from immigrant backgrounds. The last important finding is that the participants did not have a sense of what average political interest means nor engagement, as they often compared themselves with their social environment.

**KEYWORDS:** *political participation, political consumption, boycotting, politics, VAAs, Web Historian, online news, social media, young citizens.*

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# 1 Introduction

The corruption scandals of the FIFA have been discussed thoroughly in the news lately. Especially when FIFA's president Sepp Blatter was elected again on May the 29<sup>th</sup> 2015 after already 17 years in office and involved in big corruption scandals, which caused a lot of controversy and he eventually stepped down (The Guardian, 2015). RTL News decided to research what the Dutch population thinks about the World Cup 2018 after this new scandal and especially since it is being held in Russia. In collaboration with DVJ Insights they created a survey to research Dutch citizens, who probably have a strong opinion since they are always very involved during the Europa Cups and World Cups. The results showed that 62% of Dutch citizens thinks the Netherlands should boycott the World Cup in Russia (RTL Nieuws, 2015). Not only due to the corruption scandals of the FIFA, but also because the world should not support Russia and its controversial policies (RTL Nieuws, 2015). According to Erick van Muiswinkel, a Dutch artist and boycott lobbyist, people should already boycott the World Cup 2022 in Qatar (Volkskrant, 2014). How can the world support authoritarian regimes by granting them such an important sport tournament, while they shamelessly invade human rights. Adam Withnall wrote a guide in The Independent on how people can boycott FIFA by focusing on their commercial revenue streams. For example, boycotting their broadcastings, games and merchandise, FIFA approved products, and boycotting their sponsors, which are big commercial companies, such as Coca Cola, Adidas, Hyundai/Kia, and McDonalds to name a few (The Independent, 2015).

Boycotting, which can be defined as the punishment of businesses for unfavorable behavior, is a form of a protest strategy by consumers (Neilson, 2010). Since Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become very important and valuable for companies, consumers have gained more power to influence a fair and moral market landscape (Jacobsen & Dulsrud, 2007; Micheletti & Stolle, 2008; Neilson, 2010). In her study, Neilson (2010) found that people who tend to boycott are often less trusting in institutions. They are dissatisfied, frustrated and have no faith in the competence of public institutions, such as the government or political parties to address (new) social problems, which is why they feel the need for own action (Baek, 2010; Neilson, 2010; Stolle, Hooghe & Micheletti, 2005). Referring back to the Dutch context and the World Cup 2018 in Russia, it is not the first time the Dutch government supports Russia when it comes to sport tournaments. The Winter Olympics in Sochi is a good example of why Dutch citizens should not expect anything from the government in terms of boycotting, according to writer and columnist Bas Heijne. Indeed, the Dutch king, queen, prime minister and president Putin celebrated with a beer, which caused a lot of controversy in the Netherlands (Volkskrant, 2014).

Research shows a shift in the way people, especially youth, participate in political and civic

action. According to different scholars, an evolution of citizenship has taken place since people are more individualized, which affects their political participation (Dalton, 2008; Koos, 2012; Stolle et al., 2005; Ward & de Vreese, 2011). Micheletti (2003) calls it 'individualized collective action', which is part of lifestyle politics and means that "ordinary, day-to-day decisions of citizens acquire a political meaning" (as cited in Stolle et al., 2005, p. 254). New forms of civic and political action, such as political consumption, are rising and offer a more lifestyle oriented way of participating in society. According to Giddens (1991), individuals face an abundance of options that can be regarded political, which influences their lifestyle and in turn is influenced by local and global issues that collide. This trend of individualized action fits into the postmodern and post-materialistic societies people live and participate in. Globalization is a major factor that caused this change in the political sphere, since one nation's problem becomes other nations' problem as well, the government has less ability to solve policy issues (Baek, 2010). Furthermore, globalization influences the relative power of the nation-state regarding trans-national corporations and organizations which are gaining more power than the state (Fox, 2013). This causes the state to have less influence in their citizens' lives, a withdrawal from their lives that encourages individualistic participation and in turn the state becomes less important to target while taking political action (Fox, 2013).

This situation causes distrust in the competencies of governments as seen in Neilson (2010), which is why people seek actions that not directly target governments. Lifestyle politics is especially embodied by young citizens that use non-conventional ways of political participation to express their opinion or views. According to some statistics, the voting rates of youth and their interest in politics is declining, while they are an important group for developing enduring notions of citizenship (Dalton, 2008; Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Thorson, 2012; Ward & de Vreese, 2011). It may be true that conventional ways of political participation, such as voting and supporting political parties is declining, however new forms of engagement and participation are rising. These forms of political participation, such as boycotting or 'buycotting', are popular among youth and reflect the politics behind products (Stolle et al., 2005). In some countries 'buycotting' has become a common way for citizens to participate politically. It means that citizens buy certain goods or services, such as organic food or environmental friendly products, to show their political concerns and to reward businesses for favorable behavior (Baek, 2010; Neilson, 2010; Stolle et al., 2005). The act of boycotting or 'buycotting' is called political consumerism, which can be defined as "consumer choice of producers and products based on political or ethical considerations, or both" (Stolle et al., 2005, p. 246).

Another big factor that should be considered when reflecting upon this change is the internet. The internet and new media have changed the way people connect and communicate and seek and share information, which according to some scholars can have a positive effect on the

political participation of citizens, since they have more opportunities to cast their voice but also to interact with political entities and to inform themselves (Fox, 2013; Kruikeimeier, van Noort, Vliegthart & de Vreese, 2014; Ward & de Vreese, 2011). According to Wells (2010), "Digital media is one of the unprecedented opportunities for new forms of engagement and action," (p. 422). In the literature there are two views on the effects of new media on civic and political life. Optimists are of opinion that new media promote democracy, because it is more approachable and offers a low-cost way of communication, association, and participation. Pessimists oppose this point of view and think that new media will not lead to significant changes in political behavior, because it withdraws people from the public sphere (Boulianne, 2009; Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Kruikeimeier et al., 2014; Lupia & Philpot, 2005; Xenos & Moy, 2007).

Furthermore, there is an overload of political information online which makes finding accurate and accessible political information very hard if one is not familiar in this field (Kenski & Stroud, 2006). This is especially the case for people with low interest in politics, because they are often not familiar with the right sources. On the other hand, they probably will barely seek for political information online in the first place, unlike people that are politically interested (Kenski & Stroud, 2006). Kenski and Stroud (2006) note that the current levels of political knowledge and participation will probably be maintained if this is the case for seeking political information online, because the existing knowledge gaps will be replicated. Thus, the internet will not actually lead to the increase of political participation, because it is mostly beneficial for those that are already politically interested, knowledgeable and active (Kenski & Stroud, 2006). According to this view, the internet will engage citizens that are already politically involved or interested, hence not mobilize new citizens, which is referred to as reinforcement (Kruikeimeier et al., 2014). It is often stated that the internet offers more resources that people can benefit from, however on the other hand not everyone is familiar with these resources. People who are more politically interested or active are "resource-rich" or have more civic skills, which causes them to benefit more from the advantages of the internet (Best & Krueger, 2005). There is an inequality in the way people can use the opportunities that the internet offers (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006; Polat, 2005).

However, one cannot ignore the fact that new media have caused changes in the political sphere, whether positive or negative and that these changes also affect ideas about citizenship, civic engagement and political participation. As mentioned previously, young people are attracted to these different forms of political action. Therefore, they are a good group to research and they are also more amenable to considering label campaigns and other forms of 'boycotting', because they still have not developed an ingrained pattern of consumer choice (Stolle et al., 2005). Furthermore, they are 'digital natives', which are people that were born during or after the rise of digital

technologies and therefore are ““native speakers” of the digital language of computers, videogames and the Internet.” (Prensky, 2001, p. 1). They are also an important group because they are the future. As according to Prior (2010) and Lupia and Philpot (2005), political interest is key to a well-functioning democracy, thus it is important for young citizens to be politically interested and active. Therefore, it is socially relevant to research what other forms of political participation the youth is engaged in, if it is not conventional political participation.

Some scholars are of opinion that political consumption is underrepresented in the literature about political participation, because it is a form of political participation that goes quite unnoticed (Neilson, 2010; Stolle et al., 2005; Ward & de Vreese, 2011). It is more concealed since it is more individualistic action, which is not always visible. Furthermore, the claim that the political participation of youth is in decline is not completely accurate if political consumerism is not taken into account, because the youth is also trying to manifest itself through this other form of political participation. Building on that, the integration of the effects of new media and people’s web browsing behavior on their political participation is often missing in the literature or mentioned shortly as a side note. As Ward and de Vreese (2011) mention, their research is limited to the structure of the Civic Web survey which did not allow them to make an in-depth analysis of what young people do online and how young people use websites that affect their political participation. While Kruikemeier et al. (2014) have looked at Dutch citizens’ activities online, divided in passive and active political internet use (PIU), they did not focus on young Dutch citizens among which internet use is the highest (CBS StatLine, 2013). Furthermore, their research does not include political consumerism and their conclusions did not offer an in-depth analysis providing the reasons and motivations behind citizens’ PIU nor *why* certain PIU has a positive effect on political interest or voter turnout as they found, since it was a quantitative research.

As discussed previously, pessimists believe that the internet will distract the citizens from civic and political activities offline. On the other hand, some optimists believe that the internet can activate those that are already politically interested and active, while others believe that the internet can mobilize politically inactive citizens, thus mobilize new participants due to its convenience and increased information access (Bimber, 1999; Boulianne, 2009; Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Kruikemeier et al., 2014; Lupia & Philpot, 2005; Nie & Erbring, 2000; Norris, 2001; Polat, 2005; Putnam, 2000; Xenos & Moy, 2007). These conclusions are all the result of quantitatively conducted research using surveys to measure the causality between the internet and different forms of civic and political participation (e.g. Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006; Kruikemeier et al., 2014; Neilson, 2010; Stolle et al., 2005; Quintelier & Vissers, 2008; Ward & de Vreese, 2011). However, I am interested in researching the connection between online activity and political consumerism qualitatively, because this kind of

research will provide more in-depth information. Moreover, qualitative based in-depth research is missing on this topic, for example by doing interviews. As Ward and de Vreese (2011) also noticed by stating that: "Future research, perhaps also qualitatively-based, could more deeply explore actual practices online, in order to assemble more accurate insights for academics as well as youth organizations interested in pursuing such a strategy." (p. 410).

This research will contribute to the literature by focusing on how web browsing activities of young Dutch citizens contribute to their political participation and in particular political consumerism. Furthermore, it will add more and new findings to the conflicting existing views. The focus of this research will be on the link between the web browsing activities of young Dutch citizens and their political participation, in particular their political consumption. Therefore, the following research question will be researched:

**How is the political consumption of young Dutch citizens linked to their web browsing activities?**

First, a theoretical framework will be introduced incorporating relevant theories and previous research. The main theories behind the emergence of these new forms of non-conventional political participation will be provided as well as a breakdown of the theoretical concepts and the philosophical framework that drives this type of political behavior. Next, the sub-questions will be introduced derived from what has been found in the literature review. Subsequently, the chosen method will be described which will consist of first visualizing the web browsing history of the survey respondents with *Web Historian* (Version 1, 2015), a web history visualization tool. Thereafter, the respondents that are recruited through the online survey will be interviewed. The gathered data will be analyzed according to the grounded theory method of Strauss and Corbin (1998). Furthermore, an explanation of how the research will be carried out and structured will also be incorporated. Then, the results with the most important findings and main four themes will be presented. Finally, the research question and sub-questions will be answered in the conclusion.



## 2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter will provide a literature review and the most important concepts that are relevant to the research as well as the context in which the phenomenon being researched is set.

### 2.1 Political Participation

According to Anduiza, Cantijoch & Gallego (2009), the concept of political participation is multi-dimensional with unclear boundaries about what constitutes participation and what not. Verba, Nie and Kim (1978) already stated that there is no true definition of political participation, it is depended upon the research context. Scholars have shown that political participation is categorized in different categories, because it can be rather broad and unclear. From the literature about political participation, there are some recurring criteria that definitions are based upon, such as active vs. passive behavior; individual vs. group activity; instrumental vs. symbolic activity; voluntary vs. mobilized or forced activity; deliberate aims vs. unintended consequences; legal/conventional vs. illegal/unconventional activity; influence vs. intent; state/government target vs. general political actor target; and successful vs. failed activity (Fox, 2013). Conge (1988) illustrates in his review article, 'The Concept of Political Participation: Toward a Definition', that there are several issues with the concept of political participation, especially if all the components it exists of, then being a bit less than now, are integrated in the definition. Inevitably the definition will become too broad, but Conge (1988) tried to define political participation as "any action (or inaction) of an individual or a collectivity of individuals which intentionally or unintentionally opposes or supports, changes or maintains some feature(s) of a government or community." (p. 246).

This definition falls under the dangers of the 'theory of everything', like Stolle et al. (2005) explain. According to some scholars, the definition of political participation should be restricted "to activities that are directly and explicitly carried out in the political realm." to avoid the 'theory of everything' (Stolle et al., 2005, p. 250). However, this would mean that political consumption and other forms of unconventional political action would not be considered political participation. Therefore, other scholars claim that "political scientists must be open to strong evidence showing that people are leaving the traditional political realm to find new ways of expressing themselves in a politically relevant manner." (Stolle et al., 2005, p. 250). Conge (1988) also thought that his first definition was too broad, which made political participation meaningless and therefore redefined political participation to "individual or collective action at the national or local level that supports or opposes state structures, authorities, and/or decisions regarding allocation of public goods." (p. 247). This definition includes conventional and unconventional forms of political participation, however it excludes acts of political participation at an international level as well as political

consumerism, since the action must be targeting the state.

In the traditional literature about political participation the state is always seen as the primary target, however as mentioned previously, political participation has become more embedded in lifestyle politics targeting other actors as well. Another traditional incomplete definition that political scientists have agreed upon is “political participation as an activity that assures individual influence over the political system, protection of private interests, system legitimacy, and perhaps even self-development.” (Kulynych, 1997, p. 317). Kulynych (1997) describes how postmodernism has influenced political participation through the philosophies of Jürgen Habermas and Michel Foucault. The influence of politics on society has changed throughout the years and a redefinition is required to understand how political action can be effective in today’s society. According to Foucault, political power is not primarily located in the formal apparatus of the state anymore. Political power is now more disciplinary, productive and normalizing, which means that the purpose of political participation can no longer be only defined in terms of legitimacy, privacy, influence, and self-development, as it traditionally is (Kulynych, 1997). Foucault describes this power as modern disciplinary power, which does not only control people but also allows people to be more efficient, productive, and powerful.

According to Habermas, public communication is key to a well-functioning democracy. Public opinion and public will are formed through a correct process of public communication and subsequently translated into administrative power. So not only formal (in democratic institutions) but also informal participation is crucial for governmental decision-making processes. According to Habermas, informal participation has two main functions; the signal function to warn and detect and identify problems, but also providing themes for these problems and solutions (Kulynych, 1997). The public sphere is the center of democracy and politicians need to respond to this sphere in order to have a well-functioning democracy. However, the concept of the public sphere is quite abstract since it is defined by a communicative structure rather than a physical presence (Kulynych, 1997). On the other hand, it provides space for innovation and it does not limit participation to the traditional activities. Traditional or conventional political participation is the traditional form and often occurs around election time, which includes voting, donating, volunteering and campaigning for a political goal (Dalton, 2008).

According to Foucault, there is resistance wherever there is power exercised, which makes resistance crucial for political action. Foucault’s concept of resistance regarding political action is somewhat problematic, because it is individuals who resist to make a point but in Foucault’s view the individual is not more than an ‘effect of power’ (Kulynych, 1997). He replaces the agency of an individual, which is essential for political action. To deal with these problems encountered in the

concepts of Habermas and Foucault, Kulynych (1997) suggests that resistance should be defined as performative action and defines performative resistance as the core of contemporary political action. She explains performative resistance as: "Performative resistance does not eliminate power and it is not effected in the name of some subjugated agency, but rather its purpose is disruption and re-creation." (Kulynych, 1997, p. 336). By viewing participation as resistance, the scope of what participation entails is widened so new activities, actors, and locations for political action can be included. Furthermore, it requires an evaluation of the performative potential of traditional political participation (Kulynych, 1997).

According to Kulynych (1997), political participation cannot be limited anymore and "social" activities can be included when resistance is considered. The distinction between public and private and the political and apolitical becomes otiose. Hence, performative political action can embody many forms and does not have to be planned, intentional or rational, it can also be accidental, impulsive and spontaneous (Kulynych, 1997). As Kulynych (1997) states: "Performative participation is manifest in any action, conscious or unconscious, spontaneous or organized, that resists the normalizing, regularizing, and subjectifying confines of contemporary disciplinary regimes." (p. 338). This allows the detection of action that was invisible or not considered as political action before. The unconventional form of political participation previously mentioned resides in this philosophy on political participation, which includes political consumerism. Signing petitions, boycotting, 'buycotting', demonstrating and occupying buildings are all examples of this kind of political action. According to Stolle et al. (2005), the definition of political participation is constantly challenged because the lines between conventional and unconventional participation are blurring and these forms are being combined by politically active citizens. Also new locations where political action can take place are rising, in this case various markets as a different location. But who are the politically active citizens that bring such changes? What do they mean for the notion of citizenship?

