WEEK 4

DIGITAL BUZZ

SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS OF THE #LGE2026



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Introduction

Moxii Africa continues its weekly monitoring of South Africa's digital public sphere in the lead-up to the 2026 Local Government Elections (LGE), tracking how citizens, candidates, and political parties are engaging in political conversation online. As one of the most consequential elections for citizens and communities, the LGE determines who takes responsibility for the service delivery of local municipalities many of which are underservices and under-resourced.

This fourth edition of the LGE Digital Buzz report covers a pivotal week in the election calendar: the candidate nomination deadline, which closed on 29 August 2026. As parties raced to finalise their candidate lists and the IEC managed disputes over the nomination process, online conversation shifted from open campaigning to the administrative mechanics of the election itself, this report is a reminder that public interest in the LGE extends beyond party rivalry and includes the institutional processes that determine who ultimately appears on the ballot.

Insights and Trends framing this week

- There were 38 210 mentions this week. This is almost a 50% drop in last week's mentions of 62 900 mentions.
- Our findings suggest this decline is largely explained by the candidate nomination deadline for the 2026 local government elections, which closed at 5pm on 29 August 2026.
- Coverage and public discussion surged in the days leading up to the cutoff as parties scrambled to finalise their lists, then dropped sharply once the deadline passed and attention shifted from active candidate announcements to administrative review.
- A dispute between the ANC and the IEC over technical issues with the online nomination system also drive a short-term spike ahead of the deadline. The IEC denied any extension or system wide failure and once that dispute settles conversation cooled while parties awaited final candidate lists.
- With nominations finalised and thousands of candidates disqualified for missed deadlines or compliance failures, coverage has moved into a quieter administrative phase ahead of manifesto launches and active campaigning, which are expected to drive the next rise in mentions later in September.

About Moxii Africa's Election Work

Moxii Africa has monitored every democratic election in South Africa since 1994, bringing three decades of independent, evidence-based media monitoring to safeguard information integrity. For #LGE2026, Moxii Africa anchors the Partnership on Information Integrity in Elections (PIIE) —working in partnership key stakeholders and with the IEC to safeguard information integrity in elections. Other election work focuses on tracking media coverage, monitoring political party ad spending via PAdRe, and holding candidates accountable.

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- The public are demanding stronger accountability, saying an independent commission should check whether institutions are being loyal to the public, handling evidence fairly, and pushing for justice reform.
- Herman Mashaba distanced his party Action SA from the ANC-led government of National Unity clarifying that his group's earlier vote doesn't endorse the Speaker's conduct or serve as political cover for the ANC
- Online chatter linked Ramaphosa's Soweto campaign to calls for compulsory youth military training as a discipline measure.
- Ramaphosa pledged to arrest and prosecute those responsible for violence against foreign nationals amid continued anti-immigration protests.
- BOSA confirmed it will contest 24 municipalities across five provinces, formalising Mmusi Maimane's party as a real multi-provincial contender ahead of the election day.
- The ANC promoted its ESKOM turnaround as a core campaign message crediting the Energy Action Plan and the Ministry of Electricity with ending load-shedding and securing reliable supply.
- Julius Malema drew significant engagement for comments framing land dispossession as originating with colonial-era settlement.
- Ramaphosa held direct community engagement in Jabulani, Soweto, discussing sector concerns against ANC Manifesto 2026 commitments.

