



Operation Dudula

D I S C O U R S E A N A L Y S I S

-across social media platforms-

B Y F R I E K E D E R A A D T

Communication in Africa

MA African Studies 2023

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Introduction and Methodology

For the purposes of this discourse analysis I have looked at the most commonly used social media platforms in South Africa to gain more insight on the online communication strategy of **Operation Dudula**. In addition I have looked at the most commonly read news platform by South Africans to analyse the discourse between platforms led by Operation Dudula, and how they are presented in the news.

Research Question:






What methods of communication does Operation Dudula use across different social media platforms? What is the level of engagement across these platforms?

Most commonly used social media platforms in South Africa:

1		facebook.com
2		instagram.com
3		twitter.com
4		tiktok.com
5		whatsapp.com

SimilarWeb (2023)

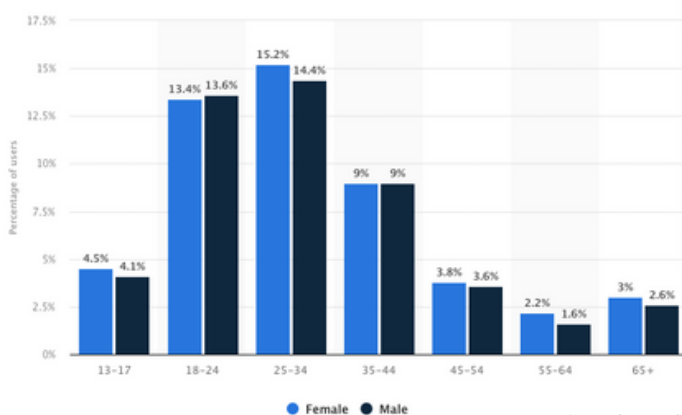
Most commonly used news platforms in South Africa:

1		news24.com
2		iol.co.za
3		yahoo.com
4		citizen.co.za
5		thesouthafrican.com

SimilarWeb (2023)

This discourse analysis will look at Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), TikTok, and Whatsapp. I have also chosen to include one news platform source to take a brief look at how Operation Dudula is presented to South African news readers. Since News24 is the most commonly read news platform among South Africans, I have chosen to use it for this particular discourse analysis.

Distribution of social media users in South Africa as of January 2023, by age group and gender



Statista (2023)

Interesting to take into account that the highest percentage of social media users are between the ages of 18-34. This is also the age group that experiences the highest level of unemployment (upto 42%). However, I was not able to find the percentage of the average age of the members part of the Operation Dudula movement. It might be an interesting link to keep in mind as the discourse analysis unfolds.

Background Information

Operation Dudula

What is Operation Dudula?

Operation Dudula is most commonly defined as a vigilante anti-immigrant organisation in South Africa.

How did Operation Dudula start?

The organisation Operation Dudula emerged as a splinter group of the “Put South Africans First” movement. This movement started as a social media campaign against immigrants and found its expression on ground through Operation Dudula. It was founded shortly after the Soweto uprising in July 2021 with **Nhlanhla “Lux” Dlamini** as their leader (although he left the movement in July 2022 due to differences in opinion). The movement initially targeted drug traffickers and businesses that involved illegal foreigners.

The foundation of Operation Dudula led to the emergence of other anti-immigrant movements among the working-class communities. These movements went under the same or similar names as Operation Dudula. These movements emerged specifically in the provinces Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal (2 of the 9 provinces in South Africa) and later spread to other regions across the country.

Since May 2023, Operation Dudula became a **political party** and they will contest in the 2024 national elections.

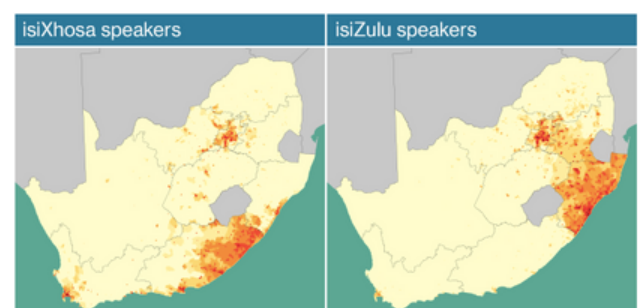
Reasons for scapegoating foreigners and/or illegal immigrants

The biggest reason is that Operation Dudula members/followers believe foreigner/illegal immigrants are ‘taking’ their jobs. The average unemployment rate in South Africa is nearly 34% and even higher (42%) between the ages 25-34. So this is a very sensitive issue for South Africans. Another big issue is housing and the level of crime occurring, whereby Operation Dudula members believe immigrants are to blame.



What does ‘Dudula’ mean?

Dudula comes from the isiZulu Language, one of the 11 official languages of South Africa. ‘**Dudula**’ means to “**force out**” or “**knock down**” - in this case referring to “forcing out the African immigrants.” The two most spoken languages are **isiZulu** (22.7%) and **isiXhosa** (16%). As Operation Dudula emerged in the provinces Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal, it could provide an explanation for the isiZulu word choice.