## **2.2 Citizenship**

Political participation is very important for the democratic political formula, because without public involvement democracy will lack its legitimacy and guiding force (Baek, 2010; Kaase & Marsh, 1979; Dalton, 2008). "If democracy is rule by the people, as we and many others maintain, then the notion of political participation is at the center of the concept of the democratic state." (Kaase & Marsh, 1979, p. 28). Citizenship, defined by Dalton (2008) as "a set of norms of what people think people should do as good citizens." is important to understand political participation, since political participation is an essential element of democratic citizenship (p. 78). Although like political participation, there is no timeless definition of citizenship and it is even harder to provide a timeless realization of what being a citizen means (Hall, Coffey & Williamson, 1999). According to some

political scientists, American democracy is at threat because of the erosion of citizenship activities and capacities, which causes the crumbling of citizenship and in turn of democracy (Dalton, 2008; Ekman & Amnå, 2012). However, according to Dalton (2008), in line with the more individualistic approach to political participation, the norms of citizenship are shifting from duty-based citizenship to engaged citizenship or as according to Hall et al. (1999), to active citizenship. Some citizenship norms, mainly concerning duty-based citizenship, have weakened, while other norms have strengthened.

Duty-based citizenship regards norms of the social order, such as reporting a crime, voting, serving in the military, obeying the law etcetera. Engaged citizenship reflects solidarity and includes active behavior in civil society groups and general political activity, it is more about liberal or commutarian norms of citizenship (Dalton, 2008). People are seeking different ways of influencing politics now that they have become more educated, politically skilled and policy oriented. While norms of citizen duty mainly lead to participation in electoral politics and also often does not expand beyond election periods, engaged citizenship is not limited and can in fact lead to an increase in political participation. Internet activism is an example of engaged citizenship activities as well as demonstrations, boycotting and 'buycotting' (Dalton, 2008; Stolle et al., 2005; Ward & de Vreese, 2011). According to Hall et al. (1999), good citizenship or notions of a good citizen are often in line with the idea of the 'active citizen'. However, Hall's et al. (1999) idea of the active citizen was not thus far developed to include political consumerism, although it revolves around personal responsibilities the concept mainly focuses on the direct community. Traditional literature about political engagement mainly describes good citizens as the ones removed from the private sector, because they are not interested in private interest or are not about self-interest (Baek, 2010). Since consumption is seen as an individualized act and consumers are perceived as inferior to citizens, because active citizens act out of public-spiritedness and not private interest, political consumption is often not portrayed as civic engagement (Baek, 2010; Ekman & Amnå, 2012).

This perception of good citizenship is outdated since it means that many citizens nowadays, especially young citizens, will not fit into these notions of good citizenship. In her article about what it means to be a good citizen, Thorson (2012) states that the discussions and debates about democratic ideals tell little about the daily lived experience of citizenship. Furthermore, say almost nothing about whether young adults of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are well-resourced to think through what it means to be a good citizen. The results of her interviews represented a conceptual map of citizenship vocabularies in which citizen's engagement can be categorized. She describes four quadrants; the first concerning the citizen as a good person and individual actions on the smallest scale; the second quadrant also concerns local and community based actions, however focused on

collective actions instead of individual; the third quadrant is broader and concerns collective political action, while quadrant four is about individual political action, such as voting with your money or being the change you want to see in the world (Thorson, 2012). These quadrants illustrate the many different notions of (good) citizenship that are embodied nowadays.

The evolved form of citizenship reflects the societal and economic changes and shift towards individualization, self-expressive and post-materialists values that “emphasize participatory norms, elite-challenging behavior and more direct forms of political action” (Dalton, 2008, p. 86). According to Kulynych (1997), currently only resistance provides a meaningful sense of citizenship, because of the privatized world people live in. As explained previously, this evolved form of citizenship and political participation arise from different factors, such as technology, globalization and the post-materialists way of life in which a lack of trust in the government is highly present. These are characteristics of post-modernism in which these engaged forms of political participation belong (Dalton, 2008; Kulynych, 1997; Stolle et al., 2005). Different social forces are affecting respect for authority and traditional forms of allegiance as well as the desire of citizens to take matters into their own hands and to participate directly in the decisions affecting their lives instead of waiting for the government to take action (Dalton, 2008; Neilson, 2010; Stolle et al., 2005; Ward & de Vreese, 2011). According to Stolle et al. (2005), citizens search for new methods, ideas, arenas and different forms of political action, because they fear that the government does not understand or cannot control new risks and uncertainties in society. Hence, there is a lack of trust and faith in authorities.

Corporations also suffer under this post-materialists behavior since consumers are demanding more ethical products and a say in what is sold and the way it is marketed. This is partly due to globalization since it has made corporate power more explicit and opened the doors for active consumption by the way globalization has politicized consumption. It is socially responsible for corporations to include the environment, labor standards and human right issues to the marketing strategy of their products. The internet also plays a big role in providing consumers with more information about products, corporations and their activities (Dalton, 2008; Lupia & Philpot, 2005; Micheletti & Stolle, 2008; Ward & de Vreese, 2011). Consuming citizens are competing with expert policymakers by recreating themselves as policymakers in their own ways (Kulynych, 1997). Citizens that consume consciously and ethically in order to contribute to social change are called citizen-consumers.

### 2.2.1 *The Citizen-consumer*

In her article 'The citizen-consumer hybrid: ideological tensions and the case of Whole Foods Market', Johnston (2008) explains the concept of the citizen-consumer hybrid. This hybrid is about simultaneously fulfilling personal desires while aiming at social and ecological issues as well. The ideology behind this is that "commodity choice can satisfy an individual's desire for personal health and happiness while generating sustainability and social harmony for society as a whole." (Johnston, 2008, p. 232). It combines the individual act of consuming and the collective or social act of citizenship. Here the consumer and the citizen are represented as being opposed, which is not how political consumerism in terms of political participation should be understood. Willis and Schor (2012) criticize this dichotomy, because of this structure that the act of consuming is an individual action, while actions regarding the state are perceived as collective action. Citizens and consumers should not be perceived as binaries where citizen behavior will bring real change, because it occurs in the realm of the state, while consumer behavior is seen as self-interest, ineffective and weak, because it takes place in the market, hence it is a private and individualized space (Willis & Schor, 2012).

On the contrary, the act of consumption is highly social and collective in different ways, people not only act and consume together but also their understandings and motivations for buying certain products are social. Moreover, the role of the state is limited in the binary, because the state does not only influence the collective sphere but also has a major role in organizing, structuring, and regulating markets (Jacobsen & Dulsrud, 2007; Willis & Schor, 2012). Willis and Schor (2012) link this lack of insight in the act of political consumption to the ideology behind consumer actions as "voluntary, consequential, and sovereign." (p. 165). Like consumption itself, political consumption is self-expressive and at the same time "a reflection of identity, lifestyle or individualized politics" (Baek, 2010, p. 1078). According to Willis and Schor (2012), this 'naïve aggregationist model' has a limited or naïve view on consumer action and does not consider "concentrations of power, structural factors, or other obstacles" (p. 165). They prefer to use the term conscious consumption over political consumption, because groups have adopted this term themselves. They define this act as "any choice about products or services made as a way to express values of sustainability, social justice, corporate responsibility, or workers' rights and that takes into account the larger context of production, distribution, or impacts of goods and services." (p. 162).

As mentioned previously, political or conscious consumption is a new form of civic and political engagement and offers a more life-style orientated, spontaneous, and loosely organized way to participate than traditional participation (Micheletti, 2003; Stolle & Hooghe, 2004; Stolle et al., 2005; Willis & Schor, 2012). The acts of political consumption include boycotting and

'boycotting', which according to Baek (2010) and Neilson (2010) should be distinguished, because boycotters and 'buycotters' have different motivations and capacities as well as different backgrounds. According to Neilson's (2010) findings trust is one of the biggest influencers, while 'buycotters' generally have more trust in institutions, boycotters have little trust in institutions. Therefore, boycotters act by discrediting market leaders aiming for change, while 'buycotters' are those who favor the 'underdog' and focus on smaller independent and local businesses. In theory they also tend to be more altruistic (Neilson, 2010). According to Baek (2010), both 'buycotters' and boycotters (political consumerists) tend to be higher educated, higher income earners, young and among racial majorities. Also people that participate politically in general are defined as more politically interested, which is influenced by their level of education, income, and social status (Stolle et al., 2005; Ward & de Vreese, 2011).

These new forms of consumer action fit into the fourth phase of consumer activism, as described by Gabriel and Lang (2005), which is the 'alternative consumption' phase that appeared in the 1980s. Johnston (2008) calls this phase ethical consumption and explains its emergence due to the 'unease with abundance', the notion that a lot of luxury consumer goods do not cause personal or moral satisfaction. Secondly, also due to environmental awareness and the identification of human consumption as a threat to earth. The Dutch have been aware of the ecological way of life and critical consumption since the 1970s when ecological awareness became important (Martens & Spaargaren, 2005). Policymakers began to focus on sustainable programs and policies to stimulate the citizens to live ecologically. During the years, the Netherlands Environmental Policy Plan (NEPP) has shown that the involvement of citizen-consumers is evident and indispensable, because their participation is essential to policies that concern the role of consumers, politics and policies that emphasize the role of the citizens (Martens & Spaargaren, 2005). Even though the research of Martens and Spaargaren (2005) investigates the role of the government and NGOs in fostering political participation, citizenship and the ideal citizen-consumer, it does not specify who these Dutch citizen-consumers are nor their motivations and activities.

Furthermore, nowadays this movement is much more than consuming environmental friendly. The citizens have broadened this by their constant innovative ways in consuming politically and taking action. However, according to Jacobsen and Dulsrud (2007), people must not forget the role of the nation, economy, social context, and traditions of a population and how the state, businesses, and organizations also frame political consumerism. The consumers position is not as sovereign as scholars like to think, corporations (CSR), NGOs, and the government also benefit from this development in political participation. Moreover, not to forget mundane consumption that influences the critical, reflective idea behind conscious consumption. Some products have become

so inherent in daily lives that people do not even notice or think critically about them when consuming them (Jacobsen & Dulsrud, 2007).

In their research, whether there is indeed a connection between conscious consumption and political action, Willis and Schor (2012) found that measures of conscious consumption are significantly and positively related to political action. They found that people who engage in conscious consumption are active in both the market and the state, as Baek (2010) also found. Furthermore, political consumption can foster democracy, because it deepens awareness and activism and it is a way for “ordinary people” to participate (Ekman & Amnå, 2012). People get to vote with their dollars, which you can do every day and almost with everything, the supermarket being the easiest and most accessible way. According to Willis and Schor (2012), political consumption encourages, or as they articulate it “crowds in”, political activism. However, it is important to keep in mind that political consumption as an individualized act does not displace collective action. They exist together and next to each other. Furthermore, this is also a historical and social process and consumers and businesses participate in a dialectic, so over time they can change in relation to each other. As mentioned before, the internet offers new opportunities and platforms for these developments from which the online citizen-consumer has emerged.

### 2.2.2 *The Online Citizen-consumer*

Individuals nowadays can consume as citizens instead of as consumers. This evolved form of citizenship is, according to some scholars, supported by the internet, particularly under youth (Anduiza et al., 2009; Kruikemeier et al., 2014; Polat, 2005; Scammell, 2000; Ward & de Vreese, 2011). Part of the existing literature indicates that new media is able to revive conventional political participation or enhance new forms of political participation and citizenship (Anduiza et al., 2009; Polat, 2005; Ward & de Vreese, 2011; Wang, 2007). Young people are confident in using the internet to find information and to form network groups or fora around certain topics. The internet opens the possibilities for citizens to engage online in unconventional ways, which can enhance political participation offline but is not always the case. As Ward and de Vreese (2011) mention, “a possibility opens up for internet use to reflect a behavior that may be also taking place offline: that is, political consumerism” (p. 401).

As mentioned before, some view the internet as a negative development for political participation that can reduce it because it fragmentizes and weakens the social cohesion (Nie & Erbring, 2000; Putnam, 2000). In their research about online and offline political participation in the UK, Di Gennaro and Dutton (2006) found that in some cases online political participation was reinforcing existing social inequalities in offline political participation for those from a lower socio-economic class and with a lower education. Also, political involvement online was mainly among



who were already engaged offline, which can be expected. Furthermore, the internet takes up people's free time, hence people have less time to participate politically offline (Nie & Erbring, 2000). Thus, some scholars found that the internet has barely affected political participation, while optimists argue that the internet can lead towards a more participative society (Anduiza et al., 2009).

From their research Anduiza et al. (2009) conclude that the internet indeed provides new modes and opportunities of online political participation. However, technological skills and resources are necessary for online participation. Therefore, some researchers argue that the internet can increase participatory inequalities, because some people do not have the resources or skills and miss out on the new forms of political participation that the internet brings (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006; Polat, 2005). On the other hand, other authors argue that the internet decreases participatory inequalities because it provides young people, who's traditional political participation is declining, with a platform to manifest themselves politically (Anduiza et al., 2009; Krueger, 2002; Lupia & Philpot, 2005). Furthermore, since the focus group here is youth and they are considered to be digital natives, the resource argument regarding the internet could be inapplicable. In terms of political interest equaling being "resource-rich", Kruike-meier et al. (2014) actually found that citizens who are less politically interested are mobilized better by engaging in certain PIU, such as reading political comments. Furthermore, Menchen-Trevino (2012) found that citizens are more politically affected by their social environment than their level of political interest. Considering the advanced technological developments and the tech-savvy public that has a lot of experience with the internet, it seems that resource inequality becomes irrelevant.

As mentioned previously, one must not forget the social aspect of political participation, which concerns people's environment and community. According to McLeod, Scheufele and Moy (2010), the process of information and motivation is determining the willingness to participate. This is linked to community integration in which people's social networks are important for the stimulation of political participation. Lake and Huckfeldt (1998) refer to social capital to explain how important social capital is to motivate individuals to become politically engaged. Especially politically relevant social capital, which is "a particular type of social capital that is produced as the consequence of political expertise and information that is regularly communicated within an individual's network of social relation" (Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998, p. 570). These relationships are mediated by communication through the media and interpersonal communication. Even if politically relevant social capital is missing, many forms of communication can reveal alternative forms of participation or make connections between individuals and their networks (McLeod et al., 2010). The community is important, because the act of participation will almost always take place at the

local level, hence in the community, even if it is aimed at international, national, and regional political processes (McLeod et al., 2010).

The new version of the 'aggregationist model' discussed by Willis and Schor (2012), considers the online sphere and its importance for social capital if not politically relevant social capital. This is a social model in which people online and offline are moved to take action due to "weak signals", such as email or Facebook posts (Willis & Schor, 2012). The social model also reflects social movements in the sense that these movements rely on a large group of people that take small actions, such as boycotting, which may lead to system-wide outcomes (Willis & Schor, 2012). Neilson (2010) also stresses the importance of generalized trust for political consumerists residing in trust in information about political consumerism and in others to do the same as them, hence collective effort. According to her, social capital is a big motivator to act politically, because people gain access and information through their social environment, especially if they are part of associations. She found that people who are more involved in (voluntary) associations and have greater trust are more likely to 'buycott' than boycott. Since it is already in the name, one cannot forget social media when talking about social capital nowadays. According to Xenos, Vromen and Loader (2014), social media can foster politically relevant social capital as it offers an user-friendly and accessible platform for people to discuss politics as well. Gil de Zúñiga, Jung and Valenzuela (2012) also found a positive relationship between social media and individual's activities aimed at engaging in political and civic action. In what way then does the internet influence political consumption as a form of political participation? And how does political interest, human and social capital play a part in the political activities of people online and offline?

### **2.3 Political Interest**

Prior (2010) explains the ambiguity of the effect of new media on political interest by noting that it is evident that new media offers more content, however the not politically interested people will use this to avoid news, while the interested people to seek news and learn more about politics. According to him, it is important to question why some people are politically interested while others are not, because political interest is important for the proper functioning of a democracy. It can be expected that people with political interest are more likely to vote, more knowledgeable about politics, more likely to participate in other forms of political participation as well as to be mobilized. Furthermore, it is a strong predictor of many important political behaviors since it is considered highly stable over time (Prior, 2010). However, it does not necessary lead to political activity as is expected. According to Verba, Schlozman & Brady (1995), political interest can lead to political activity but reciprocally political participation enhances political interest. Interestingly, Kruijemeier et al. (2014) found that regarding the internet and the reinforcement argument, people with higher

levels of political interest are not mobilized easier, because they are probably already mobilized and benefit less from the opportunities on the internet than people with low levels of political interest that can gain a lot of new information.

In general, it seems that people that are politically active are also more politically interested. However, since the literature about this is based on survey results, participants do not get to explain why they think they have a certain level of political interest. As mentioned previously, Menchen-Trevino's (2012) interview results showed that political interest is not necessarily an accurate indicator of people's political participation. Furthermore, it is hard to measure political interest, because it is a broad concept that, according to Prior (2010), it can also "resemble a well-rehearsed attitude, a personality trait, or a part of people's political identity." (p. 748). Lupia and Philpot (2005) define political interest clearer by stating that "the term political interest refers to a citizen's willingness to pay attention to political phenomena at the possible expense of other topics." (p. 1122). There are people who have a high level of political interest, which means that they pay a lot of attention to political phenomena. People with a low level of political interest pay no attention to political phenomena and there are the people in between with a medium level of political interest.

## 2.4 Sub-questions

As mentioned previously, this research is devoted to researching political consumption among young Dutch citizens and their web browsing activities. From the literature it has become clear which aspects are important and indispensable for researching political consumption as well as the different views on the effects of the internet on political participation. Building on this theoretical framework, sub-questions will be introduced to narrow down the research question and to structure the research efficiently.