Key Findings
What People are talking about



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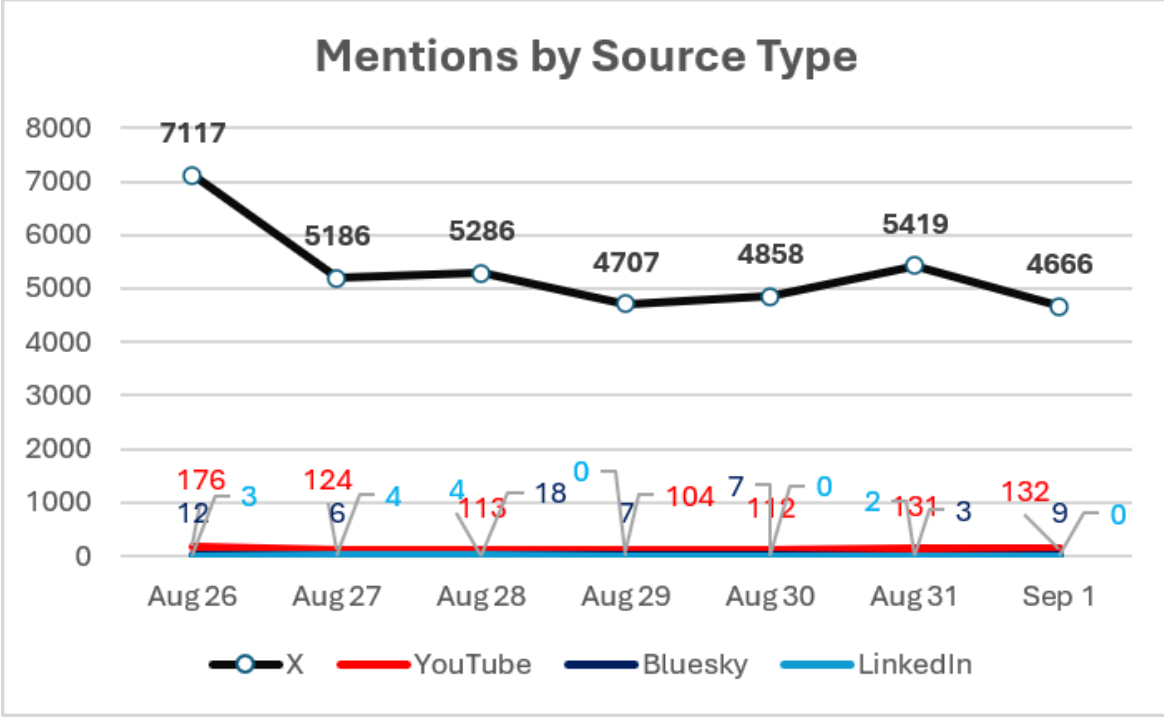
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- Conversation remains anchored around the ANC, EFF and government broadly with Cyril Ramaphosa and Julius Malema continuing to dominate visibility.
- Hashtags such as #voteeff, #voteanc2026, #anc, and #southafrica remain consistent from previous weeks' briefs showing sustained campaign-hashtag activity from both major parties.
- New hashtags emerged this week, including #voetsekanc, #thankyoueff, #effingovernment, @ancmanifesto, and #lestbuildbettercommunities.
- This suggests that campaign messaging is evolving alongside the ongoing party rivalry.
- Johannesburg, Tshwane, Gauteng, Easter Cape, and Free State shows the conversation playing out at both local and provincial level.
- Institutional and governance terms like the constitutional court, government and party were featured prominently in the word cloud and in the broader conversation.
- References to illegal foreigners continue to appear alongside the broader political conversation.
- This week's discussion also saw the emergence of #madlangacommission and Cat Matlala, both breaking into prominence for the first time.
- They are tied into wider conversations about corruption and patronage networks, appearing alongside the more established debates around parties and leadership.

Mentions Over Time



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Overview: X carried effectively all the volume in mentions again this week. Over 99% of daily mentions across all tracked platforms were carried by X. Facebook, Instagram, and Threads continued to produce less results as cross-referenced from META's Content Library.

Peak Activity: Mentions peaked on 26 August at 7,117 before gradually dropping to 4,666 by the end of the period, suggesting the conversation is slowing down but still active.

Post-Peak Decline: Volume dropped sharply the next day (27 August) and then held in a relatively narrow band for the rest of the week. That's a much flatter pattern than what we saw in earlier weeks.

Drivers for the decline: The drop is due to a combination of administrative delays, internal party disputes, and heightened society concerns. The ANC also missed the IEC's candidate registration deadline and became consumed by internal disputes and legal challenges. There were also delayed candidate and mayoral announcements that left most of the public awaiting clarity. All this coincided with the decline of engagement on platforms.

Top 10 Authors

	Accounts	Mentions	Estimated Views	Engagement	Reach
1	Slaughter.	49	215K	11.1K	2.44m
2	Thabo	1	66.9K	9.31K	13.2K
3	Max	7	135K	5.71K	67.9K
4	Sandz.	5	119K	5.55K	151K
5	knick	6	49.9K	5.28K	166K
6	John Galt	1	46.1K	5.02K	14.5K
7	Herman Mashaba	38	519K	5K	30.2m
8	Revolutionary Gansta 💚	5	42K	4.1K	276K
9	MDN NEWS	8	177K	3.46K	2.84m
10	Born-in-SAza	10	50.8K	3.38K	205K

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- The account "Slaughter." led this week's authors by engagement for the week and is an account that formed as part of the top 10 authors for the second consecutive week.
- The account's output this week was dominated by high-frequency reposting of a single source account, largely reinforcing this week's ANC/candidate-registration and Madlanga Commission narratives.
- Mentions from this account rose from 43 to 49, engagement more than doubled from 4 590 to 11 100. This suggests that the account moved from the middle in the last week to the single highest engagement account this week.
- Herman Mashaba's reach nearly doubled from 27 million to 30.2 million, but this was largely volume-driven rather than a sign of stronger interaction.

- He posted around 55 times over the week, averaging about 8 posts per day. This was well above his usual cadence.
- The surge was driven by ActionSA's poster-unveiling tour across Joburg, Tshwane, Cape Town, and Ekurhuleni.
- It was also boosted by a wave of birthday retweets from provincial ActionSA branches. Finally, he shared daily ward-level door-to-door content adding to the volume.

Call to Action for public the public and platforms

This week's monitoring confirms that online conversation ahead of the 2026 Local Government Elections is intensifying. The debate remains anchored around the ANC and EFF. It is increasingly shaped by institutional accountability narratives with growing attention on the Madlanga Commission and allegations linked to Cat Matlala. A persistent xenophobia flashpoint continues to surface in the discourse. Meanwhile a small number of high-reach accounts are driving outsized visibility and shaping much of the conversation.

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CONTACT US

For any questions, comments, or clarifications, please contact Moxii Africa Formerly Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) from Media Monitoring Africa on (011) 788 1278 or email:keamos@mma.org.za

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