<https://southafrica-info.com/>



FACEBOOK

General Analysis

When diving into the Facebook Discourse analysis, I realised there are countless “Operation Dudula” pages and groups. So hereby a quick overview of the first results that emerge when searching for the ‘official’ Operation Dudula facebook platform.



Operation Dudula Groups

Countless facebook groups with the name “Operation Dudula” - it is an endless scroll through Operation Dudula groups, including groups that were made for specific regions “eg. Operation Dudula Western Cape.” Some groups are public and others are private or require a short ‘screening’ process to become a member. There is a wide variety of number of followers for these groups.

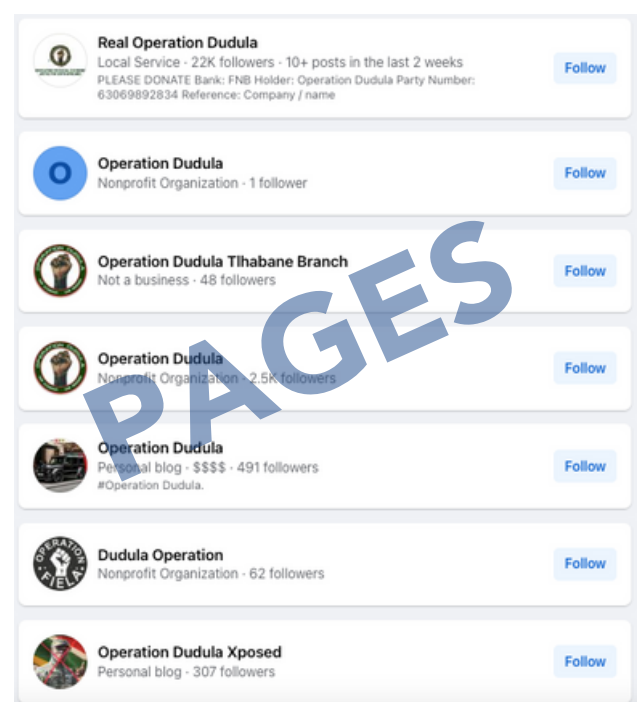


Operation Dudula Pages

Countless facebook pages with the name “Operation Dudula.” Just like the groups, they have specific Operation Dudula pages for different regions across South Africa. Just like with the Facebook Groups there is a wide variety of number of followers of these pages, ranging from thousands to as little as two followers.

Facebook Group vs. Facebook Page

A **Facebook Group** usually allows for members to create their own posts and raise topics for discussion. A **Facebook Page** is typically run by an organisation or company whereby only they can create the posts and followers can only contribute through comments. Terminology difference - Groups have members, Pages have followers.





Operation Dudula Group



Followers

28.9K members



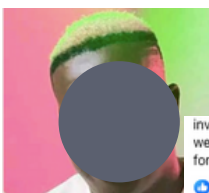
Language

English & Zulu

This **Facebook Group** is highly contaminated with spam of personal messages or people trying to get attention through posting personal pictures with phone numbers. In addition, there is a lot of 'hate speech' towards foreigners, yet at the same time there are also people posting comments against Operation Dudula. Many comments are in Zulu language. There is little to no information in regards to Operation Dudula posters, updates, announcements.

Hate messages towards foreigners

No South African is ugly, what is this, is this baboon from Zimbabwe???



investigate everyone with an ID. If we find that they have obtained it due to fraudulent activities we hang them/kill them publicly for breaking our law. The death penalty should apply to foreigners who do as they please in our... See more

19

People destroy our Country is

Zimbabweans

Mozambiqueans

Nigerians

Tanzanians

Especially in Mpumalanga, Gauteng, Limpopo, and North West

Remember that Operation Dudula is the most feared formation in the townships by the ANC. This is the only pro South African political entity that talks the language of the poor. Let's galvanise the ground platforms and take back the country from Zimbabwean control.

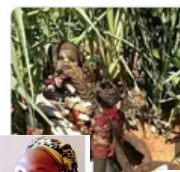
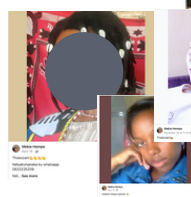
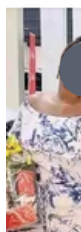
Xenophobia is when foreigners go to another Country just to kill Citizen, vandalize the infrastructure, **traffic** human, sell **drugs** and **poisoned food**, hijack buildings and cars.

Personal messages (spam) & messages related to making quick money



"Hello, my name is 0693260828, I always take her home in Cape Town, I want to tell you that I have been poor for a long time, I am looking for quick money, I just threw away my money after seeing the post of another sister..."