As understood from the literature about political participation, political consumerism belongs to the category of unconventional political participation. Activities, such as signing petitions, boycotting, demonstrating and occupying buildings exemplify these unconventional political acts. To get a better idea of which acts of political action young Dutch citizens participate in, the first sub-question will define the activities of political participation and in particular political consumerism. Therefore, the first sub-question will be the following: *In what ways are political participation and consumerism manifested by young Dutch citizens? How does the level of political interest play a role?*

The definition of citizenship by Dalton (2008) indicates that to be a good citizen one at least has to be active in society. Since citizenship is fundamental for a well-functioning democratic society, political participation among the citizens is crucial. Dalton (2008) explains that the norms of citizenship have shifted from duty-based citizenship to engaged citizenship in which political consumption is nested. Since political consumption could be seen as a form of engaged citizenship it is necessary to focus on the role of citizenship and the citizen-consumer. Therefore, the second sub-question will answer the following question: *How does political consumerism in the Netherlands reflect the role/concept of citizenship and the citizen-consumer according to young Dutch citizens?*

The third sub-question will try to grasp the motivations of the respondents that are political consumers and those that are not by asking; *What are the motivations or reasons that young Dutch citizens have to consume or not consume politically?* Like the first sub-question this is linked to the level of political interest of these respondents. Again, *how does the level of political interest play a role?* Lastly, coming closer to answering the research question, the effects of the internet need to be addressed. The literature shows that there are different views on the effects of the internet on political participation. To add to this framework, the fourth sub-question will be: *How can/does the internet support or discourage political participation and consumerism?* Furthermore, because the Web Historian extension will be used, this research will also look at *how the web browsing history of the respondents reflects their level of political interest.* This to see if the claim that scholars put forward about searching for political information online in relation to the level of political interest, as explained by Kenski and Stroud (2006), holds among the Dutch respondents.

### 3 Methods

To answer the sub-questions and in turn the research question, this research mainly focused on information gained from interviewing young Dutch citizens. Before interviewing them however, Web Historian (Version 1, 2015), a web history visualization tool, was used to help research the participants by visualizing their web browsing history to analyze their web browsing behavior and activities. Since this study is aimed at investigating young Dutch citizens' political consumption and its connection to their web browsing behavior as well as investigating their political participation in relation to their media consumption in general, a qualitative research design was applied. As the goal was to discover the underlying meanings and patterns of the daily political experiences of young Dutch citizens, interviews were chosen as the most appropriate technique to research this (Babbie, 2008). More specifically, the grounded theory method procedure of Strauss and Corbin (1998) was applied to analyze all the collected data (survey answers, Web Historian visualizations and interview transcripts). However, some quantitative methods techniques were applied in the data recruitment process, such as the survey used to recruit the participants for the interviews.

This research design was chosen for two particular reasons. First, as mentioned previously, there is a lack of qualitative research on the discussed topic. Prior research in the Netherlands fails to identify who Dutch citizen-consumers are and lack in-depth information about their motivations and activities, ultimately the 'why' question is missing (e.g. Martens & Spaargaren, 2005; Kruike-meier et al., 2014). Regarding the relationship between the internet and political participation, most conclusions are based on quantitative research where the researchers have looked at the causality between the internet and different forms of civic and political participation (e.g. Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006; Kruike-meier et al., 2014; Neilson, 2010; Stolle et al., 2005; Quintelier & Vissers, 2008; Ward & de Vreese, 2011). Again, the 'why' question, which can provide the underlying meanings and reasoning for certain actions, is missing. Therefore, more in-depth information about the motivations, activities and experiences of the target group is required by doing interviews to get a better notion of the relationship between young Dutch citizens' internet use and political consumption and more specifically, the reasons behind their internet use and political behavior. Secondly, by using Web Historian (Version 1, 2015) and using the internet as a source to study this phenomenon with, this research provides a more in-depth and practical dialogue and later on analysis. Therefore, something new has been added to the existing research that has been conducted about this phenomenon in the Netherlands.

#### *Web History Visualization Tool: Web Historian*

Web Historian (Version 1, 2015) is a software program (<http://webhistorian.org/>) that will provide

interactive visualization of people’s web browsing history. The Web Historian extension offers three visualizations that visualize the participant’s browsing history in three different ways. The participant’s network could be visualized with the network option, which shows the browsing path and how the websites visited are linked to each other. The circles visualization shows which websites one visits most often, while the search terms visualization only focuses on what someone has searched for, as is illustrated below.

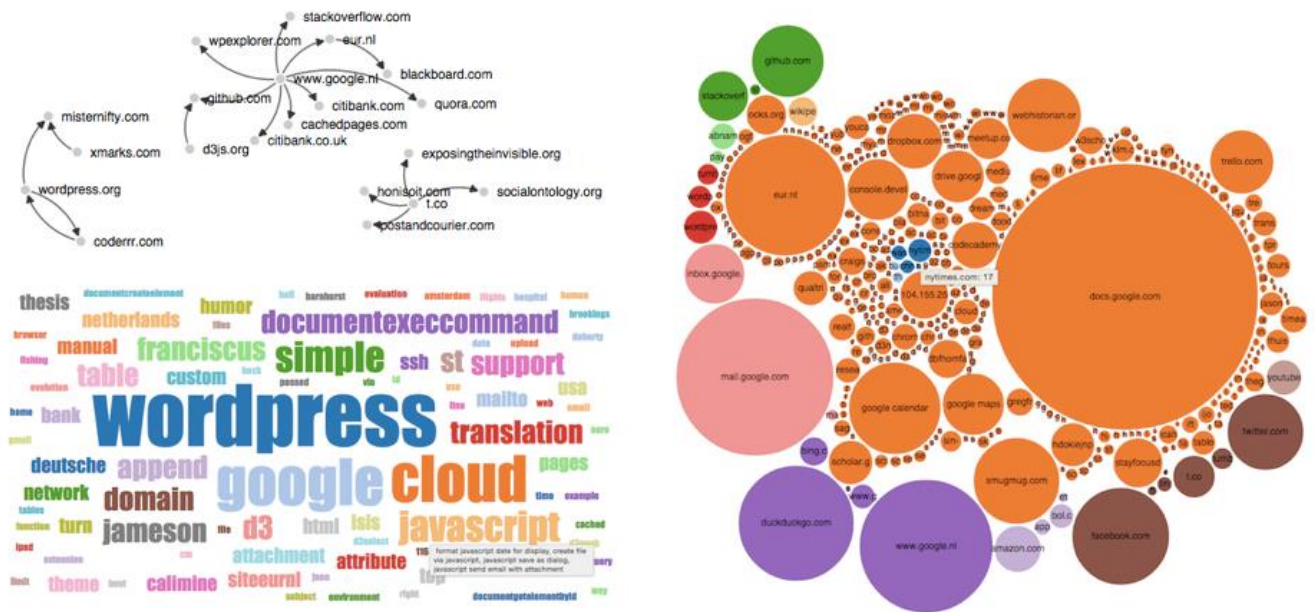


Figure 1: Three example Web Historian visualizations. Top left: Network. Bottom left: Search Words. Right: Websites Visited.

*Network*: “This is a network based on how you navigate to the websites you visit. There is a link between two websites if you click on a link from one to the other.”

*Search Terms*: “This is a cloud of the words you have used to search the web. The larger words were used in a greater number of different searches. Hover your mouse over each word for a tool-tip that shows all of the search terms where the word was used.”

*Websites Visited*: “A larger circle means that the website was visited more. Hover your mouse over a circle to see the number of visits.” (Web Historian, Version 1, 2015).

The aim with these visualizations was to find patterns and things that stand out related to the research. After the visualizations were generated with the informed consent of the participants, their information was incorporated in the interviews to discuss their overall web browsing patterns, what they consider political content and what others consider political content. In general, these visualizations provided a more in-depth conversation and analysis.

### 3.1 Data Collection

As mentioned previously, for the purpose of this research a survey and individual interviews were used to collect the data as well as the Web Historian visualizations that served as illustrations of the participants' browsing behavior, which helped clarify some situations. The aim was to find new and interesting results to the research question with the data collected about the political consumption actions of the participants and their information consumption practices. This was conducted in a two phase design that consisted of recruitment through a survey first in which the respondents were requested to give their consent and send their web browsing history data, after which the participants were interviewed. The units of analysis for the interviews were the same people that gave consent to research their web history, which were young Dutch citizens between the age of 18 and 29 which are considered young adults (Thorson, 2012).

The first phase of the design revolved around the recruitment of young Dutch citizens between 18 and 29 years old and their consent regarding the installation of Web Historian (Version 1, 2015). In the survey they gave their consent, answered a few questions and in the end they were linked to the Web Historian website (<http://webhistorian.org/>) to install the extension. The ones that completed this whole processes and actually send their Web Historian data file were rewarded with a payment of 5 euros. Afterwards, the participants were selected to be interviewed, which was the second phase of the data collection process.

#### 3.1.1 Sampling

The recruitment process was based on convenience or accidental sampling, more specifically snowball sampling. This was the most feasible way to recruit the participants, because people could share the survey on social media and through email with the people that they knew and in turn those people would share it as well. It was important that the survey was shared this way, through and with people that knew each other, because of the privacy sensitive aspect of the web history data that people prefer not to share. Subsequently, quota sampling, which addresses the issue of representativeness, was used to find interviewees after the participants send their Web Historian data file (Babbie, 2008).

Quota sampling was used to achieve a variety of political interest levels among the participants. Since the focus of the research is on the Dutch population and the interviewees were chosen based on their level of political interest, national quota sampling was required. Thus, a national quota sample was established on the basis of the political interest levels of the participants. Ideally, the total sample should have the same distribution of political interest levels as the Dutch population. Hence, in the end the levels of political interest of the interviewees should match the

national results so that there is a reasonable representation of the total population. The European Social Survey (ESS) of 2012 shows that in the Netherlands more than half (51.2 %) of the respondents were *quite interested* in politics (figure 2). On the basis of these numbers national quota sampling was conducted. The goal was to select the interviewees according to these percentages so that the sample will be somewhat representative. However, this proved to be difficult due to the lack of respondents, but in the end a variety of political interest levels was reached.

Dataset: ESS6-2012, ed.2.1

How interested in politics: Categories | Country: Categories | Type: Column percentage

Country	Albania	Belgium	Bulgaria	Switzerland	Cyprus	Czech Republic	Germany	Denmark	Estonia	Spain	Finland	France	United Kingdom	Hungary	Ireland	Israel	Iceland	Italy	Lithuania	Netherlands	Norway	Poland	
How interested in politics																							
Very interested	10.7	8.9	11.1	16.9	11.4	2.2	19.6	20.2	5.4	11.8	9.7	14.2	11.7	3.9	9.6	18.0	16.3	15.1	1.6	13.5	20.7	6.1	
Quite interested	34.8	36.2	40.0	45.1	23.2	19.9	44.7	49.7	34.2	23.0	44.9	33.5	37.9	22.4	33.8	33.1	42.2	33.6	15.5	51.2	40.0	33.6	
Hardly interested	20.7	34.2	28.6	28.5	34.0	49.9	30.8	26.8	44.4	35.8	37.1	33.6	27.4	37.8	31.2	23.5	29.9	34.0	49.3	24.3	22.4	42.5	
Not at all interested	33.9	20.7	20.3	9.4	31.3	28.0	4.8	3.3	16.1	29.3	8.3	18.7	23.0	35.8	25.4	25.3	11.5	17.3	29.1	11.0	7.0	17.8	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N=	1,199	1,868	2,245	1,493	1,114	1,993	2,958	1,648	2,373	1,885	2,196	1,968	2,281	2,003	2,615	2,497	748	955	2,081	1,844	1,624	1,884	

Figure 2: ESS (2012) political interest question.



### 3.2 Operationalization

As mentioned previously, the research design consisted of two phases in which a survey and interviews were used to collect the data. For the recruitment of interviewees through the survey the aim was to recruit a diverse group of respondents as possible based on their educational background and level of political interest. Respondents with a high, medium and low levels of political interest were recruited for this research. When someone has a high level of political interest, it means that they spend a lot of time focusing on politically oriented tasks or materials. When someone has a low level of political interest, it means that they devote all their time and energy nonpolitically (Lupia & Philpot, 2005). The people that have both characteristics have a medium level of political interest. However, the educational background of the interviewees was not as diverse, since all the participants were higher educated people.

The participants were recruited by sharing the survey on social media, in social media groups, in organizations and by asking people to share the survey in their own networks, hence through second and third degree networks. For example, on Facebook there are many political groups, such as 'Boycot Israël' and 'Politiek en Samenleving'. However, these are groups that contain people that are politically interested. At the same time, the people that were politically interested or interested in software and new technologies were more amenable to recruit, because they were interested in the research or were not afraid to use the Web Historian extension. So to find a more diverse group the survey was shared through the first, second and third degree network of the researcher to recruit more people with different socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, and levels of political sophistication.

The survey (Appendix A) started with a requirements section since respondents had to give their consent and information about their voting rights and Dutch bank account to be able to enter the study. Thereafter, a technology section about which devices and browsers the respondents use, which was necessary for the results of the Web Historian visualizations. People that used the Google Chrome browser less than 20% of the time could not continue with the study. The section with the media consumption categories was put together with the help of researchers (J. Swart, personal communication, March 3, 2015) from the project 'The New News Consumer' (2015) that research how digitalization creates new habits and patterns of news consumption in the Netherlands. In the politics section, which included voting activity, political interest and boycott activity, the questions provided by the Dutch version of the ESS (2012) were replicated. In the end some demographics were required in which the question about the level of education of the respondents was also provided by the ESS (2012).

After the participants send their Web Historian data file they were invited for an interview.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted, because those allow more flexibility during the interview and give the possibility to ask follow-up questions (Appendix B). Time at the end of the interview was dedicated to the web browsing behavior of the participants visualized by Web Historian (Version 1, 2015). Eventually nine out of twelve people, which actually send their data, were interviewed for approximately 60 to 90 minutes per interview over a period of two weeks. The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder, and transcribed immediately after the interview to get a more accurate analysis.

The interviews consisted of three main parts which discussed the participants' media use, political orientation and participation, and in the end they reflected upon their Web Historian visualizations. In the first part their media consumption was discussed, mainly focusing on their online information consumption concerning how they inform themselves, select and avoid news as well as their social media use. In the second part their political views in relation to their media consumption were discussed as well as political opinions, their level of political interest and their political activities, from voting to political consumption. In this section notions of citizenship were discussed as well. In the last section their Web Historian visualizations were reflected upon in relation to what was discussed earlier in the interview.

### 3.3 Data Analysis: Qualitative Coding

As mentioned previously, the grounded theory method guidelines of Strauss and Corbin (1998) were followed to conduct a thematic analysis of the collected data. This method seeks to uncover relevant conditions and determines how the participants under investigation actively respond to those conditions, and to the consequences of their actions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Strauss and Corbin form a method in which they argue that qualitative research is all about an inductive process, thus generating theory. However, for this research the focus was solely on doing a thematic analysis, the aim was not to formulate new theory since theory is designed for more than just one phenomenon and needs more time. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), concepts can only earn their way into the theory by repeatedly being present in each interview *or* by being significantly absent, hence when saturation occurs. To specify these concepts, analyzing the data started from the first interview to not miss any cues and to incorporate all seemingly relevant issues into the next set of interviews and observations (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). To do so, writing memos to keep track of the developing codes, categories and questions, proved to be essential. This way the researcher will not skip reflection and reviewing, recoding and so on when starting to write the analysis. By constantly analyzing, reviewing and comparing concepts and findings for similarities and differences, greater precision and consistency was reached in the research.

According to Boeije (2002), theoretical sampling is key to constant comparison. With theoretical sampling “the researcher decides what data will be gathered next and where to find them on the basis of provisional theoretical ideas.” (Boeije, 2002, p. 393). By constantly comparing (analyzed) old and new data the possibility to answer questions that have arisen from the analysis of and reflection on previous data was enhanced. However, the first step after each piece of data that was collected was to start coding the data. First, starting with *open coding*, which means coding the data with what comes to mind while reading the transcripts. Some examples of the developed open codes were ‘student’, ‘social media’, ‘in-depth information’, ‘background’, ‘family’, ‘political views’, ‘feels engaged’, ‘voting: how to decide’ and many more. Some *in vivo* codes were used as well, such as ‘voting with your wallet’. The coding process provided many different categories or themes in the first place. However, the goal of coding is to end with some general themes hence, it was necessary to reduce the open codes. Thus, the next step was *axial coding*, which is the process of putting the data back together in new ways after open coding. Connections between categories are made through a more abstract process since the researcher will be coding around several single categories or ‘axes’ (Boeije, 2010). For example, ‘traditional media vs. new media’, ‘national vs. international news’, ‘trust vs. no trust in politics’, ‘effectiveness of voting’ and so on. The last phase in coding is *selective coding* through which the coded data was further reduced to some main connections

between the categories to make sense of the phenomenon (Boeije, 2010).

This coding process is necessary to “identify, develop, and relate the concepts that are the building blocks of theory” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 13). After all the data was conceptualized, coded, categorized and reviewed through the guidelines of the grounded theory method, four main themes were created and linked. The findings represented below emerged from repeatedly reading the transcripts, reading the literature, and data reduction through coding and creating themes of the saturated answers.

## 4 Results and Discussion

This chapter provides an overview of the conducted research and the most important findings that have been found through nine in-depth interviews and connects it to previous literature. The results are divided in four main themes that emerged from the interviews, which are *online information*, *citizenship*, *traditional political participation*, and *political consumerism*. The two overarching themes, online information and citizenship, are relevant due the insights they provide in how the participants get informed and think about political participation. These two themes form the framework for political participation, because it is through the concept and notions of citizenship that the participants frame their traditional political acts as well as political consumption. Moreover, their ideas about certain topics as well as how they acted is fueled by their online information consumption. Therefore, the theme online information comes back in all the themes that were found through the interviews, since online information is essential for how they get their ideas and news regarding politics and political participation.

