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CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CommGAP	Communication for Governance and Accountability Programme
ComTask	Communication Task Group on government communications
DG	Director General
GCIS	Government Communication and Information System
ICT	Information Communication Technology
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OGP	Open Government Partnership
PGCIS	Provincial Government Communication and Information Service
SACS	South African Communication Service
SMS	Short Message Service
SPSS	Statistical Product and Service Solutions (formerly Statistical Package of Social Sciences)
TSCs	Thusong Service Centres
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

The constitution of the Republic of South Africa mandates the public administration – herein referred to as government – to be accountable [and to] foster transparency … "by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information" (South Africa 1996:s 195.108: 107). Through the words timely and accessible, it is inferred that such information should be available within easy reach at all times (Collins English Dictionary 1999; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015). Accordingly, for communication to be effective, the process thereof should be two-way – reciprocal – as this will ascertain mutual understanding of the intended message (Drenth, Thierry & De Wolff 1998; Cleary 2003; Horwitz 2004; Koontz & Weihrich 2007). However, despite the evolution of the communication phenomenon, the South African government prefers to continue utilising the outdated old or tradional media channels in communicating with the citizens (South Africa. GCIS 1996; Horwitz 2004; Ramodibe 2014; South Africa 2015).

The implication is that over-reliance on one-way old media channels could hinder effective communication with the citizens. Thus, given that there is no certainty that the messages transmitted are mutually understood by both the South African government and the citizens – owing to the usage of one-way communication channels – there is a high possibility of ineffective communication (South Africa. GCIS 1996; Horwitz 2004; Ramodibe 2014; South Africa 2015). This may effectively result in the government failing to fulfil its constitutional mandate of being accountable and transparent to the citizens. Various studies have proved the old media channels elicit one-way communication, as opposed to two-way communication produced by new media channels (Rogers 1983, 1995; Salwen & Stacks 1996; Yates 2001; Duhé 2007; Kituyi-Kwake & Adigun 2008; Lekhanya 2013; Tracey 2014; Stahl & Caprano 2014; Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart &

Madden 2015; Mcbride & Respaut 2015). In this regard, the diffusion of myriad platforms of mass media within communities offers endless opportunities to realise effective communication (Williams, Rice & Rogers 1988; Salwen & Stacks 1996; Pillay 2015). The term mass media is composed of two words, namely, 'mass' and 'media', with the former referring to 'many' and the latter being the plural for medium, and referring to the means or channel of transmitting information (Collins English Dictionary 1999; BusinessDictionary.com 2014; Cambridge Dictionaries Online 2015; Sociology Central 2011). To this end, mass media refers to various mediated information dissemination platforms which are capable of reaching a large number of people simultaneously (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur 1976; Crosbie 2002; Herman & Chomsky 2008; Sociology Central 2011).

It can be classified into old (or traditional) and new mass media, with the former encompassing one-way passive communication channels such as television, books and magazines, and the latter encompassing two-way interactive communication channels such as social media networks (Sociology Central 2011). In motivating for the significance of mass media in mass communication, Katz, Gurevitch and Haas (1973: 164) argue that "the mass media are ranked with respect to their perceived helpfulness in satisfying clusters of needs arising from social and individual dispositions." This is evidenced through technological innovations such as computers which have enabled the development of the Internet and have thus "open[ed] up the potential for 'many-to-many' communication, where a mass audience can, simultaneously, interact and communicate with each other" – making communication possible (Sociology Central 2011: 1).