- translated from Zulu language



Real fast money - Send your name and surname and your account and a photo of your child with 600 lights now - Inbox grandma now

-translated from Zulu language

Messages against Operation Dudula

Dudula thugs must fall, they are the ones killing innocent people,

The problems with you locals is that you don't want to work, lazy, if you get paid, you spend the whole week drinking beer, AWOL at work, that's why investors employ foreigners.

Without foreigners, RSA will fall, foreigners are helping paying tax for locals to get 350 grant, but you have a nerve to say foreigners must go, fuck

60 comments 1 share



3

Thank you sir for letting them know the difference between foreigners and illegal foreigners, these dudula people where bzy shouting that all foreigners must go and forgetting that they are also South Africans in other countries

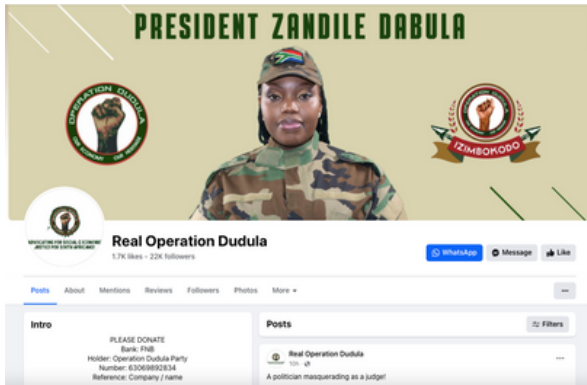
Even if all foreigners are gone, you are going to remain poor coz u will still go and look for a job from a white person who is a foreigner again

Operation Dudula Posters



December 14 at 11:18 AM

Here is the future president of South Africa Amaaandla



Followers

22K followers



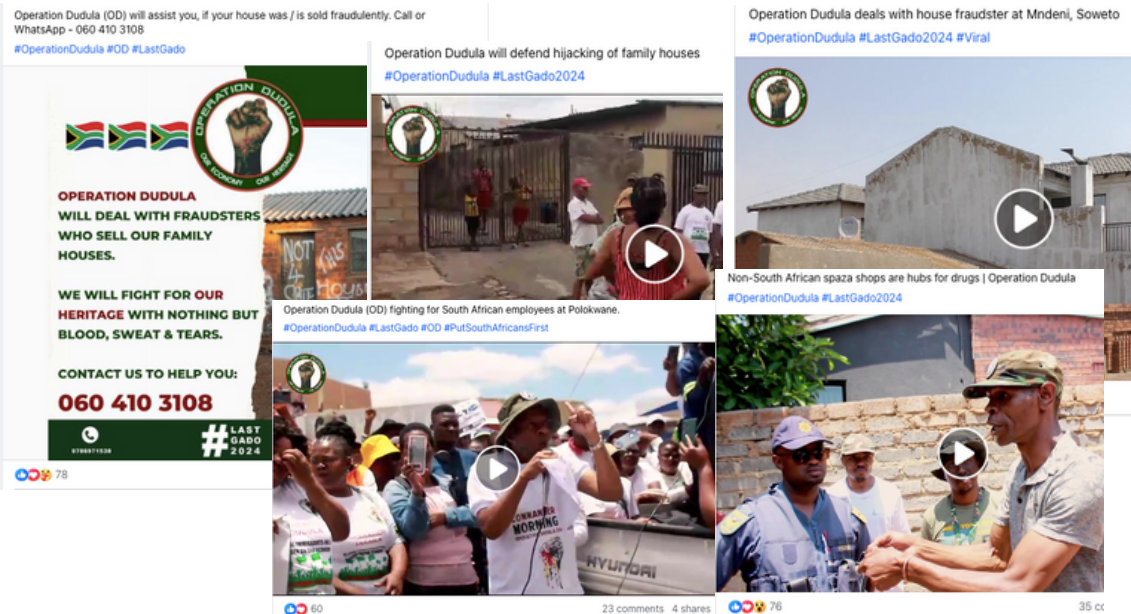
Language

English & Zulu

The Facebook Operation Dudula Page is aiming to align their posts with the other social media platforms. There is much use of video content to engage followers and provide updates on actions Operation Dudula has partaken against foreigners/illegal immigrants. Their messages seem to say that “everyone is welcome” yet it is clear they mean only South Africans.

Messages scapegoating foreigners

These posts are all updates related to housing issues, spaza shops being run by foreigners, and updates on getting rid of foreigners. Many of the posts related to updates have an attached video with the Operation Dudula logo in the corner.



Messages related to Operation Dudula updates & announcements

Interesting that they state “everyone is invited” - making them seem like a welcoming organisation. All announcements also have an attached poster with the Operation Dudula logo and the link to their social media handles at the bottom to catch the viewers attention.





INSTAGRAM

@realdudula



realdudula Follow Message ...