Political participation is split into two themes, traditional political participation and political consumerism, which specifically focus on the participants' political actions as well as their ideas about contemporary political participation, which is often perceived through the notion of the engaged citizen. The theme traditional political participation describes the thoughts of the participants regarding their dutiful acts, while the theme political consumerism extends this form of political participation and adds to the sphere of political action by including unconventional acts and new spaces for action. All the themes help provide an answer to *how the political consumption of young Dutch citizens is linked to their web browsing activities*. The participants use information online for many different things, but especially for news and are really conscious internet users when it is election time, which was also visible in their Web Historian visualizations. However, the participants were not as conscious of their online information consumption regarding political consumption, in particular regarding 'boycotting'.

To provide a more in-depth analysis, the analysis will start from the biggest overarching theme, online information, to the most specific theme, which is political consumerism. First, the relevant characteristics of the participants will be described as a context for interpreting the findings themselves, after which the results will be presented.

## 4.1 Description of the Participants

The findings of this research are drawn from nine in-depth interviews with young Dutch citizens between the age of 18 and 29 years old to find out how they use the web to get information about the world and how these activities can be linked to their political participation, in particular political consumption. The youngest participant was a 21 year old female and the oldest a 28 year old male. Two of the nine interviewees were males and the rest was female. All of them were higher educated people, most of them still enrolled in a 'HBO' bachelor, university bachelor or master program. Only two people were already graduated, one person is working and the other looking for a job. An important factor that is intertwined with political participation, is education. It is expected that higher educated people are more politically interested and engaged (Baek, 2010; Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998). However, when looking at the participants' level of political interest it becomes clear that that is not always the case. Concerning their level of political interest, four of the nine participants were quite interested in politics, two were very interested, two were barely interested, while the other one was not interested in politics at all. For this research it is valuable to have recruited people with different levels of political interest, since political interest is seen as an indicator of political behavior (Prior, 2010).

The interviews were 1 to 1,5 hours long and the topics concerned media consumption, online news, political orientation, conventional and unconventional political participation, and citizenship (see appendix B). In the end they reflected on their Web Historian visualizations. These visualizations tended to differ a lot, because some used their laptop most often to browse online and others actually only used their laptop to browse for school or work related information. To put things more into perspective, the person with the least amount of web activity had visited 71 websites and searched for 56 unique terms, whereas the person with the most web activity had visited 830 websites visited and searched for 793 unique terms. This difference can be due that Google Chrome is not the only browser they use. Many use their mobile phone instead of the laptop to get their news, especially news apps appeared to be popular among the participants. Unfortunately, it was not possible to retrieve their mobile phone's browsing history with Web Historian (Version 1, 2015).

**Table A: The Participants**

Pseudonym	Age	Political Interest**	Online info. Sources	Visits*	Websites*	Searches*	Days*
<b>1. Violet</b>	21	Not interested	FB Google	19,090	213	128	90
<b>2. Kim</b>	22	Quite interested	nu.nl nos.nl NOS app Volkskrant email subscription Google FB	7,607	553	647	90
<b>3. Isabel</b>	22	Barely interested	FB NOS app nu.nl Google	6,133	413	324	90
<b>4. Maria</b>	22	Quite interested	NOS app Nu.nl Reddit Google FB	20,983	830	793	90
<b>5. Jack</b>	28	Quite interested	Email subscriptions Crunchbase Google Finance Yahoo Finance Google	14,032	545	506	90
<b>6. Kirsten</b>	24	Quite interested	Telegraaf app FB	6,153	302	146	90
<b>7. John</b>	26	Very interested	NOS teletext app BBC news app News.google.com Almonitor.com	2,818	216	143	13
<b>8. Anna</b>	23	Barely interested	Windows 8 news app (Al Jazeera, NRC) Google FB	2,079	71	56	38
<b>9. Sarah</b>	24	Very interested	Trouw.nl Volkskrant.nl Blogs theguardian.com Google FB	7,376	164	144	90

\* From Chrome browsing history. Days are total days between the first and last date, not active days.

\*\* Self-reported political interest in the survey.

The levels of political interest are self-reported by the participants, hence it is their own perception of their political interest level. As is visible in table A, four of the nine participants (Kim, Jack, John and Sarah) have a higher level of political interest and are also politically active compared to the other five (Violet, Isabel, Maria and Kirsten) that are not as active, even though Maria and

Kirsten both said they are quite interested in politics. Anna is left out of this distinction, because she is actually quite an exception since she think she is barely interested in politics, while she is quite politically active. As mentioned previously, it is expected that people's level of political interest can predict whether someone will be politically active or not (Prior, 2010; Verba et al., 1995). However, it seems that the level of political interest is not necessarily related to their actual political behavior.

Menchen-Trevino (2012) found that the political interest level of people does not necessarily correspond with their political information consumption nor activity. She also found that people who reported to have a low level of political interest were quite engaged in certain political topics and activities. People do not have a sense of what an average level of political interest means, so they compare themselves with people in their environment. Hence, social relationships are important when people think about their own level of political interest and activity (Menchen-Trevino, 2012). For the purpose of the analysis the different levels of political interest will be divided into high and low categories of political interest. To created categories will refer to Kim, Jack, John, Sarah and Anna as having a relatively high level of political interest, while Violet, Isabel, Maria and Kirsten have a relatively low level of political interest.



## 4.2 Main Themes

### 4.2.1 Online Information

This theme provides an analysis of the participants' media use, in particular their online news consumption. Online information has become indispensable for young people, especially regarding news. The participants search almost everything online, even news they receive from traditional media. Google.com is their 'best friend', which they consider as a part of their daily lives since they use Google for everything. This was also visible in their Web Historian visualizations where Google.com was often the biggest circle as well as the center of their network.

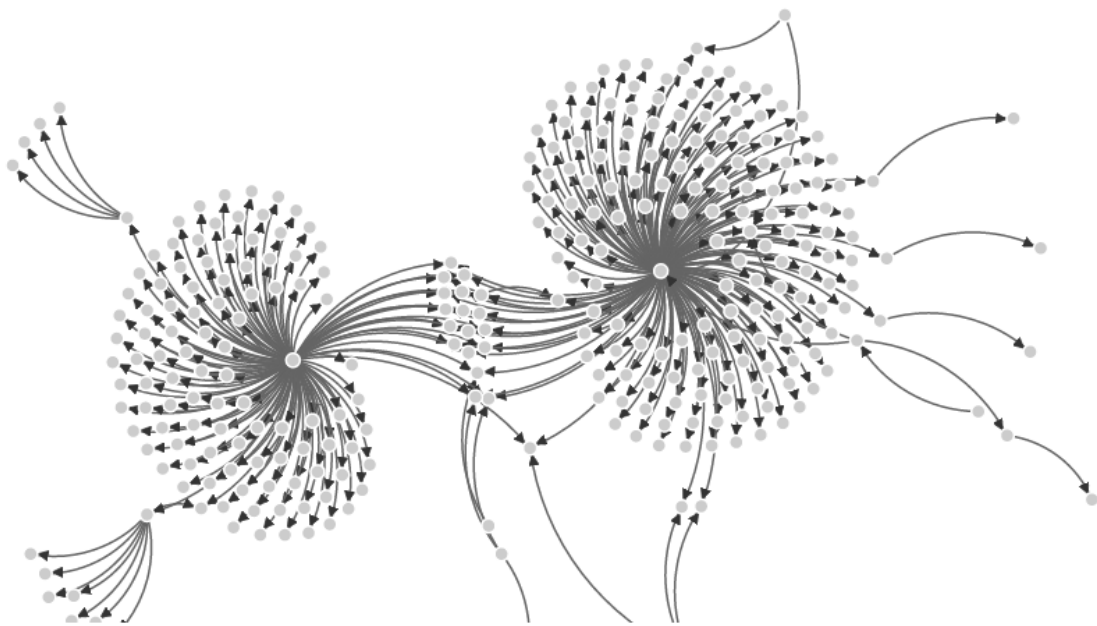


Figure 3: Maria's network visualization that shows Google's central presence.<sup>1</sup>

This visualization shows two big centers which are Google.com and Google.com.hk. The participants' networks often revolved around Google as a starting point from which they branch out to other websites. A big contributor to their extensive online information consumption is the smartphone which allows people to be connected 24/7 and offers many apps, which are often used for news consumption. However, the role of traditional media is still important for their information consumption only at certain times more than others, like when it is election time. Unsurprisingly, social media is a big news source for this age group. According to scholars, social media is often actively used by young people as well as more often used by them for news (Xenos et al., 2014; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012). Since online information has become so popular and important in young

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<sup>1</sup> The labels, as depicted in figure 1, are removed in these visualizations to anonymize the data of the participants.

people's lives, many of the participants feel they cannot get the same in-depth information elsewhere and would be less informed without it.

When the participants were asked about their media consumption, all of them mentioned that they would feel less informed without online information. According to the participants, new media is cheap, flexible, mobile, and convenient to use, especially when being a student often goes hand in hand with a hectic lifestyle. Therefore, news apps are popular since people can use them everywhere and anytime due to their smartphones. Smartphones have become such valuable devices in people's lives that they have even changed people's expectations of access, because mobile access to the internet has penetrated almost all aspects of daily life (Han, 2012). In the Netherlands, 72% has access to the internet through their mobile phone and 77% use the internet for news and information about current events (CBS StatLine, 2013). These numbers are higher when looking at the age group of the participants (18-29 years old); 96% (15-25 years old) and 89% (25-35 years old) has access to the internet through their mobile phones, 84% (15-25 years old) and 86% (25-35 years old) use the internet for news and information about current events (CBS StatLine, 2013). Kim clarifies why online information is important for this age group:

Becoming a student I didn't have a newspaper anymore, I did have a TV but it didn't really fit the student life to watch the news at 8, for example. So online news is more of a flexible, mobile way but still a reliable way to get news. It fits well with the student dynamic life, you can fit it in whenever you want but still get the same information as you would from watching the 8 o'clock news. Also you can get the news all day long, I think that's nice.<sup>2</sup>

Besides the fact that young people in the Netherlands have the possibility to be connected almost everywhere and anytime, hence have the possibility to get online information all the time, the internet also offers more in-depth, elaborate, and, according to the participants, more objective news. At the same time, people can select their own news according to their interests, which is also how the participants defined the objective part of online information. The internet allows people to make their own news selection and focus more on what they want to see instead of what traditional media wants them to see through agenda settings and news selection processes, such as news on TV. The participants think that they can do more research online about certain issues or news, hence the internet offers a more elaborate and in-depth news coverage as well as different perspectives on issues, which is why they feel they can get more objective news on the internet, as Kim states:

First of all, it's in a way more objective because you can have your own selection of what you want to read. If you have a whole list of a hundred headlines and you can pick the ones that

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<sup>2</sup> The participants were interviewed in Dutch, so all the quotes are translated from Dutch to English.

you think are interesting or important, you have in that sense a more objective selection. While in the news obviously they select for you, so I really think that is different. Secondly, which is kind off the same, the ability the focus more on your interests. So for instance, sometimes the news on TV will be about soccer and I really don't care. Online I can just pick the topics that I want and maybe also topics that they don't talk about in the news and also go more in-depth.

It is interesting how the participants talk about the positive implications of the internet on news objectivity, while mainstream journalists have criticized the credibility of online news sources since the internet lacks gatekeepers that protect the quality of the information (Ruggiero, 2004). On the other hand, new media offers many ways to avoid elite bias by which traditional media is limited as well as the objectivity structures that limit the depth and scope of the news from the news room (Woodly, 2008). It seems that the participants prefer this unrestricted way of news coverage which, in their sense, is more objective than traditional media coverage, because it is not limited to a specific predefined view. They mainly aim to talk about biased media here while using objectivity. The objective part lies in the fact that they can select their own sources expecting them to not have a strict agenda setting as well as the freedom to search for news that they are interested in. Hence, it is more about the freedom that the internet offers in the selection process of news than the actual objectivity of that news, because is there even such thing as objective news?

Online news or news apps make this own selection process of news easier for people, because there are many news sections as well as options to personalize the news or help select news content. Especially apps support user's desires and preferences through easy tapping, swiping, and a wide array of choices for customization. According to Batsell (2012), this non-linear news presentation is important for digital natives, because they expects to absorb the news in the form and order they want. This is also linked to personalization and interactivity which this age group finds appealing (Kruikemeier et al., 2014; Smith, 2011). According to Kruikemeier et al. (2014), interactivity is the process of two-way communication and is key for online political communication as it helps citizens make sense of information more meaningfully. For John this was also the reason why he did not use the Al Jazeera app, it is not customized and interactive enough:

...I think the app is not efficient, too much information, not organized and not so interactive.

The urge for own news selection, customization and personalization is something that is important for most of the participants. They often made the comparison with traditional media, which does not offer these options.

### ***Traditional Media vs. New Media***

As mentioned previously, the participants were aware of the agenda setting and gatekeeping functions of certain media, which they perceive as nonobjective or biased information dissemination. They prefer online news when they are looking for more elaborate and “objective” news as well as different or alternative views and international news. Some found that traditional media do not reflect the “real world” nor the “truth” by which they meant that they are biased. However, this does not mean that the participants do not use traditional media. In fact they did, however passively and often depending on their residence situation and household. The participants that lived with their parents mentioned the influence that it has on their traditional media consumption. For example, sometimes they watch the news or certain programs, because their parents are watching. Also one participant said she does not read the newspaper as often as she used to when she lived with her parents, because she does not have a newspaper subscription anymore since she moved out. Others did not have a TV for a while, which affected their media consumption habits as well. Menchen-Trevino (2012) also found that the household, but also other social aspects and life transitions, influence and shape people’s media use.

In their longitudinal research about newspaper reading, Chaffee and Choe (1981) called these kind of changes transitional constraints; the newspaper reading habits are disrupted due to personal life cycle changes, such as changes in residence, marital or parental status, occupation etcetera. However, transitional constraints can also apply for other media as well. For example, other participants mentioned the radio as background noise at work, in the car or at home. Even if they themselves are not actively listening, they pick up on news or information in general and sometimes look for more information online if the item interests them. It is clear that the spheres in which one moves influences the person’s media consumption. As Anna states, she is also influenced by her family’s media consumption:

My dad is really interested in the news, so at home we get to see the news in three different languages every hour. So unconsciously I also pick up the news because it’s always on TV.

According to Berker, Hartmann, Punie and Ward (2005), the domestication process does not only take place with wild animals. Technologies also need to be ‘housetrained’, which means that “they have to be integrated into the structures, daily routines and values of users and their environments.” (Berker et al., 2005, p. 2). Thus, when one moves out of or in a household or environment the domestication of technologies changes as well. However, the domestication process is seldom complete and sometimes these technologies that are being domesticated can also cause damage or arguments in the household (Berker et al., 2005).

For example, some participants with immigrant backgrounds (Violet, Kirsten and Anna) said that they sometimes are annoyed or disturbed by the news that their parents watch on cable TV. These channels' gatekeeping functions differ from Western norms and they show more aggressive and explicit images and videos than Dutch channels. The examples they gave often concerned ISIS or other war related images and videos, which they find inappropriate or disturbing to watch and avoid them by walking away or asking to change the channel. As Violet exemplifies:

For example, if you would compare Dutch news with Arabic news you would see videos and pictures of dead people, I mean they have seen it a lot so they are used to it. I find these kind of images disturbing so I would avoid those, so I would say the more aggressive sources. For instance, if my dad is watching TV the chance that these images appear is big so I try to avoid it by just not watching the TV or sometimes going somewhere else.

Anna also deals with the same argument at home:

But for example, I do avoid certain news in the morning or during dinner, like news about ISIS with immoral images and stories. As I said, my dad watches the news 24/7, so sometimes these images pop up and I tell my dad to turn off the TV. It's also not healthy for your peace of mind, looking at it from a psychological point of view.

For these participants this was partly also the reason why they turned to online news, the ability to select their own news. Violet explicitly says this by stating:

But online it's so selective that you can just select what you like to follow and see, so you don't have to avoid what you don't like, it's just not there. And if it still does appear, just don't click on it.

Isabel confirms in terms of social media:

On FB you have the option to not show posts from this source anymore or 'I don't want to see this'. I do use that for images or videos or when something is disturbing or annoying me.

It is interesting that none of the participants avoid news sources according to their political views. Some said they preferred to not watch or read conservative sources, however do not actively avoid them, because one should keep an open mind and be open to different perspectives and opposing views, which will create a more nuanced or balanced view. Jack said:

...I think it's better, even if it's against your beliefs, to check it out so you know the counter arguments to what you believe and you should always try to dig deeper. If you find

something against your belief than it's better read up and form a strong opinion ... you have to keep an open mind, so sometimes you actually do find a good argument and you maybe have to adjust your view a bit.

All the participants shared the same view on avoiding political news. Instead of avoiding political views, sources or channels that are not in line with their own arguments, some participants seek for them while others encounter them on a regular basis and pay attention to them. For example, Sarah is someone that seeks for the opposite view:

You need to have a certain argumentation before you can say I agree or disagree and explain it. But it's not because I need to have my own views confirmed, because then you're not reading news. But more that I think that's the most objective view and I want to learn more about that. I would for example, look for information for 30 minutes on my view and 50 minutes on what the other side thinks, just to balance my view and think about why I think like that.

Many scholars agree that new media offers more content and space that stimulates political interest and participation (Boulianne, 2011; Fox, 2013; Kruikemeier et al., 2014; Stolle et al., 2005; Wang, 2007; Ward & de Vreese, 2011). However, research has found that not politically interested people will take that advantage to avoid news, while the interested people to get (political) news (Kruikemeier et al., 2014; Prior, 2010). For the nine participants this was not necessarily the case, they specifically did not avoid news due to political reasons because they want to create a more nuanced or balanced view by accepting and reading different perspectives or opposing views on political matters.