New media such as social media can thus be referred to as new mass media because it provides for 'many-to-many' interactive two-way communication which solicits feedback from the message received (Crosbie 2002). Accordingly, the new media has been credited as a catalyst towards effective communication, given its ability to provide instant feedback which is necessary to ascertain that

the intended meaning of a message is mutually understood by both the sender and the receiver (Eisenberg & Goodall 1997; Pandey & Garnett 2006; Shockley-Zalabak 2006; Garnett, Marlowe, & Pandey 2008). This has resulted in the majority of people having now turned to new media as their primary source of information (Salwen & Stacks 1996; Abbott & Yarbrough 1999; Pratt 2000; Yates 2001; Livingstone 2002; Croteau & Hoynes 2003; Jenkins 2006; Duhé 2007; Cunningham 2010; Ikpe & Olise 2010; Logan 2010). The preference of the new media, over the old media, by many people, can be attributed to technological advancement which has been credited for improving communication and information dissemination (Callon 1991; Kling, McKim, & King 2003; Ngenge 2003; Pikas 2006; Mbatha 2011; Fichman & Rosenbaum 2014; Kumar 2014). This study thus establishes the extent of the diffusion of new media within South African communities, with particular focus on the Province of Mpumalanga, and further establishes whether the one-way old media channels utilised by the South African government hinder effective communication with the citizens.

1.2. Conceptual setting

There is consensus that technological advancement offers endless opportunities to connect human beings with each other through Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) infrastructure (Callon 1991; Kling *et al*, 2003; Ngenge 2003; Pikas 2006; Mbatha 2011; Fichman & Rosenbaum 2014; Kumar 2014). This is because "technology is never finished, and its ramifications are endless" (Callon 1991: 132). By endless ramifications, it is implied that ICTs are forever evolving and consequently, offer users improved and endless uses and benefits, which could ultimately improve their socio-economic well-being. They are "embedded in complex and dynamic networks of social, cultural, organizational [*sic*], and institutional contexts" (Fichman & Rosenbaum 2014: 19). ICTs have thus become significant catalysts towards realising economic growth and development of countries, the world over (Callon 1991; Kling *et al* 2003; Pikas 2006; Fichman & Rosenbaum 2014). The term 'Information Communication Technologies' (ICTs) is an overarching term which refers to a wide range of communication devices

and applications such as computer-based and mobile phones electronic mail (e-mail) supported by network hardware, software and satellite, amongst others (Kling *et al* 2003; Ngenge 2003; Pikas 2006; Mbatha 2011; Kumar 2014; Fichman & Rosenbaum 2014). It is "a compound term that is used to refer to the convergence of a wide array of new technologies presently being developed and used in the creation, processing and transmission of information" (Mbatha, Ocholla & Le Roux 2011: 2). Pikas (2006: 13) further expands the definition to refer to "communication tools built into scientific tools and experiments such as sensor networks, grid computing, remotely-operated telescopes and observation devices, visuali[s]ation and virtual reality tools, and telemedicine tools." As such, it could be described as the means to disseminate information electronically, to a vast number of people, by utilising channels such as the Internet, wireless networks, and mobile phones, amongst others (Marcelle 2000; Ngenge 2003; Kituyi-Kwake & Adigun 2008; Mbatha 2011).

In supporting this view, Kumar (2014: 1020) asserts that "the Internet is the latest of a long series of information technologies, which includes printing, mail, radio, television and the telephone". To this end, ICTs are able to break geographical or distance barriers thus improving communication and overcoming historical information dissemination challenges (Mbatha 2011). Furthermore, according to the World Youth Report (2003: 311), there are two (2) major assumptions underlying the role of ICT; that is, "the proliferation of these technologies is causing rapid transformations in all areas of life; and that "[the] ICT function [is] unify[ing] and standardis[ing] culture". Fichman and Rosenbaum (2014) support these views by arguing that the use of ICTs has diffused profusely within communities because "networked devices have become routine information appliances in people's social lives", thus making new media a significant source of information and communication, and further becoming the desired socialisation platform. Mudombi (2013) further argues that ICTs have a significant role of being the medium for the dissemination of information due to their inter-connectivity and vastness, while Thioune (2003) argues that ICTs are well-known for their ability to transform communities. Livingstone (2002: 30) argues that "young people's