184 posts 96 followers 3 following

Operation Dudula

Military veterans and umphakathi #OperationDudula



Housing



Pres Zandile...



Events



Township Ec...



Immigration



O.D News



Followers

96 followers



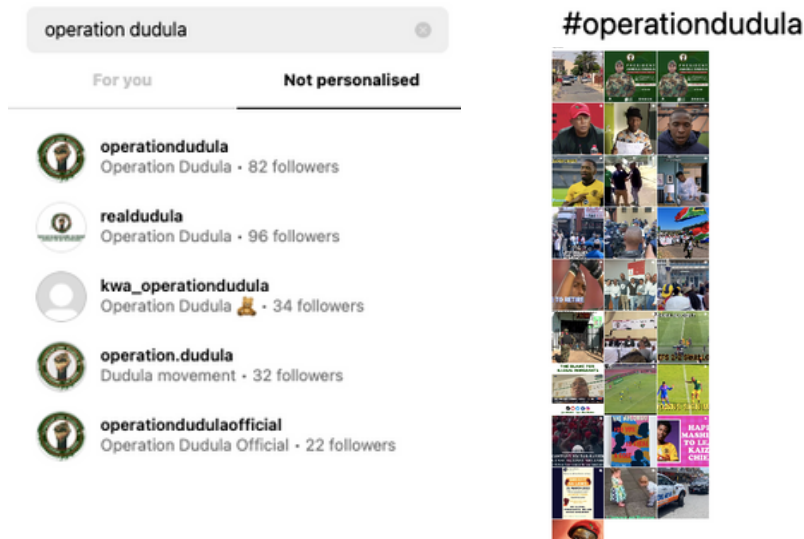
Language

Poster in English
Some videos in Zulu

There is very little engagement on Instagram and it is not clear to me why exactly this may be. It seems there is a high level of engagement on TikTok and X (Twitter). Most of the posters are the same ones as posted on facebook. Interesting because where the focus lies heavily on Zimbabweans on the Facebook platforms, on instagram there seems to be a higher focus on Bangladesh and Pakistani foreigners.

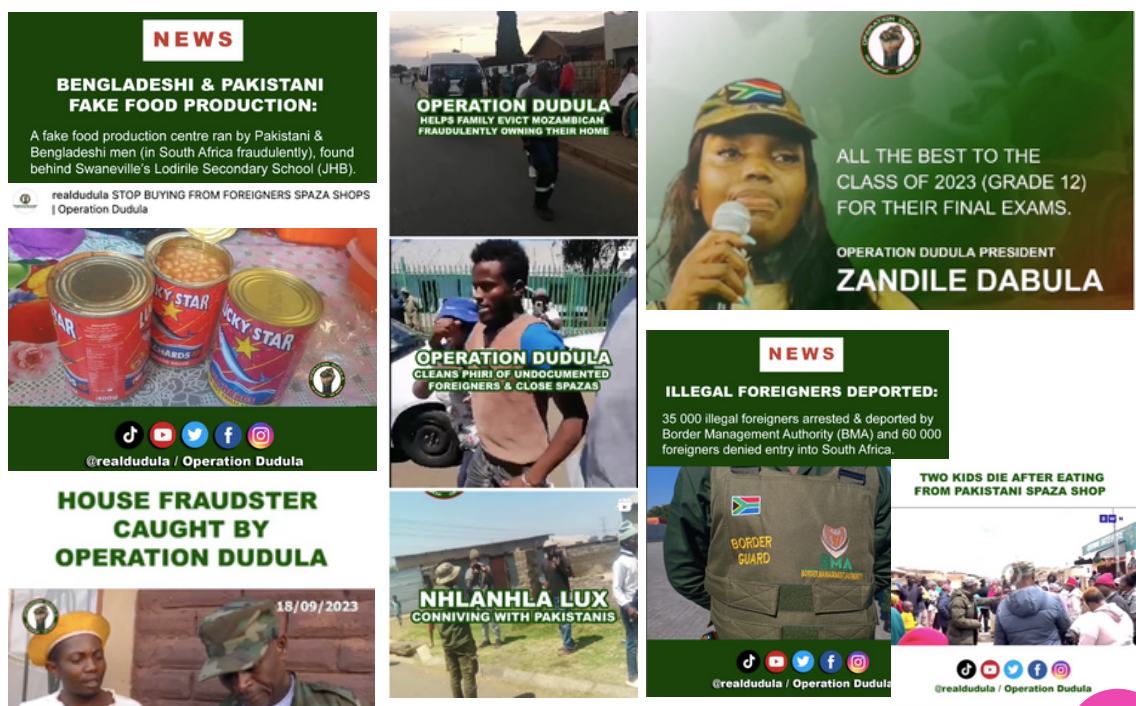
Instagram reach

For some reason (unknown to me), instagram does not have a high following or much activity related to Operation Dudula. Only 5 pages popped up when searching for 'Operation Dudula' and even the hashtag (#OperationDudula) only showed 28 posts.