As mentioned previously, the participants prefer online news to inform themselves through these different perspectives to avoid biased media and the agenda setting functions of traditional media. Some also said (Isabel, Kim, John, Violet) that the radio or 8 o'clock news does not cover international news as much or as elaborate as they would like. Therefore, they also turn to the internet. According to Woody (2008), throughout the years traditional media has adopted four reasons that cause this turn to online news. The news is often biased toward elite opinion, has become more sensational with the rise of infotainment, the objectivity which journalists swear by is preventing them to reflect reality adequately, and last but not least the consolidation of media ownership (Woody, 2008). Sensational news or infotainment sources were also averted by the participants, which they perceive as low-quality journalism, such as the newspapers 'De Telegraaf', 'De Metro', and 'The Daily Mail' as well as sites, such as Buzz Feed or the news on commercial channels.

Even though, different negative connotations were underlying the way participants talked and compared traditional media, most of them do still use it to consume news even if it is more on a superficial level and to check the headlines. Nguyen and Western (2006) also found that online news and information users still use traditional sources to satisfy different needs. Sometimes one just wants to check the headlines and get a quick summary or overview, while at other times wants to get more in-depth news. As Nguyen and Western (2006) conclude, new media will not completely replace traditional media, because each medium serves different needs and situations, which is also the case for social media.

### ***Social Media***

Social media serves a need that digital natives are so accustomed to, which is socializing online (Kelly, 2014; Mainardi, 2011). Most participants also mentioned social media as a news source and felt that they would be less informed without social media, especially Facebook. This was also visible in their Web Historian visualizations where Facebook was often a big circle. For Violet it was even shocking to see how big her Facebook circle was, but on the other hand she actually uses Facebook for almost everything, especially in terms of her news consumption. As she herself states:

I have been using social media a lot as a source of information and not only for informal information but also for online news and newspapers. Because everything is linked you can get a lot of information from there.

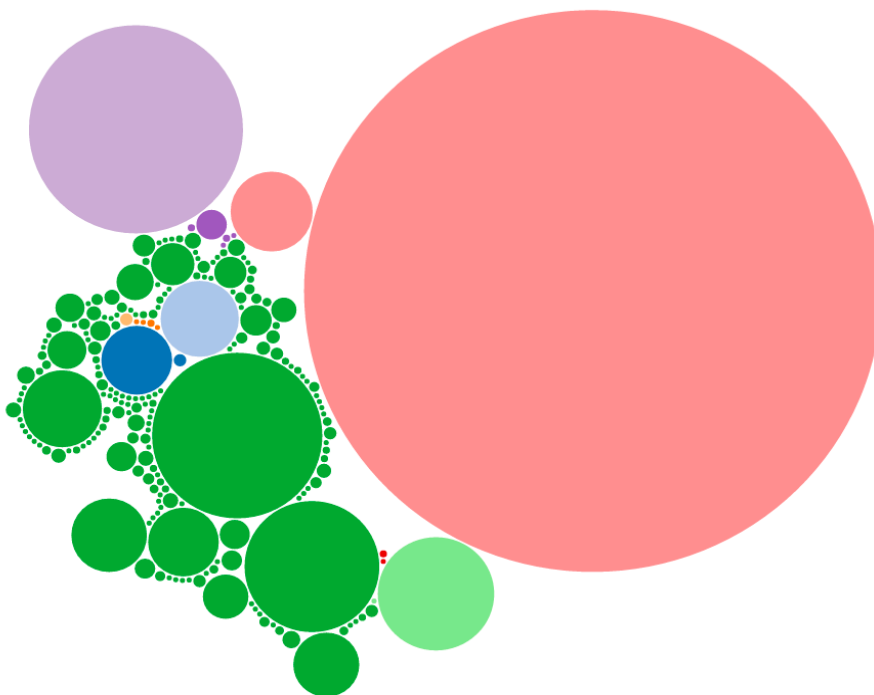


Figure 4: Violet's big Facebook circle.

Most of the participants have liked actual news pages so that they can follow their news coverage, but also news that friends share is a big contributor to their news consumption. According to Sarah:

...if you like certain news pages on Facebook, than your news feed will actually be a news feed.

The optimists versus pessimists debate previously mentioned regarding the influence of the internet on political participation also concerns social media. Is social media allowing people to become more informed, find common causes and participate in society or do they disengage, distract people from public affairs and provide shallow and superficial information and relationships? (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012). According to Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2012), Facebook is definitely a source of political information and news and people do not only use it for personal identity construction, social relationships or entertainment. For some participants, like Violet, Facebook was even their main news source, because they follow certain news pages and have friends that actively share news stories and their opinions on current (political) topics and events. It is actually inevitable since Facebook is the most often visited website after Google worldwide and in the Netherlands as well (Alexa, 2015).

The participants also highlighted the Facebook options of liking and tagging, which have an important function in what SNS friends see of each other. They get information or see news articles that friends have liked, were tagged in or the person gets tagged by others, as Violet mentions:

...for example if I just log on to Facebook my sister has tagged me in something for example a news article. You can directly see it, so if my friends think something is really interesting or important they will tag or like it, so everyone can see it.

While the participants were aware that they were being informed by seeing what their SNS friends like, by being tagged by friends, or reading their posts, they themselves were not actively doing the same. Very few of them actually post on Facebook, but they do like, sometimes tag and share. However, rarely concerning political issues or public affairs, because often they considered their own political orientation or opinion as private or personal. They also rarely comment online or are cautious when posting or commenting publicly about certain issues. The most prominent reason for this behavior had to do with the damage it can cause. Some, like John and Jack, considered it damaging to their future careers if they publicly state their opinion about basically anything but in particular concerning politics, because everything online can be traced back to you. So they were afraid of damaging their reputation, which is also linked to their life transitions, because both John and Jack mentioned their career or future career since they are not students anymore. As John exemplifies:



...because I don't want to connect my name with certain people or websites or Facebook accounts. For example, a couple weeks ago I wanted to attend a lecture on Turkey by a Turkish Dutch organization and the speaker was a former Dutch ambassador of Turkey. So I clicked on attending on Facebook so other people saw that I was going and somebody sent me a friend request. It was Turkish Studies, so I thought why would they send a friend request. So I looked it up and saw that they organized a few lectures and I clicked on one of them and immediately I got jackpot. It was about the dramatic events in the Soviet Union after the breakup of the Soviet Union. I saw that the story was very one sided on the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. I don't want to be connected with those kind of people nor their cause. Just Google your name for the fun of it, look what comes out of it. I don't want my name to be registered with those kind of people, you never know who you're going to meet, help, what kind of lobby you're going to work for or something.

Others considered their friends with different views, because most of them had SNS friends with different views, however Kim and Maria considered them because they did not know about their friends' views. These participants did not want to insult anyone, get negative reactions, cause barrier between friends, or start unnecessary discussions, which according to them can escalate very quickly on social media. Only two participants (Sarah and Anna) are of opposite opinion and they are also the ones that post and comment more regularly than the rest on social media. For example, Anna got a bit cautious over the past year, however she wants to change her ways:

...I don't want to think about 'Oh what will he or she think of me if I post this' anymore. So I'm trying to be like don't think about it too much, be free, be yourself, it doesn't matter what others think of your opinion. I want to be able to speak out about issues that I consider important.

Sarah's posting behavior on social media is, compared to the rest of the participants, somewhat extreme:

I do not post often, but I especially do if I see that my SNS friends have a different view. Because if you do not participate in a certain political discussion or do not choose a side in a conflict, than you're choosing the oppressor's side. That's my idea, that's why I will always make a statement when I see that I need to make a statement and that's mostly based on what I see my friends on Facebook are doing. [pause] and when I post something and expect a certain backlash I always get it.

In their research on Facebook users in the United States, Hampton, Goulet and Marlow (2012) found that the average Facebook user gets more from their friends than that they give due to 'power users'. 'Power users' contribute much more than a typical user does in any form, whether it is liking, tagging, sending friend requests or messages and they tend to specialize in certain activities (Hampton et al., 2012). Even though the participants were not 'power users', hence do not actively participate on social media, whether through liking, tagging or posting, and most of them did not like to share their opinions or news stories publicly, they did share on a personal level through WhatsApp, Viber, email and Facebook messenger. Most often stories are shared that will interest the person he or she is sharing it with, hence they know this person personally and know exactly who will read it, which is not always the case when someone shares publically on social media. This personal sharing process is also selective, because they know what interests who. With the rise of the smartphone instant messaging applications have become very popular not only for staying in touch, but also to share information and create communities with family, friends, classmates and colleagues (Church & Oliveira, 2013). All the participants use WhatsApp as a tool to share information, as Isabel exemplifies:

... well I've got some WhatsApp groups in which I share stories or articles. Mostly stories that interest us all, so it also differs per group.

Here again, the need for own news selection, in accordance with someone's interest, customization and personalization is visible.

In conclusion, the participants rely a lot on the internet in terms of news and general information consumption, because they can set their own agenda. Furthermore, the internet offers a more elaborate and in-depth news coverage as well as different perspectives on issues, which they prefer. This way they can avoid the agenda setting functions that traditional media has and, in their opinion, get less biased news. Their use of the internet in relation to traditional media was often complementary, because most of them used the radio or the TV for quick headlines and went online for more in-depth information (Nguyen and Western, 2006). The participants also receive news from their SNS friends and news pages they have liked on Facebook. However, while they often do get a lot of information from their SNS friends they do not provide the same input back, because most of them, with the exception of Anna and Sarah, are lurkers. On social media they also encounter political information and opposite political views, however none of them avoid contradicting political information nor any political information, whether they are politically interested or not. The only thing that is avoided are violent and immoral images or videos, mainly concerning current events around ISIS, which is not necessarily a political but an ethical issue. How the participants use the

internet as a source for political action will be clarified in the next three themes.

#### 4.2.2 *Citizenship*

This theme will map the different ideas the participants have about citizenship as well as how they fit into those ideas. Social networks, which enhance one's social capital, hold the same importance for the notion of citizenship as for sharing or reading information. The participants' ideas about citizenship were very dispersed as they on the one hand define citizenship in terms of being a dutiful citizen, while on the other hand act or want to act through notions of engaged citizenship. Like with their self-reported level of political interest, the participants do not have a sense of what average engagement means and could only measure their engagement in relation to others. Which can also be the reason why they mainly focused on the community when considering what it means to be a good or engaged citizen. However, they did not mention collective actions regarding the community, but described everything through the individual. What can I do as an individual? Therefore, most of them fit in Thorson's quadrant 1 or 4. Only traditional political participation, in particular voting, was mentioned in line with good citizenship, while unconventional political acts were completely left out.

In general, the concept of citizenship or being a citizen seemed to be something that the participants do not think about often. Not only did they have trouble articulating what being a citizen means to them, they also had a very broad to narrow view on citizenship. Most of them started out with comparing being a citizen to just being a person or individual to duty-based citizenship, especially focusing on duties such as paying taxes and obeying the law. After surpassing the idea of being a citizen as being a human being or person of earth, most of them thought about citizenship as a label which categorizes you to a certain country through a passport. These thoughts are in line with Parker's (1998) definition of citizenship as "a status that represents a collection of rights and duties conferred by political authority rather than stemming from economic power or social position" (p. xi).

However, after asking them about their responsibilities as a citizen of the Netherlands, they started to focus more on political participation and engaged citizenship. According to Hall et al. (1999), people consider being an active citizen as being a good citizen, which means that a citizen feels certain personal responsibilities and a wider duty of care towards neighbors and the community. The participants positioned being a citizen and some being an engaged or involved citizen in the more generous definition of citizenship that focuses on responsibilities and general participation rather than duty-based citizenship. Although, they did stress voting as something a good citizen should do, they did not see voting as a duty but as a responsibility. Another responsibility that an engaged or good citizen should feel is giving back to the community and this ranged from family and friends to the Dutch community as a whole. However, most of them talked

about their direct community. As McLeod et al. (1999) state (political) participation can be aimed at any level but will always take place in the local community.

When asked about their own engagement as a citizen the participants seemed somehow conflicted. Most of them thought that they could be more engaged and are not really engaged now, even though their threshold for being an engaged citizen was relatively low, according to themselves. This can be due to the comparison of the self with others in their surroundings that are maybe more or less engaged than them. Social capital helps explain why citizens participate politically even though they perceive themselves as having a low level of political interest (Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998). Their idea of an engaged citizen is someone that is first of all up to date, knows what is happening in society and consciously thinks about that, and has a general political awareness, as is well described by John:

For me the level of being engaged is very low [pause] if you just think about what is happening around you, read things, watch things, such as the news is important. Voting consciously not because you like the hair of Mark Rutte for example. So if you are conscious and you vote, for me then you're an engaged citizen.

This idea of an engaged citizen focuses on the general political activity part of engaged citizenship, according to Dalton (2008). Secondly, an engaged citizen should vote, participate in and contribute to society by improving their surroundings, helping in the community by for example volunteering, but also create awareness through talking with people. The participants take action in the broader participation repertoires of engaged citizenship. However, voting is something that is of great importance for the democratic process, so even if it is considered duty-based participation the participants did consider voting as something an engaged citizen must do (Dalton, 2008). A few were of opinion that their perception of being an engaged citizen was too basic, because there are many levels of engagement, as John continues:

But of course there are many levels above that, such as being a member of a party, demonstrating, volunteering, actually being in a council.

Only Anna, that perceives her level of political interest as low, has actively participated in society on a "higher level" by:

...helping refugees that have just arrived with a buddy project. I have also been a tutor for children in elementary school of which Dutch was not their native language to help them score better.

From the interviews it has become clear that the participants describe a citizen as someone with a legal status and certain duties, such as paying taxes and obeying the law, but also as an individual that should vote, have general political awareness as well as contribute to the community and society. This contribution is not limited to any ideals and can be achieved through various ways of participation, but they mainly concentrate on local participation in their own community. When trying to analyze their ideas on citizenship through Thorson's quadrant 1 to 4, it seems that most of the ideas cover the civic horizons from global to hyperlocal but center around the individual axis when it comes to civic contributions (Thorson, 2012). Hence, quadrant 1 and 4 were most represented by the participants' descriptions of citizenship. When they talked about the responsibilities and the contributions of a citizen they referred to the individual, what they as individuals can mean and do for the community and did not consider classic collective endeavors. Jack is a good example of quadrant 1, although he viewed himself more a human of earth than a citizen of a country, he focuses on the hyperlocal level when talking about how he and other people should contribute to society:

Well in general everyone should try to improve, I think that's the main thing. Improve what you find, but that's not just for a citizen that's for everyone in life. You should improve your own well-being, the well-being of your family, the community around you etcetera. You can do that by maybe change people's mindsets, if you can change their mindset it can change their behavior and from that everything else will follow.

Maria had the same ideas about helping the people around you, but she did stretch it to the global level by referring to the whole Dutch community and system, which makes her fit into quadrant 4:

I think being a good person makes someone a good citizen. I don't feel any real obligations, I guess you should vote, and give back something to the Dutch community. Because I'm personally conflicted, I would like to work abroad after I finish my study but I do feel almost guilty, because then I have enjoyed those many years of study finance and then I just leave and put my knowledge elsewhere...

As stated earlier, most participants did not go beyond their own community or the Dutch society and talked about individual contributions, however only Violet slightly shifted to quadrant 3 when she mentioned community building and also actually talked about global action when saying:

...be good to my environment and to society, I think that's enough for now. To be a good citizen and good to your environment you have to help each other out, in your community and I don't think I'm doing that enough yet, for example like community building. And not

necessarily local, contribution to the earthquake in Nepal is also a way of doing that. We shouldn't be bound by borders.

In conclusion, since the participants did not talk about other forms of duty-based or traditional political participation other than voting, it is clear that they have broader perceptions on citizenship and leaned towards engaged citizenship when talking about citizen involvement. They only focused on the direct community, because of their understanding of a citizen being a label bound to a certain country, hence the local focus. While on the other hand they all started with the description "I'm just an individual, a person of earth", they did limit themselves to the local community in terms of civic engagement. As Hall et al. (1999) mentioned, citizenship is bound to the time one lives in and there is no timeless definition of the concept. While the participants did have certain ideas floating in the back of their minds, they filled the grey spots of the definition with their own civic activity ideas. Where political participation evolves citizenship evolves, otherwise democracy cannot be guaranteed since political participation is an essential element of democratic citizenship (Dalton, 2010).

### 4.2.3 *Traditional Political Participation*

This theme will clarify why the participants only discussed voting as an act of civic engagement as well as how they use online information and traditional media to participate during election time. Furthermore, the use of Voting Advice Applications (VAAs) seems to be an important new medium in their decision-making process during elections. Even though six of the seven participants that actually vote use it, they do not all have the same trust in the outcome of their vote. Some of the participants lack trust in the government and their ability to provide something valuable for society. Hence, some vote for the sake of voting while others genuinely believe in the democratic implications voting has.

As previously stated in the literature, there has been a decline in traditional forms of political participation due to evolved citizenship norms that encourage innovation in political participation, but also due to new technologies and globalization (Koos, 2012; Stolle, Hooghe & Micheletti, 2005; Ward & de Vreese, 2011). This decline or non-existence of traditional political participation, except for voting, was clearly visible among the participants. From the nine participants no one had participated in any traditional political acts, such as campaigning, donating, or was member of a political party etcetera. They only voted, however Violet has never voted and is not planning on voting in the future. She explained that she is not interested in politics at all, which makes her not voting comprehensible considering the theory about political interest which assumes that political interest is a strong predictor of people's political involvement and activity (Prior, 2010). However, less politically interested citizens are now more likely to be mobilized due to technological developments and different forms of PIU, which counters the argument that the internet will mainly effect the already politically sophisticated citizens (Kruikemeier, van Noort, Vliegenthart & de Vreese, 2014).