Messages related to Operation Dudula updates & announcements

Interesting that they state "everyone is invited" - making them seem like a welcoming organisation. All announcements also have an attached poster with the Operation Dudula logo and the link to their social media handles at the bottom to catch the viewers attention.

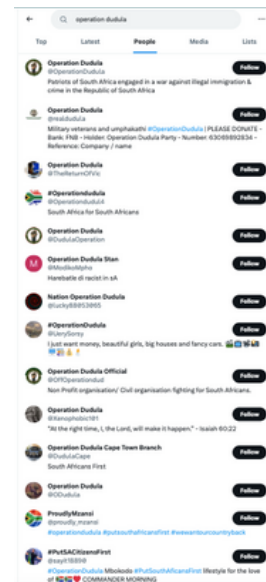




X (Twitter)

General Analysis

When diving into the X (Twitter) platform, I also came across a wide range of Operation Dudula pages. Although it seemed like @realdudula was the official page, the @OperationDudula page seemed much more active and had a higher following, Therefore I have chosen to look at this page for this particular discourse analysis.



A screenshot of the various related pages that popped up when searching "Operation Dudula"



@realdudula

1,731 Followers

This is the X (twitter) handle that is referred to across the 'official' Operation Dudula pages. It seems Operation Dudula is trying to streamline their communication, however other pages such as @OperationDudula have already been existing for much longer and therefore have a much higher following. The posts on this page are the same as the posts on the Facebook page and the Instagram page.



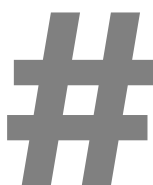
@OperationDudula

26.8K Followers

Although it says the page opened in December 2015, when scrolling all the way down - their first post was posted on 1 February, 2022. There is a high level of engagement and activity on this page, and since it has the biggest following I will focus on this page for the discourse analysis.



#OperationDudula



When typing #OperationDudula in the search bar there are thousands of posts that pop up. The most recent ones relating to the upcoming elections and overpowering ANC (African National Congress) during the 2024 national elections



Followers

26.8K followers



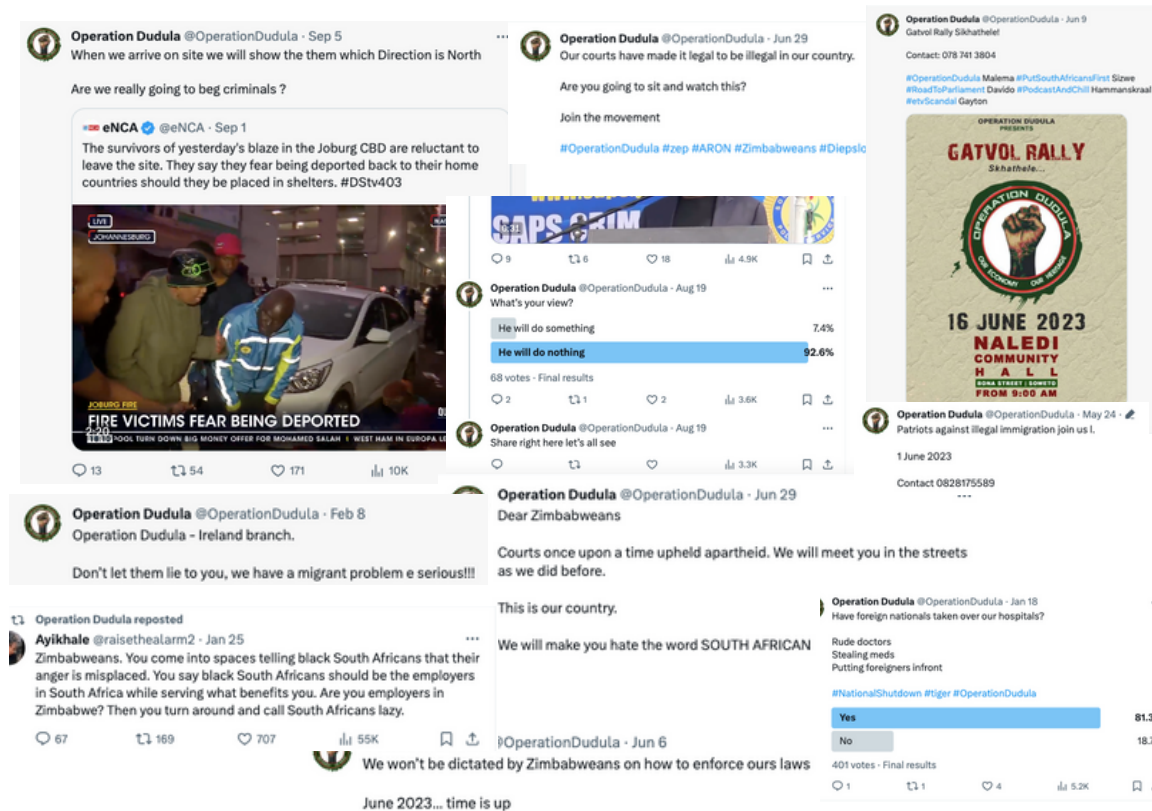
Language

English is the dominant language used on X

X (Twitter) uses a wide range of creative tools to increase the level of engagement on the platform. The Zimbabweans are the most scapegoated nationality on this platform and they use 'direct messages' to 'attack' them online. In addition the platform is also used to give updates on the actions taken against illegal foreigners

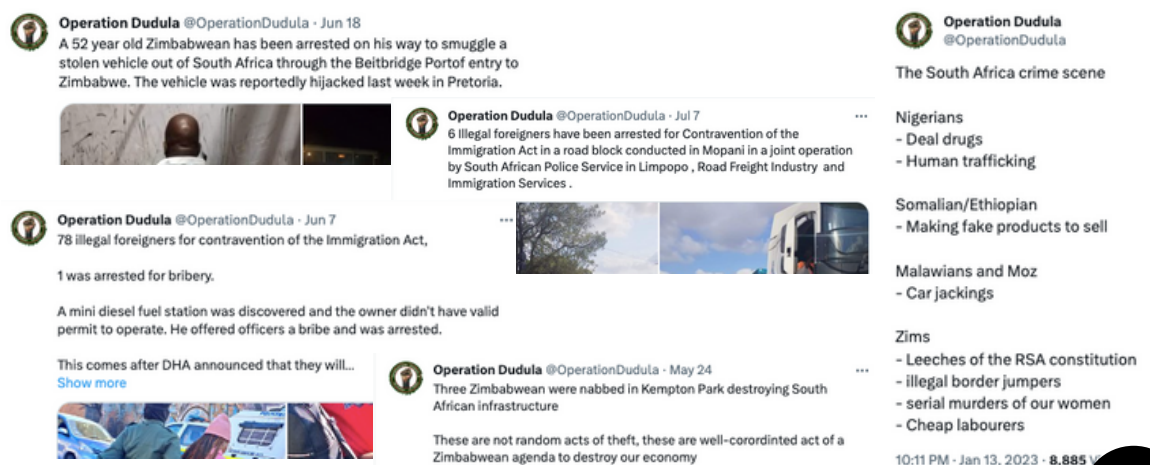
Tools for Engagement

There is a high level of engagement on this platform through tools such as “polls”, “questioning”, and adding phone numbers to contact. This triggers the viewer to partake in conversations on and actions beyond the platform. They also use ‘direct messages’ to Zimbabweans to trigger reactions, and repost comments from followers



Updates on illegal foreigners

Many updates with specific details and pictures of the foreigners who were caught or arrested. Scapegoating foreigners as the reason for the crime scene in South Africa





TikTok



realdudula

Operation Dudula

Follow

5 Following 38.6K Followers 149.2K Likes

Military veterans and umphakathi #OperationDudula



Followers

38.6K followers



Language

English is the dominant language used on X

TikTok has the highest level of engagement and also the highest number of followers compared to all the other social media platforms. It is the newest social media platform and the short videos seems to provide a high level of engagement among the South African followers. The videos are viewed by thousands, with hundreds of comments below. Most pressing issues mentioned on this platform are; scapegoating the immigrants for housing issues, job issues, and crime-related issues.



Posters with announcements



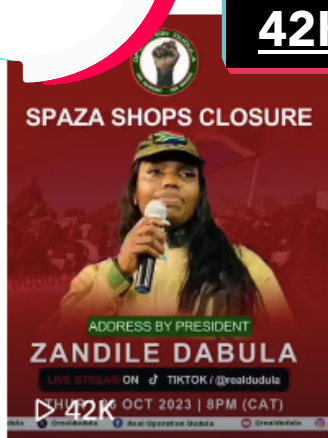
Expressing the frustration of South Africans towards immigrants



Operation Dudula fighti...



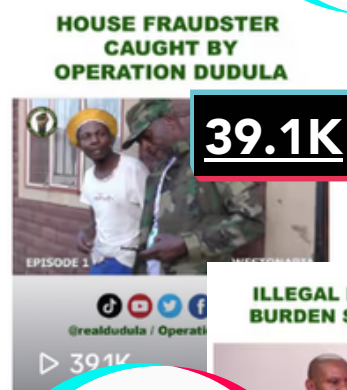
Posts related to mass deportation of illegal immigrants



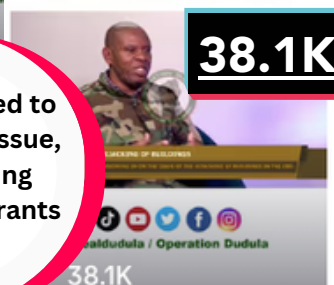
Operation Dudula (O.D) ...