Unfortunately, Web Historian (Version 1, 2015) is not able to precisely measure the PIU of the participants. This was especially the case for Violet since she used social media as her main source for information. However, she does consume political information online and has a strong opinion on why she does not participate traditionally, which comes down to not having trust in politics. According to Ekman and Amnå (2012), this behavior is anti-political as opposed to apolitical, which is how Violet describes herself. In fact, she engages in active types of non-participation, because she thinks the system is corrupt and in that sense she is resisting against the system by not participating, which fits into Foucault's line of thought. She is using her modern disciplinary power to make a political statement by actively not participating. As she herself states:

...but instead of supporting them by voting and playing along, I just don't and try to be good



to my environment and to society...

The Web Historian visualizations did detect some political websites in the browse history of the other participants who all voted, although half of them (Maria, Jack, Kirsten and Isabel) were skeptical about the effectiveness of voting. In summary, they did not trust the politicians nor the political system. They believe that the voice of the people does not matter, because eventually other powers have more influence. This is also one of the reasons why they are not politically active other ways. For these people it is the lack of trust in public institutions that constrains them from supporting the government (Baek, 2010; Neilson, 2010; Stolle et al., 2005). Furthermore, they do not feel fully represented by the political parties nor do they have a strong preference or interest for a certain party, so donating, volunteering or campaigning for a certain party is out of the question for them. Moreover, these participants were more interested in the bigger landscape of politics and not so much in the government. They voted when it was voting time, because they have the right and they can somewhat guide the direction of the coalition, but they do not expect much in return, as Maria states:

I vote, I try to vote every time I'm able to vote, because I think we should. I'm not active other ways, because I don't have a super strong view on my political position and I also don't have faith in the political system, so why would I participate. I don't think anything will happen with my vote, but I should vote still because I know how the coalition will be formed and I kind of can have an effect on them, but then that coalition doesn't do anything so that's why I don't really have trust in political people.

Jack also emphasized that the way people vote or the voting system itself is somehow crooked:

I vote but I don't think it's extremely effective, because I always vote for sort of the underdog. I do think you have to give your opinion even if it's not as accurate as you want it to be. That's also my main problem with the current way of how politics are run in a country, you have to pick from a list of individuals or political parties that do not really accurately convey your opinion. So you have to pick the lesser of evils sort of and that's then your best option. I think that's what's wrong in general, that you can't give your opinion on each specific topic and be like okay this is what I think, but you have to sort of pick from a menu even if you don't agree with all the statements.

In this post-materialist era there is a need to take control and for individual political responsibility, due to the lack of trust and faith in authority. As represented in the quotes, citizens think that the government does not convey their opinion or tackle problems affectively. In line with engaged

citizenship, people want a more direct say and influence on, which they do not feel through voting (Dalton, 2008; Stolle et al., 2005; Ward & de Vreese, 2011). However, Sarah had an interesting example that influenced her to believe that citizens can have an influence on the local, municipality level. In her experience:

...For example, the path from the train station of Tilburg to the library of the university has always been rocky. So once I fell there and my skirt ripped and I was late for class. I guess because I'm a law student I decided to complain about it and wrote a letter to the municipality of Tilburg and they paid the compensation for my skirt. And now after 1,5 year, the path is clean and straight. They renovated it, I'm sure I wasn't the only one that complained. What I want to say is that on the level of municipalities, these are the things that are important. You can have direct influence and see the change. On the national level, of course it's more important and interesting and about something bigger. You can also have influence, but you have to invest much more time in it but you don't have as much influence as on a local scale...

The other half of the participants, like Sarah, does believe in voting and find it utterly important to vote in a society where people have the right to cast their voice and have influence in decision-making processes. However, for them this is also the only way they politically participate in the traditional sense. Only Anna ones campaigned on social media, because her friend was on the election list and admitted that otherwise she would never do so. Here, the social aspect played a big role and the support of her peer instead of a party. These participants have trust in the government, but they do not always support the same specific party. They vote on the parties that are in their best interest, whether from a student perspective or from an entrepreneurial perspective. The participants talked about how being a student takes a lot of time and energy, which they do not want to spend on something they do not full heartedly support. Only Sarah always votes for the same party, because she votes for their ideals, but even she did not find it necessary to support them any other way. Also Kim mentioned that she votes for party ideals instead of the party program, because there are always some point you disagree with, however not always the same party. She said:

... I think that voting is effective and I think that it's important that everybody votes. It's one of the bases of our society, one of the key pillars of democracy ... I vote for certain party's ideals and not so much the exact practical things they say, because I guess I keep in mind beforehand that that's not necessarily going to be what's happening.

A few of these participants also stressed conscious voting, which they also perceived as a responsibility of a citizen. The idea is that one makes an informed decision by looking at the party's position and competency and not just vote for the sake of voting, because the chance that the coalition will actually be able to provide something valuable becomes bigger, as Kim explains:

...I also look at their competency, in general I feel that some parties are just competent and lets say good at making decent laws and I think that's very important. If I feel that a party doesn't have the capacity to get anything done then I wouldn't vote for them, even if I stand behind their ideals.

Most of the participants mix traditional and new media when trying to figure out who to vote for. The participants were very aware of their media consumption regarding traditional political participation, specifically when it is time to vote. In general, they actively look for information online by visiting the party websites to read their statements, look for articles and other opinions, and use the website 'Stemwijzer.nl' to make an informed decision. However, traditional media is also highly used in this period, because the participants watch and listen to the debates on TV and the radio between and about the politicians to help them decide who to vote for. This is a clear example of the complementary relationship between the internet and traditional media when it comes to traditional political participation (Nguyen & Western, 2006). According to Kruijckemeier et al. (2014), both active and passive forms of PIU stimulate political engagement, especially the interactive features of new media can have a positive effect on political engagement, such as Voting Advice Applications (VAAs). They believe that new forms of political communication or media can involve "new" citizens politically.

'Stemwijzer.nl', the Dutch VAA, is an important website that many people use in the Netherlands, including most of the participants (6 out of 8), to help them decide who to vote on. Last provincial elections in March, 1,7 million people used the website to make a decision, but it is important to know that the turnout was only 47,76% (Kiesraad, 2015). In their research, Kruijckemeier et al. (2014) found that using such a VAA has a positive effect on citizens, because they are more likely to vote or to feel more interested in politics. In the literature these VAAs are perceived to solve a problem that is harmful to a well-functioning democracy, which is low voter turnout. The VAAs function as an assistant to voters who want to make an informed decision before the election. According to Ladner and Pianzola (2010), VAAs help diminish information gaps during decision-making, because there is often a lack of information, as well as counter rational choice reasoning against voting, hence not voting because it does not pay off. Ladner and Pianzola (2010) found that in the 2007 Swiss federal elections VAAs did have an impact. The VAAs "motivated citizens to

participate in the elections, to search for more information about parties and candidates and to discuss politics with other citizens.” (p. 223). Especially young citizens were motivated to vote and get involved by the VAA, which is an important effect since traditional political participation is declining among youth. The participants use ‘Stemwijzer.nl’, because it is easy, provides information, and clarifies their doubts between which party they want to choose. John actually represents what those six participants do when trying to decide who to vote on by saying:

...follow the news, debates a few weeks and days prior to the elections, and ‘Stemwijzer’ is a very handy tool that I use. Economically I’m very right and socially I’m very left, so it’s hard to decide sometimes because it’s a very difficult thing to combine.

In conclusion, voting seems something the participants feel responsible for doing, sometimes just voting for the sake of voting because you have the right, sometimes because they think they might have some impact, and sometimes because they genuinely believe voting is effective and a must if one lives in a democratic society. However, the other forms of traditional political participation were neglected, because the participants do not want to invest their time and energy in a party or system they do not completely trust or do not always support. Most of the participants were also somewhere in the middle in terms of their political preference, so they cannot make such an ingrained decision yet. This is also why they use VAAs to help them with their decision, they are not sure and the VAA helps by presenting the advantages and disadvantages of their choice clearly. According to Dalton (2008), democracy is not at risk because young people do not participate in traditional political participation anymore, as some believe. Citizens like to have more influence and citizen participation is becoming more linked to that.

#### 4.2.4 *Political Consumerism*

This theme will discuss the unconventional political acts that the participants engage in as well as how the online and social sphere influence this behavior. Furthermore, the implications that traditional notions of citizen engagement have on political consumption will be evaluated. As mentioned previously, these young citizens use different ideas and ways to influence politics, which expands and enriches democratic participation (Dalton, 2008). Some people do that by actively voting, because they believe in its power while others prefer more direct influence. Most participants believed that political consumption can offer more direct influence, however not directly visible since it influences companies' revenue flows. Since they believe in voting with your wallet, they compared it with traditional voting which they saw as less effective, however indispensable for democratic processes.

The broader political participation repertoires that are in line with engaged citizenship have created space for new locations for political action where citizens might feel they have more direct influence, such as in the supermarket (Dalton, 2008; Johnston, 2008; Stolle et al., 2005; Ward & de Vreese, 2011). According to Dalton (2008), "non-electoral participation gives citizens more control over the focus and locus of political action, which should presumably increase their influence in the political process." (p. 93). This is exactly what the participants thought was lacking in traditional political acts, people are bound to a certain time and limited acts, which have short-term influence according to them. In their opinion, political consumption definitely offers long-term influence, but on the other hand will also only be effective in the long-term and is not directly visible. All the participants thought positively, although some more critically, about political consumption and a few (Kim, Sarah, Jack and Anna) are already active political consumers, while others will definitely try to do so in the future. All the participants have also sporadically participated in other unconventional acts, such as signing petitions and demonstrating, at least once. However, they think political consumption is more effective than these acts, because often the results are not visible, especially when it comes to demonstrating. For John petitions are even considered symbolic:

...A lot actually, not only petitions but I have signed many. But as I said before it's also a bit of a 'feel good' feeling and symbolic. And it's an easy way to support through the internet...

The ones that boycott or 'buycott' things were consciously aware of the political implications this has. According to Ward and de Vreese (2011), a citizen-consumer is also a smart shopper, because the person is aware of the brands he or she is using, what they stand for and spends in a socially responsible way. All the participants that were actively doing so were socially conscious consumers, SCC, as Ward and de Vreese (2011) call them. They see their consumption acts or the

lack of it as something that might bring social change. In traditional consumption theory, consumption acts are seen as acts out of self-interest. Bennet (2003) questions if political consumerism really relates to citizenship and collective action, because it is mainly restricted to the wallet. Are these consumers really acting as informed citizens for social change or are they buying into the marketing schemes that satisfy the 'feel good' mechanism, hence eventually out of self-interest. The CCC, critical citizen consumer, is the ultimate example of someone that acts as a SCC but goes beyond political consumption and takes on a political identity and becomes involved in activist organizations (Ward & de Vreese, 2011).

The participants that did consume politically at the moment fall into the category of a SCC, they do consume consciously with the implications in the back of their mind. However, since most of them are still students, convenience and money play a major role. That is why it is not always possible for them to make the sacrifices one has to make when consuming politically in terms of money, but also in terms of time and plain convenience. According to Neilson (2010), altruism is an important characteristic of a 'buycotter'. In her research she found that 'buycotters' tend to be more altruistic than boycotters, because indeed they have to make sacrifices for the greater good. In turn they have to trust that greater good as well as others that will hopefully do the same as them. It is easier to make the sacrifice if you get something in return, for example some participants mentioned the impact conscious consumption has on their own health, which makes their conscious consumption behavior indeed partly out of self-interest, especially regarding biological food and GMO. Being a CCC is ideal, however not everyone always has the opportunity to be one. Being a SCC deepens awareness and activism and most importantly it is a way for "ordinary people" to participate, because they can vote with their money every day (Willis & Schor, 2012). People that are less interested in traditional political participation also get involved in politics on another level. Violet is a good example, while she never votes she was very positive about political consumption:

Actually I think that's very effective and I definitely want to do that and implement it in my idea of becoming a better person ... for instance every time I go to Primark I feel a little bit guilty when I think of the labor conditions of probably children ... However, I still go and buy there because it's so cheap and convenient. I think it would be a big sacrifice to not buy there anymore, however it would make a difference to boycott it. If I would have money then I would only eat biological, buy fair trade products and more locally...

The participants believe in the purchasing power of consumers, because it effects big companies who primarily care about money. People can actually force companies into change if they stop buying from them. Big corporations do not only have a lot of influence on the market, but also

on society and in political spheres their power is visible. Today, the big multinationals with a lot of influence, such as Nestlé and Shell, are under fire since consumers are demanding more ethical products. It has become popular for corporations to be socially responsible, which they also use as a marketing strategy since it works in their benefit (Dalton, 2008; Lupia & Philpot, 2005; Micheletti & Stolle, 2008; Ward & de Vreese, 2011). Many participants compared consuming with voting, because people can vote at the checkout with their wallet and be heard now that social corporate responsibility has become some kind of trend. As Jack states:

... but in general I think it's more effective to vote with your wallet. So if your against something people listen better or companies, because some companies are very powerful and have a big influence on the world in general so it's best to support the companies that you care about that have the values that you share, than doing anything else....

According to Micheletti and Stolle (2008), corporations are caught in a social justice 'trap' nowadays, because they are being "pushed and pulled into human rights and social justice by everyday consumers, activists, and market forces themselves." (p. 750). These market forces are very important, because it means that "capitalism is helping capitalism to develop a face of social justice." (Micheletti & Stolle, 2008, p. 750). New market actors and structures are being created by niche markets, which are semi forcing these big corporations into progressive social change. However, according to Jacobsen and Dulsrud (2007), people should be cautious with their optimism regarding political consumption since its real potential to change society is limited due to people's daily consumption that is non-reflexive in which convenience also plays a role. They also question the consumer's agency, because the consumer is bound by many invisible structures and often does not have accurate information. Sarah also worries about this by saying:

Do you really think that those farmers aren't using any chemicals or whatever? Of course they are, otherwise they could never compete on the market, never. We want round tomatoes, we think that's normal but it's not. It's only clean if you plant it yourself and know what you did. They are still consumer goods, we don't know the actual processes, why should I trust a sticker that says biological?

John has another critical note regarding boycotting:

...every advantage has a downside. Of course it can be effective, but you always have to think more clearly or critically than the masses do, the general public does. When you boycott something you always have to take into account who makes those products, sure it's under bad conditions etcetera, but the people that make it also benefit from it. For example,

there's a huge problem in the West-bank with Palestinians who don't have jobs. It's not an ideal situation of course but thousands Palestinian people work in Israeli factories, hence they have a job. Another example is the clothing industry in South-East Asia, when you boycott those clothes people forget thousands of women in those factories. There are a lot of advantages, first of all emancipation, second of all they earn more of a living. Third of all the economy has a way of developing itself. Instead of saying lets boycott something, you have to find a way of improving the situation over there without having a situation where the factories have to leave the country. So boycotting only is not a solution, there's a much bigger mechanism behind it.

Sarah and John are not the ideal type CCC, however it necessary that they are critical so that they also highlight this point on the spectrum. When consumers do not have enough information and are kept in the dark by the mechanisms behind political consumption, then "the necessary preconditions for most consumers to make ethically guided choices are simply not fulfilled, due to the way production, manufacturing, distribution, and marketing is organized in our societies." (Jacobsen & Dulsrud, 2007, p. 478).

### ***Voting on Politicians vs. Voting on Products***

Most participants also compared political consumption with voting in terms of effectiveness. They are of opinion that political consumption will be more effective than voting in the long-term, because one money is everything in capitalist societies and two people can vote every day and incorporate it in their lifestyle. Jack explains how people can vote every day:

...I think that's even better than voting on a piece of paper, because every time you're in a shop or you're going to buy something or choose a product than you can vote in a sense by choosing the product and company that you agree with the most.

Kim shares this view by stating:

... But on the long-term I think it can make a difference, because I think money can always make a difference ... If there's enough force behind promoting these things they will become more prevalent. I actually think this could make a bigger change than traditional political participation, but it could also be a trend and go down again. But if it would continue, I think it really could make a bigger change, because it's something people can incorporate in their daily life much easier and thereby it becomes a much bigger force than voting once in four years or campaigning once in four years.



When it becomes a lifestyle participation will expand beyond elections, as Kim mentions. Citizens do not have to wait until the next election to be active, so they can select how and when they participate (Dalton, 2008). Kim also mentions something else which the other participants also worried about; "If there's enough force behind promoting these things...". The participants have concerns about the scale in which people are consuming politically or consciously; "If I'm the only one then it won't make a difference", said most of them. Some also felt that there is a lack of information regarding the act of political consumption, but also a lack of information on the inside stories of these companies. Kirsten also feels this way:

Of course it won't be effective if I do it by myself, but in a big group yes. The thing is that not many people have this information. So in order to be effective people need to know and be informed.

Anna continues in this line of reasoning, however with a different angle concerning her own behavior:

My motto in life is 'Be the change you want to be', so if I have an opinion about something and I act upon it and actively promote it then it will help even if I'm the only one. It will of course be more effective if everyone did it, but most people think 'oh I'm the only one, my one euro won't do anything'... I think most people eat fast food or drink Coca Cola, consume from the big companies because they have become so mainstream. And not a lot people have information about what these companies do or that there are also many alternatives.

Anna embodies the important characteristics for a 'buycotter', altruism and generalized trust, because she believes that you should start with yourself and the rest will follow slowly. She blindly trusts the rest, which most of the participants did not and they also lacked the altruistic feeling. Also according to Jacobsen and Dulsrud (2007), with these individual actions citizens will only challenge political and economic power when the actions are aggregated. Even though many expected political consumption to be more effective than voting in the long-term, voting will not be replaced by political consumption since it is one of the main pillars of a well-functioning democracy. Political consumption will exist next to voting, because voting is needed for short-term results, problem solving, and decision-making processes. Sarah was not sure of how effective political consumption can be, according to her it has an effect, but we cannot be sure whether it is effective.

... lets be honest, I think in the end if a group really wants to change something then they will go through the traditional channels of participation by creating a party and competing in

elections, because they have to. That's how the system works, it's not like you can just change the democratic system of the Netherlands.

However, it is not about changing the democratic political system but about being able to influence the spheres around the system from outside the system and creating space for performative resistance, it is about the extra-parliamentary forms of political action (Ekman & Amnå, 2012). As different scholars state, political or conscious consumption is a new form of civic and political engagement, which offers a more life-style orientated and accessible way to participate than traditional participation, which often appeals to young people (Micheletti, 2003; Stolle & Hooghe, 2004; Stolle, Hooghe & Micheletti, 2005; Willis & Schor, 2012). Especially for the people that have lost their trust in the government and communicate their opinions differently. They are digital natives with different perceptions of citizenship than their elders. Both Kim and John linked these other forms of participation with the decline of trust in authority. According to John:

I think political consumption is going to be much more regular in society, because people our age are less interested or are less inclined to do something with politics, demonstrating, becoming member of a party, doing whatever. But they are still being fed with news and things which are interesting for them, only they have lost their faith in politics and politicians ... these are not my words, there is a general trend, multiple researchers say that youngsters, 30 and younger, are less interested in politics than for example 20, 30 or 40 years ago. But what I do see is that people still want to have a 'feel good' feeling and do something. Somebody sends them a website or something, they have to put their name on it and their part of a petition, boycott or 'buycott' a product and their politically active. So they are engaged, however not in the same political activism as before. There are a lot less people who are a member of or affiliate with a party, so they find multiple different ways of being engaged. Through the internet, boycotting, buycotting, you name it.

Kim mentions the importance of locality and the social network:

... I also think it's easier to care about something local than about a big political ideal and I think also the trust in politics isn't helping so that might also be a way to circumvent that, you need to trust the local guy you buy your fish from and not anybody else.

Young people seem less attracted to traditional political participation and one could say that it is logical since there is less trust and faith in politics and the government nowadays. Therefore, young citizens create their own political opportunities to influence politics instead of relying on the state to offer them an opportunity.

## ***Online Information Consumption and Political Consumption***

These social relations and ties in people's environment and community are important for political participation. As mentioned previously, social capital is an important factor in making people politically engaged (Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998). Now that there are online social networks, which are very popular, people are exposed to different ways of connecting with their community and even internationally. New media is important for politically relevant social capital, since people can be triggered by an email, Facebook post or a forwarded WhatsApp message (Willis & Schor, 2012). Most participants said that they have participated in a demonstration or signed a petition due to an online post, whether an invitation on Facebook or through email. However, they did not always remember the exact post nor what they exactly signed. Most do know which demonstrations they attended and here again the social factor played a big role, as Kim exemplifies:

Yeah, mostly through my social network, my Facebook friends. And I think it influenced me because it came from people that I know and it felt like [pause] well first of all I stood behind the values of it but that happens more often, but what really made me actually participate instead of thinking of participating is that it was people that I knew.

As Kim states, she did stand behind the cause, however the biggest motivator was that her friends were going. This was also often the case for the other participants, which supports theories about people's social networks' importance for the stimulation of political participation (Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998; McLeod et al., 2010).

However, boycotting or 'buycotting' were less influenced by the social environment. The participants mostly read online about these topics, often by searching, on blogs, or through big scandals that reach the news, often concerning poor labor conditions and bad animal treatment. However, they were not always conscious of what they were consuming online, for example they did not have specific websites or blogs, that influenced their decisions regarding political consumption. Most of them were just aware of it but often could not recall how exactly, like Jack:

...maybe you get subconsciously influenced or maybe you find out about a company you haven't heard about before online or through some other way. In that sense if you don't know the company you can't buy from them or compare companies, then you're not making an informed decision based on political argument. So it is necessary to read up.

Sarah did stress the new ways of communicating offering new ways of participating, by saying:

The new ways of communicating are very important, such as blogs, Twitter, Facebook. Those

are all things that many young people are communicating in and with and making political statements in. And demonstrating is something that has been reborn kind of, I mean in The Netherlands. The Netherlands is not a state where it's normal to demonstrate every couple of months, but it has become something like that and people are able to communicate more and therefore be able to become more politically active in a different manner through more well [pause] it is still within an organization, but we call them activists. They are still a political organization, it's always an organized group of people. So it basically remains the same but the names are different, the brands are different and the topics are different.

The participants did feel that new media offered them opportunities to get informed about political actions, for example about demonstrations and boycotts. Sarah follows the line of reasoning of the scholars that are of opinion that new media offer a new space that could enhance political participation (Anduiza et al., 2009; Polat, 2005; Ward & de Vreese, 2011; Wang, 2007).

### ***Political Consumption as Civic Engagement***

Even though most of the participants have participated in unconventional activities, none of them counted these actions as being engaged in society when discussing citizenship. They only focused on traditional forms of participation in relation to citizenship. This can be explained by the different definitions or ideas that people have about citizenship or civic engagement. As Ekman and Amnå (2012) describe in their new typology of political participation and civic engagement, in the traditional definition of civic engagement only formal or traditional political participation was considered as civic engagement and (latent) unconventional political acts, or what they call extra-parliamentary activism, were not included. According to critics, citizenship is about democratic values and consequences. While political consumerism revolves around political and ethical reasons, consumer's choices do not influence democratic consequences nor the basic criteria of citizenship, such as universality, consideration of others and cooperation between fellow citizens (Baek, 2010). Such traditional understandings of citizenship and limited ideas on consumerism cause confusion in contemporary conceptions of citizenship and political consumerism.

It is especially confusing when considering that the participants' descriptions of citizenship mostly fit in Thorson's quadrant 1 or 4, which means that they focus on the individual level. At the same time they talked about political consumerism on an individual level, something an individual can incorporate in their daily life and do every day. The collective was only mentioned when referring to the effectiveness of political consumption, but more in the sense that their daily contributions will not matter if nobody else does it as well. Even though Willis and Schor (2012) argue that political consumerism is in essence a social and collective action, it is not perceived as

such. Yet the participants did not regard their political consumption or other unconventional participation as civic engagement. It seems that young Dutch citizens do not discuss their political consumption activities with their peers like they do when voting, demonstrating or forwarding a petition. This is in terms of 'buycotting' more relevant than boycotting, because as Neilson (2010) found, boycotters do depend on being visible in the collective sphere. They need media attention, protest action, and people to spread the word because they are targeting big brands and want direct effect. They must know if their boycotting is repeated by others, because they have less generalized trust and do not just trust that people will follow. However, if people do not talk about 'buycotting' in their social networks, which fuels the lack of information, how will they ever cause a change?

In conclusion, the participants tended to be optimistic about political consumption due to the influence one can make with money, which is a very valuable aspect of the capitalistic society. Four of the nine participants are actually actively boycotting or 'buycotting' currently, however most of them were positive about continuing or starting to consume politically in the future. All of them have ever participated in unconventional political acts, often through the internet and their social networks. The participants believe that signing petitions or demonstrating is not necessarily effective, but at least they can show their support this way. However, they were sure of the social change political consumption can bring. They compared traditional voting with voting with your wallet, concluding that voting with your wallet is more effective in the long-term but it cannot replace traditional voting, because it feeds the democratic system. It is interesting that the participants talked about traditional voting in relation to democracy, however never mentioned democracy in relation to political consumption nor political consumption in relation to citizenship. But would citizens be able to act as consumers with agency and choose their own responsible and ethical products and in turn also have actual influential outcomes without open markets and democracy?

## 5 Conclusion

This research aimed to explore how young Dutch citizens get information about the world and apply the information they have to their political participation activities, whether conventional or unconventional political participation. The main focus was on their political consumption and how that is linked to their web browsing activities. Therefore, the main research question was: *how is the political consumption of young Dutch citizens linked to their web browsing activities?* Through nine in-depth interviews, a thematic analysis was performed which found results that complemented previous studies or contradicted them, but also provided some new insights. The analyzed findings have shed light into how young citizens manifest themselves politically in the Netherlands.

Firstly, this research found that information about political consumption or topics related to political consumerism can be found anywhere, since information is all around us. The participants discussed information from news websites, news engines, blogs and social media regarding boycotts. They most often encountered articles online or news about big immoral disasters caused by big corporations, which get attention. While social media has a prominent role when it comes to young people's news and information consumption as well as offers a platform for political engagement, it was missing as a source in the discourse about political consumption (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Vromen et al., 2015; Xenos et al., 2014). As Neilson (2010) and Baek (2010) stress, researchers should not talk about political consumerism without dividing boycotters from 'buycotters', because they have different motivations and characteristics that are crucial for understanding their actions. Since 'buycotting' is an individualized form of political participation in the sense that people make individual choices about what to consume and the impact is often directly visible in the personal wallet, makes this form of political consumption somewhat invisible.

On the contrary, boycotting is more manifested, because it needs media attention and works out of the protest logic which makes it more visible (Neilson, 2010). The participants also mentioned that they did see boycott messages on their Facebook timeline of people that are creating awareness. However, they have never encountered people posting about what they are 'buycotting'. This can be explained by the two important characteristics of 'buycotters', altruism and generalized trust. The belief that others generally have good intentions and will do the same as you as well as making self-sacrifices for the greater good. When these two things are combined it can mean that people do not feel the need to post about it, because of their belief in generalized trust. Furthermore, it seems not morally righteous to post about your 'buycotting' actions since you are doing it for the greater good. It can also have certain implications, such as an implied judgement of people who do not 'buycott' and it also implies something about the social status of the person that 'buycotts'. Some people are not able to join the movement, because they simply do not have the

resources. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is not the social norm to post about 'boycotting' activities on social media. These people post consciously on social media, hence not about their ethically righteous activities to show people what they also should do, because that should not be a character trait of the 'boycotter'. While the 'boycotter' has a 'feel good' feeling, it can cause other people to feel bad about themselves. As was also visible in some participants' reaction, it is not appreciated when people spam with their meals, religious ideals, or their voluntary activities. People perceive it as a showing off, which takes the whole moral and ethical essence away.

Secondly, on the other hand, traditional voting was much influenced by their online news consumption and social media as well as traditional media use. While this research found that there is a lack of trust in the government and election outcomes under the young participants, most of them still voted. The biggest contributor to the final decision-making process of who to vote for are the VAAs. This was also visible in their Web Historian visualizations where one can see that right before the elections on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March 2015, the party websites and 'Stemwijzer.nl' were visited. While there has been research on VAAs in previous literature, the focus is mainly on how it effects voter turnout found through quantitative survey research. Through interviews this research found that the young participants mainly think it is a handy tool to help them with their decision as they are often caught in the middle of two parties. It gives them a clear overview as well as extra information that leads them to the party websites, which can foster political interest (Kruikemeier et al, 2014; Prior, 2010; Verba et al., 1995).

Thirdly, the self-reported level of political interest of the participants do not accurately reflect their political participation, since they had many different ways of manifesting themselves politically but also because of the social aspect and the comparison of the self with others regarding political and civic activity, as Menchen-Trevino (2012) also found. According to Ekman and Amnå (2012), scholars should also consider latent forms of political participation as well as people that are on stand-by or are in their pre-political face where each piece of information can trigger them to participate. Even if participants said they were not interested in politics, they actually often were, because all of them were very much interested in opposite political views and alternative political views. None of them avoided political information, on the contrary they seek it. According to Ekman and Amnå (2012), this is very important behavior that can actually lead to manifest political participation. The only thing some participants did avoid were immoral and unethical images or videos often related to war crimes as well as their household. Transitional constraints also effected their news consumption as well as their political consumerism. The participants are often limited in political consumption due to their student lifestyle in which convenience is key and money often missing.

## Limitations and Future Research

It is important to note that the limitations Web Historian (Version 1, 2015) offered influenced the complete image of the participants' actual web browsing behavior regarding their political consumption. First of all, Web Historian (Version 1, 2015) could not provide visualizations of their mobile browser and app use, which the participants used on a regular basis. Secondly, Web Historian (Version 1, 2015) could not provide what people actually do on social media, hence the actual practices. Which also would be very valuable, since Facebook is a big contributor to their news consumption. Lastly, the data that is analyzed is really time sensitive, since the visualizations only show a period of 90 days in which someone maybe was doing specific research, as was the case for some of the participants. Due to these limitations of the program one cannot be sure how exactly the participants' web browsing activities are linked to their political consumption. Hence, it would be valuable for future research to dive more into the actual practices of people online, like Kruikemeier et al. (2014) did, however focus more on their information selection processes and its influence on their political consumption through interviews. Furthermore, it would be interesting to research the outcome of the research question in terms of social media posting norms, the ethics of posting on social media about your political consumption, in particular 'boycotting'. What are these underlying social media posting norms?



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## 7 Appendix A: The Survey

Initial Report

Last Modified: 05/13/2015

### 1. Beste deelnemer,

Deze enquête zal u een aantal basis vragen stellen over uw surfgedrag, mediagebruik, stemgedrag en politieke belangstelling voor een MA scriptie onderzoek over politieke participatie. Het onderzoek is gericht op de politieke consumptie (bv. het boycotten van producten) onder Nederlandse jongeren (18-29 jaar oud) en de rol van het internet met betrekking tot deze vorm van politieke participatie. Naast deze vragenlijst zal er ook gebruik worden gemaakt van interviews en de resultaten die via Web Historian met ons gedeeld worden. Om de resultaten van dit onderzoek te optimaliseren zal er gebruik worden gemaakt van een visualisatie programma genaamd Web Historian (<http://webhistorian.org/>). Dit programma (alleen voor Google Chrome) zal een interactieve visualisatie van de web geschiedenis van de deelnemer verstrekken. Het doel is om een visualisatie te genereren van het surfgedrag van de deelnemers aan het onderzoek. Dit houdt in dat de web geschiedenis van de deelnemer gebruikt zal worden, echter in verband met privacy kan de deelnemer verwijderen wat hij of zij niet wilt delen. De deelnemer kan alle gegevens via de Data Tabel in Web Historian verwijderen die hij of zij niet wilt versturen. Als u deel wilt nemen aan dit onderzoek, vult u de vragenlijst in en installeert u Web Historian in uw Chrome browser. Ook kan het zijn dat u uitgenodigd wordt voor een interview. De vragenlijst zal ongeveer 15 minuten in beslag nemen en u kunt uw deelname op elk gewenst moment beëindigen. De gegevens blijven anoniem en uw identiteit zal niet gepubliceerd worden. U komt in aanmerking voor een vergoeding van 5 euro als u aan de volgende eisen voldoet: U hebt de Nederlandse nationaliteit en bent tussen de 18 en 29 jaar oud. U bent één van de mensen die uw surfgeschiedenis naar Aya Hashim ([aya.hashim23@gmail.com](mailto:aya.hashim23@gmail.com)) verstuurt. U heeft een Nederlandse bankrekening die nog niet eerder een betaling van dit project heeft ontvangen. Het verstuurde bestand gegenereerd via Web Historian bevat tenminste: 1.000 registraties van regelmatig surfen op het web Een tijdperiode van minstens 2 weken, Registraties van bezoeken aan ten minste 25 verschillende web-domeinen, Elk bewijs van gecreëerde surfgeschiedenis, dus niet "echte", is reden voor geen vergoeding. Als u vragen heeft kunt u contact opnemen met: Aya Hashim [aya.hashim23@gmail.com](mailto:aya.hashim23@gmail.com) 335423ah@student.eur.nl Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam Of (in het Engels) Dr. Ericka Menchen Trevino [menchentrevino@eshcc.eur.nl](mailto:menchentrevino@eshcc.eur.nl). Gaat u akkoord met de bovengenoemde voorwaarden?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Ja	63	91%
2	Nee	6	9%
	Total	69	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.09
Variance	0.08
Standard Deviation	0.28
Total Responses	69

**2. Heeft u toestemming om te stemmen in Nederland?**

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Ja		51	98%
2	Nee		1	2%
	Total		52	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.02
Variance	0.02
Standard Deviation	0.14
Total Responses	52

**3. Heeft u een Nederlandse bankrekening waarop u het bedrag van 5 euro kan ontvangen wanneer u deze studie heeft afgerond?**

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Ja		49	94%
2	Nee		3	6%
	Total		52	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.06
Variance	0.06
Standard Deviation	0.24
Total Responses	52



#### 4. Geboortejaar

##### Text Response

1992

1989

1991

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1992

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1989

1989

1989  
1985  
1990

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	52

### 5. Hoe bezoekt u websites?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Mobiele telefoon	40	89%
2	Kantoor computer (laptop of desktop)	19	42%
3	Thuis computer (laptop of desktop)	31	69%
4	Tablet (bv. iPad)	17	38%
5	Anders	1	2%

#### Anders

Bibliotheek computer

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Total Responses	45

### 6. Welke browser gebruikt u?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Chrome - Windows of Mac	36	80%
2	Internet Explorer	11	24%
3	Safari	12	27%
4	Firefox - Windows of Mac	10	22%
5	Android telefoon	17	38%
6	iPhone	7	16%
7	Andere smartphone (bv. Windows, Blackberry)	0	0%
8	Andere web browser (bv. Opera)	4	9%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	8
Total Responses	45