Songs sang in Zulu language, name of post "Remember South Africa"



Videos related to the housing issue, scapegoating illegal immigrants



Messages convincing people to join Operation Dudula whatsapp groups

realdudula
Operation Dudula · 8-13

Follow

Operation Dudula cares. Join our WhatsApp Group, if you've loved ones affected by drugs <https://chat.whatsapp.com/LDZ09e0ICTKB4xcPa7uGua>

original sound - Operation Dudula



Whatsapp

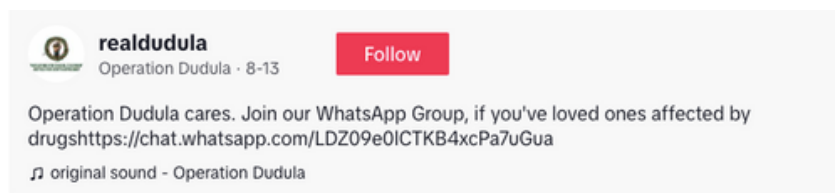
Whatsapp is a difficult platform to get access to for the purposes of a discourse analysis. According to the **BBC Eye documentary “Fear and Loathing in South Africa”** whatsapp is ‘Operation Dudula’s’ main platform for communication and the operationalisation of specific events or attacks.

Evidence has also been found that various whatsapp groups and messages were used during the July 2021 unrest. It has also been said whatsapp groups have been used to “incite followers to seize businesses owned by foreigners” (DefenceWeb, 2023).

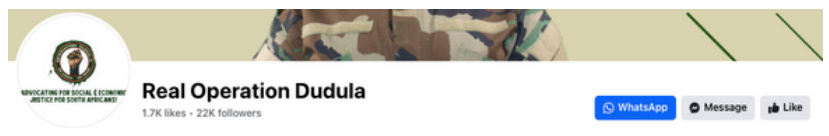
Whatsapp across the media platforms



Various posts pushing followers to “join the Operation Dudula whatsapp groups”



Direct buttons linking to whatsapp groups & posts with whatsapp group links



Instagram did not have any mentioning of whatsapp groups. It did however have a number you could call on each of the posters posted on their page



No direct comments or posts about whatsapp, however sometimes posts included a phone number that can be called.

news24
Trusted News. First

The news24 discourse analysis showed that ‘whatsapp’ was mentioned as one of the top 50 words in a word cloud analysing the posts related to Operation Dudula. Most recently ‘whatsapp’ was discovered as the platform that was used to instigate violence to chase out foreign nationals from Durban



- A Durban man part of the infamous Operation Dudula group has been convicted of inciting violence.
- Philani Gumede was convicted under the Cybercrimes Act after he sent a voice note to fellow members to chase out foreign nationals from Durban.
- Violence emerged in the Durban CBD following his voice note which he admitted to sending to fellow Operation Dudula members.

News24 is the most widely read news platform among South Africans. To delve deeper into their representation of 'Operation Dudula' I typed the organisation name in the search bar and did a discourse analysis of the results that popped up.



of articles posted

198 posts (16 June 2021 - 21 December 2023)

Two outliers: 14 Feb 2005 & 4 April 2007

ANALYSIS OF THE TWO OUTLIERS

2005

"Van Vuuren said the four suspects, aged 17, 18, 24 and 25 were arrested as part of Operation Dudula. This is an operation in Umfolozi where police co-operate across police district boundaries for "greater impact" and to crack down on crime."

2007

*"The raid was a joint effort by police, Johannesburg metro police, the Department of Trade and Industry and several musicians from the **anti-piracy group, Operation Dudula**. The musicians included poet Mzwakhe Mbuli, Afro-pop king Ringo Madlingozi, and gospel singer Deborah Fraser."*

Despite not being an official organisation/movement, it seems the term was used prior to the formation in 2021. The two outliers mention Operation Dudula as an 'anti-crime' and 'anti-piracy' movement, however it is unclear if these groups were part of the foundation of the official 'Operation Dudula' movement that emerged in July 2021.

Word Cloud

The word cloud is a representation of the most common words found in the titles of the 198 posts that showed up when searching for 'Operation Dudula.' The word cloud only represents the top 50 most commonly used words.



Some observations:

- **Lux, Dlamini & Nhlanhla = Nhlanhla 'Lux'**
Dlamini was the founder of Operation Dudula in June 2021, however he left the organisation in July 2022 as he didn't fully agree with the direction of the organisation. He was anti-crime, but not anti-foreigner
- **Soweto, Joburg, Diepsloot, Alexandra = all are places found in the Gauteng province, where Operation Dudula was founded and still seems to be most active**
- **Xenophobic, vigilant, violence, threat, fear =** these terms do not correspond with Operation Dudula's initial aim of being anti-crime
- **Jobs =** is a word that appeared frequently as this is also a major reason for Operation Dudula members to be anti-foreigner, they feel foreigners are taking their jobs (sensitive issue due to high unemployment rates in SA)
- **Whatsapp =** was the only social media platform word that appeared in the top 50 most frequently used words. This indicates again the important role whatsapp plays in the mobilisation of Operation Dudula's activities
- **Zimbabweans =** are the only nationality that was frequently mentioned and appeared in the top 50 words. It seems they are the most scapegoated nationality across all platforms, including News24

RECAP



Followers: 28.9K (group) & 22K (page)

- Facebook Group: unserious discussions, mostly text posts and written comments - high engagement through comments
- Facebook Page: Dudula announcements and updates. Very multi-modal - written text, posters, and video posts
- Foreigners: much focus on Zimbabweans



Followers: 96 (*lowest following across the platforms*)

- Same posters as the Facebook page (announcements & updates)
- Use of visual posters and video reels - very little written text
- Focus on housing, spaza shops, and the importance of the education of South African students
- Little to no engagement in comments
- Foreigners: more emphasis on Bangladesh and Pakistani



Followers for @OperationDudula: 26.8K

- Despite Operation Dudula trying to streamline their communication strategy through the @realdudula page, the highest following is on the @OperationDudula page
- Use of polls, questioning, reposting comments, and posting contact numbers to engage the viewer and lead them to action on the platform but also beyond the platform
- Direct messages to Zimbabweans to trigger reactions



Followers for @realdudula: 38.6K

- High level of engagement with the highest number of views of their posts compared to the other social media platforms
- Hundreds of comments
- Large focus on housing, mass deportation ideas, and updates on arresting illegal immigrants
- Videos in Zulu languages and video posts of Zulu songs against foreigners



Unclear how many groups or messages are circulating the web

- Across all social media platforms, followers are pushed to engage with Operation Dudula through their whatsapp details
- BBC Eye Documentary about Operation Dudula called “Fear and Loathing in South Africa” states that whatsapp is their key form of communication to mobilise various events and announcements
- Also mentioned frequently as a platform used by Operation Dudula in articles posted by News24



Most widely read news platform for South Africans

- Operation Dudula is presented as a violent, vigilante, anti-immigrant movement
- High focus on Zimbabweans in their articles, little to no mention of other nationalities in the titles of articles related to Operation Dudula
- More frequent articles that relate Operation Dudula to places in the Gauteng province - little to no mention of other regions in the titles

Final Remarks

The highest level of engagement and number of followers across the platforms is on TikTok. The posts and videos are viewed by thousands of people with hundreds of comments below. X (Twitter) and the Facebook Group also have high levels of engagement, but to a lesser extent compared to TikTok. The Facebook Group contains a lot of spam and personal messages, whereas the engagement and content on X (Twitter) is all related to Operation Dudula and their aim of “forcing out” foreigners. Apart from Instagram (where the focus lies more on Bangladesh/Pakistani), there is a heavy focus on scapegoating and singling out the Zimbabweans across all social media platforms, including the news platform News24. Most of the posts across all platforms focus on the housing issue, job issue, and crime issues through scapegoating the foreigners/illegal immigrants.

X (Twitter) uses the widest range of engagement tools; questioning, polls, contact numbers, and reposting comments - but TikTok still has the highest level of engagement. This could be because it is a rapidly growing social media platform with approximately 70% of their users between the age of 18-34 (Oberlo, 2023). Interestingly enough this is also the age group with the highest unemployment rate, going at approximately 42% (Woughton, 2022). Unfortunately I was not able to find out the average age group of Operation Dudula members.

Limitations:

I spent a long time trying various programs to find ways of analysing the word frequencies across all platforms for a more detailed, technological, and accurate discourse analysis. However despite trying various programs; AntConc among other free online web versions, I was not able to get a full breakdown of the word frequencies for the social media platforms. Possibly because of privacy reasons, causing a ‘blockage’ in the system. For the news platform I found a way around the system by highlighting all the text and pasting this into a word frequency program. Due to the high multi-modality of the social media platforms, I was not able to highlight texts as a lot of the text was in video or poster format. Despite the limitation of the word frequency analysis for the social media platforms, I was still able to analyse the conveyed messages and compare and contrast excerpts across the different social media platforms.

Future Research Ideas:

- Dive deeper into a discourse analysis across the top 5 news platforms and demographics of the news platform readers
- Find ways to get more insight onto the Whatsapp situation of Operation Dudula
- Further analyses the demographics of the followers across each platform - what are the similarities & differences, and which followers are present on all platforms
- Compare and contrast the Operation Dudula movements in the different provinces of South Africa

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