### 7. Geef een schatting van uw surfactiviteiten op verschillende apparaten. Het totaal moet gelijk zijn aan 100.

#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation
1	Mobiele telefoon	10.00	100.00	49.06	32.94
2	Kantoor computer (laptop of desktop)	2.00	100.00	37.53	31.35
3	Thuis computer (laptop of desktop)	10.00	100.00	50.30	28.53
4	Tablet (bv. iPad)	3.00	33.00	14.93	10.09
5	Anders	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Anders

**8. Geef een schatting van uw surfactiviteiten op verschillende browsers. Het totaal moet gelijk zijn aan 100.**

#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation
1	Chrome - Windows of Mac	8.00	100.00	63.57	30.80
2	Internet Explorer	10.00	100.00	34.88	33.46
3	Safari	2.00	100.00	38.91	30.07
4	Firefox - Windows of Mac	3.00	80.00	20.80	21.85
5	Android telefoon	5.00	100.00	45.20	32.23
6	iPhone	0.00	72.00	36.60	33.64
7	Andere smartphone (bv. Windows, BlackBerry)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
8	Andere web browser (bv. Opera)	5.00	12.00	8.50	4.95

**9. Als een vriend, familielid of een collega hulp nodig heeft met haar/zijn computer of software, hoe waarschijnlijk is het dat diegene u zou vragen om assistentie?**

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Erg onwaarschijnlijk	2	6%
2	Onwaarschijnlijk	1	3%
3	Enigszins onwaarschijnlijk	9	25%
4	Weet niet	2	6%
5	Enigszins waarschijnlijk	11	31%
6	Waarschijnlijk	6	17%
7	Erg waarschijnlijk	5	14%
	Total	36	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	7
Mean	4.58
Variance	2.82
Standard Deviation	1.68
Total Responses	36

**10. Geef aan hoe vaak u het volgende medium gebruikt om uzelf te informeren.**

#	Question	Nooit	Nauwelijks	Soms	Vaak	Meest gebruikt	Total Responses	Mean
1	Lokale krant	16	9	9	1	0	35	1.86
2	Regionale krant	16	9	9	1	0	35	1.86
3	Kwaliteitskrant (bv. Volkskrant, NRC, Trouw)	8	15	7	2	3	35	2.34
4	Populaire krant (bv. AD, Telegraaf)	12	10	12	1	0	35	2.06
5	Gratis krant (bv. Metro)	9	5	13	7	1	35	2.60
6	Tijdschriften	10	11	9	3	2	35	2.31

Statistic	Lokale krant	Regionale krant	Kwaliteitskrant (bv. Volkskrant, NRC, Trouw)	Populaire krant (bv. AD, Telegraaf)	Gratis krant (bv. Metro)	Tijdschriften
Min Value	1	1	1	1	1	1
Max Value	4	4	5	4	5	5
Mean	1.86	1.86	2.34	2.06	2.60	2.31
Variance	0.83	0.83	1.35	0.82	1.36	1.34
Standard Deviation	0.91	0.91	1.16	0.91	1.17	1.16
Total Responses	35	35	35	35	35	35

**11. Geef aan hoe vaak u het volgende medium gebruikt om uzelf te informeren.**

#	Question	Nooit	Nauwelijks	Soms	Vaak	Meest gebruikt	Total Responses	Mean
1	Lokale radio	19	9	4	3	0	35	1.74
2	Regionale radio	19	7	5	2	1	34	1.82
3	Nationale radio	8	9	10	3	3	33	2.61

Statistic	Lokale radio	Regionale radio	Nationale radio
Min Value	1	1	1
Max Value	4	6	6
Mean	1.74	1.82	2.61
Variance	0.96	1.42	2.06
Standard Deviation	0.98	1.19	1.43
Total Responses	35	34	33

**12. Geef aan hoe vaak u het volgende medium gebruikt om uzelf te informeren.**

#	Question	Nooit	Nauwelijks	Soms	Vaak	Meest gebruikt	Total Responses	Mean
1	Teletekst	21	7	5	2	0	35	1.66
2	Publieke omroepen	2	9	13	4	7	35	3.14
3	Commerciële omroepen	4	9	17	5	0	35	2.66
4	Regionale/lokale kanalen	14	6	11	1	3	35	2.23
5	Internationale kanalen	2	7	14	8	4	35	3.14

Statistic	Teletekst	Publieke omroepen	Commerciële omroepen	Regionale/lokale kanalen	Internationale kanalen
Min Value	1	1	1	1	1
Max Value	4	5	4	5	5
Mean	1.66	3.14	2.66	2.23	3.14
Variance	0.88	1.42	0.76	1.59	1.13
Standard Deviation	0.94	1.19	0.87	1.26	1.06
Total Responses	35	35	35	35	35

**13. Geef aan hoe vaak u het volgende medium gebruikt om uzelf te informeren.**

#	Question	Nooit	Nauwelijks	Soms	Vaak	Meest gebruikt	Total Responses	Mean
1	Krant websites	6	5	12	8	4	35	2.97
2	Tijdschrift websites	9	13	8	4	1	35	2.29
3	Radio websites	21	7	5	2	0	35	1.66
4	Omroep websites	16	8	7	1	3	35	2.06
5	Online nieuws websites (bv. nu.nl, spitsnieuws.nl)	5	4	9	11	6	35	3.26
6	Blogs	10	8	13	2	2	35	2.37
7	Websites van politieke partijen	23	5	4	3	0	35	1.63
8	NGO websites	22	6	5	2	0	35	1.63
9	Zoekmachines	0	5	10	9	11	35	3.74
10	Email, SMS, of andere bericht applicaties (bv. WhatsApp, Viber)	3	1	8	10	13	35	3.83

Statistiek	Krant websites	Tijdschrift websites	Radio websites	Omroep websites	Online nieuws websites (bv. nu.nl, spitsnieuws.nl)	Blogs	Websites van politieke partijen	NGO websites	Zoekmachines	Email, SMS, of andere bericht applicaties (bv. WhatsApp, Viber)
Min Value	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
Max Value	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	5
Mean	2.97	2.29	1.66	2.06	3.26	2.37	1.63	1.63	3.74	3.83
Variance	1.56	1.15	0.88	1.58	1.67	1.30	1.01	0.89	1.14	1.50
Standard Deviation	1.25	1.07	0.94	1.26	1.29	1.14	1.00	0.94	1.07	1.22
Total Responses	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35

**14. Sommige mensen stemmen tegenwoordig om de één of andere reden niet. Heeft u tijdens de laatste verkiezingen in 2012, 2014 en 2015 gestemd?**

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Ja, alle	15	44%
2	Nee, geen	13	38%
3	Tweede Kamerverkiezingen	9	26%
4	Gemeenteraadsverkiezingen	6	18%
5	Europese Parlementsverkiezingen	6	18%
6	Provinciale Statenverkiezingen	3	9%
7	Niet stemgerechtigd	0	0%
8	Weet niet	0	0%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Total Responses	34



**15. Hoe geïnteresseerd bent u in de politiek? Bent u...**

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Heel erg geïnteresseerd		9	26%
2	Tamelijk geïnteresseerd		12	35%
3	Nauwelijks geïnteresseerd		7	21%
4	Helemaal niet geïnteresseerd		4	12%
5	Weet niet		2	6%
	Total		34	100%












Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	2.35
Variance	1.39
Standard Deviation	1.18
Total Responses	34

**16. Heeft u bepaalde producten geboycot in de afgelopen 12 maanden?**

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Ja		11	32%
2	Nee		17	50%
3	Weet niet		6	18%
	Total		34	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	1.85
Variance	0.49
Standard Deviation	0.70
Total Responses	34

**17. Wat is het hoogste opleidingsniveau dat u succesvol heeft beëindigd? We spreken over succesvol beëindigd indien: een formeel certificaat is uitgereikt na een toetsing die aangeeft dat men voor de cursus geslaagd is. OF een cursus of onderwijsperiode is volledig gevolgd maar er is nooit een certificaat uitgereikt. OF een cursus of onderwijsperiode is volledig bijgewoond en er is een certificaat van deelname is uitgereikt (en geen andere certificaten, voor bijv. het behalen van de cursus).**

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Basisschool niet afgemaakt		0	0%
2	Alleen basisschool afgemaakt		0	0%
3	LBO, VBO, LEAO, LTS ambachtsschool, huishoudschool, LHNO, VM		0	0%
4	MULO, ULO, MAVO, VMBO (niveau 4; theoretische leerweg); HAVO		2	6%
5	KMBO, leerlingwezen, MBO niveau 1, MEAO, MTS afgemaakt		0	0%
6	HAVO, MMS, MSVM afgemaakt		3	9%
7	VWO, HBS, atheneum, gymnasium afgemaakt		1	3%
8	MBO niveau 2 en 3 afgemaakt (duur 2-3 jaar)		0	0%
9	MBO niveau 4 afgemaakt (duur 4 jaar)		1	3%
10	MBO-plus voor havisten afgemaakt		1	3%
11	Propedeuse WO, OU-certificaat		5	16%
12	Bachelor HBO afgemaakt		5	16%
13	Bachelor universiteit afgemaakt		4	13%
14	HBO: Master's degree, tweede fase opleidingen; Post HBO-opleiding		1	3%
15	WO/universiteit: Master's degree, tweede fase opleidingen		8	25%
16	Doctoraat/gepromoveerd		1	3%
	Total		32	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	4
Max Value	16
Mean	11.53
Variance	11.87
Standard Deviation	3.45
Total Responses	32

### 18. Geslacht

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Man	11	34%
2	Vrouw	21	66%
	Total	32	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.66
Variance	0.23
Standard Deviation	0.48
Total Responses	32

### 19. Om de rol van het internet met betrekking tot informatievergaring en nieuwsconsumptie beter te begrijpen, zullen een aantal deelnemers uitgenodigd worden voor een interview. In welke taal zou u een interview kunnen voeren?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Alleen in het Nederlands	8	25%
3	In het Nederlands of Engels	24	75%
	Total	32	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	2.50
Variance	0.77
Standard Deviation	0.88
Total Responses	32




**20. Vul uw emailadres in voor meer informatie en/of als u wenst deel te nemen aan het interview. Dit moet hetzelfde emailadres zijn dat u zult gebruiken om uw bestand van Web Historian te mailen.**

**Text Response**

winglamlui@gmail.com  
tinaasnafy@msn.com  
tashanasnafy@gmail.com  
moshganwahedi@gmail.com  
Omrjacobson@gmail.com  
tamara4terzic@gmail.com  
m.rebaz@hotmail.com  
berivanasnafy@hotmail.com  
Duaa@live.nl  
0887767@hr.nl  
Mm.maro@live.com  
fatemaraufi@hotmail.com  
najibullah\_deventerboy@hotmail.com  
jatinderkaur91@hotmail.com  
info.delft@gmail.com  
Malalaih@live.nl  
s.dostzad@gmail.com  
test@test.nl  
samirmrabet@outlook.com  
h29alhabboubi@yahoo.nl  
Hamayun@live.nl  
okkidekat@live.nl  
anne.dirkson@hotmail.com  
arie\_43@hotmail.com  
faezehmoallemzadeh@hotmail.com  
winglamlui@gmail.com  
saskia.vd.put@hotmail.com  
alessandrocardinali@msn.com  
moshw@live.nl  
v.meliksetian@hotmail.com  
v.meliksetian@hotmail.com  
tamara4terzic@gmail.com

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	32

**21. U moet de visualisatie extensie op een Chrome browser op de computer gebruiken (niet op een mobiele apparaat). Hoeveel andere mensen (exclusief uzelf) hebben de desbetreffende Chrome browser (uw Chrome browser) de afgelopen 3 maanden gebruikt?**

#	Answer		Response	%
1	1 andere persoon gebruikt deze browser		2	15%
2	2 of meer personen gebruiken deze browser		3	23%
3	I do not use the Chrome web browser		0	0%
4	0 - I am the only person who uses this web browser		8	62%
	Total		13	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	3.08
Variance	1.58
Standard Deviation	1.26
Total Responses	13

**22. Hoeveel (in percentage) gebruikt u deze browser vergeleken met de andere persoon/mensen die het ook gebruiken? Het totaal moet gelijk zijn aan 100.**

#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation
1	Jij	30.00	97.00	76.40	27.15
2	Andere persoon of mensen	3.00	70.00	23.60	27.15

### 23. Vragen of opmerkingen? (optioneel).

#### Text Response

Succes Aya! You da bomb

Te veel antwoorden in deze vraag, Kung je hier niet beter 2 losse van maken? Sommige mensen stemmen tegenwoordig om de één of andere reden niet. Heeft u tijdens de laatste verkiezingen in 2012, 2014 en 2015 gestemd?

Na

This is a test entry

Geen

Ik sta open om geïnterviewd te worden en mijn waardes uit te leggen , indien dat van toepassing is bij mij. Voor de rest kan je geen web historian downloaden, omdat er geen link beschikbaar is. Zelfs niet voor de Alfa.

ik wens liever niet deel te nemen aan het interview

succes!

geen.

Je komt er wel, niet zo stressen :)

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	10

## 8 Appendix B: The Interview Guide

### Introduction (approximately 3 minutes)

1. Thank the participant for their participation/introduce myself.
2. Describe the purpose of the interview:
  - a. I want to find out more about how people select or come across (political) information online and how they get to know things about the world.
  - b. I'll be asking for your help to understand the survey and the Web Historian visualizations.
  - c. The interview will have three parts, first we'll focus on how you get information from the media, then we'll talk about political participation and in the end we'll discuss your Web Historian visualizations.
3. Reminder that the study will be confidential and the participants' identity will not be reported. Plus I will record the interview with my phone.

### Background information respondent (approximately 2 minutes)

First, tell me a bit about yourself. Where are you from, what do you do etc.? What are your interests? E.g. name, age, educational background, job, hobbies.

### Media (approximately 20 minutes)

- a. Starting out, I'd like you to take me through a typical day and describe how you get news or information about what's going on in the world. Some people wake up on the morning and get some kind of information, other people might do that more in the evening. How about you?
  - i. What kind of news outlets?
- b. Which source or news outlets from the ones you use is the one you'd miss the most if it went away--you'd feel less informed without it?
- c. Do you remember why you started using (the source mentioned)?
- d. Do you think you would miss anything if you just inform yourself online or would you prefer something else?
- e. Which devices do you use the most to surf online?
  - i. Why do you prefer those?
- f. How would you describe your online activities?
- g. Which websites do you use to inform yourself? (Refer to previous answer).

- h. What is the news website that you'd miss the most if it went away--you'd feel less informed without it?
- i. Do you remember why you started using (the site mentioned)?
  - i. (If not) Do you remember when you started getting news online? Was it a gradual process or did something change when you started getting online news?
- j. How important would you say online news is to you? (Refer to previous answer).
- k. If online news were not available is there any kind of news that you can get online that you can't or don't get elsewhere or is it the same *kind* of news online?
- l. Do you use Facebook or any other social networking sites for news?
  - i. (If so) Do you know if your SNS friends share your political beliefs?
  - ii. (If beliefs differ) Do you ever hesitate to post something on the SNS because your friends have different views?
  - iii. Do you ever get information from those with different political views on SNS?
- m. Do you ever share news stories with other people on SNS, forums or email? What kind of stories?
  - i. Do others share news stories with you?
  - ii. Do you ever contribute to any kind of website, whether comments, stories, pictures, videos or music?
- n. Is there any news source that you try to avoid?
  - i. How do you avoid it?
  - ii. (If only non-political reasons for avoiding were mentioned) Is there anything (else, if something was mentioned) you won't watch because of their political views?

**Politics & Political participation** (approximately 20 minutes)

- o. Did your political views influence your choice to begin consuming (named news media)?
  - i. Do you think your political views influence your news media choices in general?
- p. Do you ever look for the opinions of people who disagree with you on political issues?
  - i. (If so) Why? (Is it to find out what the other side thinks so that you can win an argument, or because their views are absurd and amusing to you, or are you trying to find out and would be open to changing your views?)
- q. Do you think that the information that you consume online influences your political views?



- r. In the survey you say that your level of political interest is..., how can you explain that?
- s. What does “being political” mean to you?
  - i. How would you describe your political views?
- t. What about your political participation? Do you actively participate in elections for example or campaigning, membership, donating etc.?
  - i. See survey for voting activity. Look at visualizations.
  - ii. How important do you find voting?
  - iii. How do you decide who to vote for?
  - iv. Did you search for information online for last elections?
- u. There are also other ways to participate politically, which are seen as unconventional ways, such as boycotting, occupation, demonstrating and signing petitions. Have you ever participated in any of these acts? Why or why not?
  - i. Would you in the future?
  - ii. What about ‘boycotting’? (explain boycotting)
  - iii. What do you think about acts of political consumption in general or of the people that consume politically?
    - 1. Do you think it will make a difference (long-term)?
- v. Have you ever participated in such activities due to a post online?
  - i. If so, what was it about and why did it influence you?
- w. What do you think it means to be a citizen?
  - i. How about a bad citizen? What do you think would make someone a bad citizen?
  - ii. How do you fit into those portrayals? Do you think of yourself as a good citizen?
  - iii. Are there things a good citizen should do that you don’t do yourself? Why not?
- x. Do you feel like you have any responsibilities or obligations as a citizen?
  - i. What kind?
- y. Would you consider yourself an engaged citizen? Why or why not?
  - i. How do your political activities play a role in this or not?

**Reflection on visualizations** (approximately 10 minutes)

- 2. When you look at your visualizations, how would you say they reflect what you do online. What do these visualizations mean to you?
  - a. How would you describe your network?
  - b. What about the websites visited (circles)?

- c. Do your search terms reflect what you are doing or what you are interested in?
3. How would you describe yourself by looking at these three visualizations?
4. What is the most surprising or confronting thing that these visualizations show?
5. What did you think about Web Historian before and after you tried it?

**End**

Thank you for your participation.