lives are increasingly mediated by information and communication technologies" and this is not different in South Africa. To this end, ICTs are the backbone of South Africa's economy, with the country being Africa's tele-communications leader, and accounting for 40% of the continent's telephone infrastructure (Thioune 2003). The advancement of ICTs therefore assist to bridge the information divide, and will thus assist organisations to keep in touch with their stakeholders, including employees (Fichman & Rosenbaum 2014). On the upside, there is huge investment in ICT infrastructure in South Africa which could assist to address the historical information divide, especially in rural areas, thus contributing towards improving government communication with citizens (Montealegre 1999; Mutula & Mostert 2008; Mbatha 2011). This has resulted in South Africa being the dominant and Internet connectivity hub for surrounding Southern African Countries, with its mobile penetration recorded at around 65% in 2011 (South African Yearbook 2010).

Thioune (2003: 1) asserts that "ICTs have made it possible to find fast access to, and distribution of information". It can thus be argued that technological advancement has the capacity to transform and improve communication between individuals, groups and organisations (Lievrouw & Livingstone 2006; Mbatha 2011). The advantage in this regard, is that well-informed stakeholders, are likely to share and adopt their organisation's vision thus assisting it to reach its goals and objectives (Hopkins 2006; Smith & Mounter 2008; Gall 2009; Verghese 2012). Kituyi-Kwake and Adigun (2008: 127) add that "ICTs are grouped under two categories: 'traditional' and 'new'. The traditional (old) ICTs constitute non-electronic media such as print and analogue technologies … [whereas] 'new' ICTs consist of computers … through their use (email, Internet … cellular phones, wireless technologies)".

Cunningham (2010) supports this view by referring to old ICTs as non-computer or non-web-based one-way and non-reciprocal slow communication platforms encompassing newspapers, books and television, amongst others. Thus, new ICTs are regarded as mobile, faster, instant and interactive in nature (Friedman

& Friedman 2008; Ikpe & Olise 2010; Cunningham 2010; Rand Media Group 2015). Some of the identified benefits of utilising new ICTs is their ability to share or disseminate information in real-time and instantly, at low cost, their interactivity (enabling feedback), time saving and globalisation (Ngenge 2003; Kituyi-Kwake & Adigun 2008; Mbatha 2011; Mudombi 2013). In this regard, by being interactive, the new ICTs provide a platform for feedback which makes it easier to establish whether the transmitted message was understand as intended (Rice & Associates 1984; Pratt 2000; Livingstone 2002; Logan 2010). This is based on the assertion that effective communication can only take place when the underlying meaning of a message is mutually shared by the sender and the recipient (Berlo 1960; Mehrabian & Morton 1967; Rogers 1983, 1995; Pearson 1983; Fielding 2006; Krile 2006; Barnlund 2008).

Hall (1980) explains the process of understanding the underlying meaning of a message through his 'Encoding/Decoding' model of mass communication. Encoding – in the communication process – refers to the process of imbedding meaning into a message to be communicated whereas decoding refers to the process of extracting meaning from a message received (Hall 1980; Chandler 1994). According to Hall's (1980) 'Encoding/Decoding' model, the conceptualisation (encoding) and understanding of meaning (decoding) of messages take place in stages which he has termed as 'moments', arguing that they are critical towards the realisation of a successful communication process. These "linked but distinctive moments [are] – production, circulation, distribution/ consumption, [and] reproduction" (Hall 1980: 128). Corner (1983) has further classified these 'moments' into three stages.

The first one is 'the moment of encoding' which he explains as "the institutional practices and organi[s]ational conditions and practices of production" (Corner 1983: 266). The second one is 'the moment of the text' which refers to the "symbolic construction, arrangement and … the form and content of what is published or broadcast" (Corner 1983: 267). The third and last one is 'the moment of decoding' which refers to the recipient's understanding of the underlying or

shared meaning of a message facilitated by an interactive rather than a passive medium of communication (Corner 1983). To this end, there is a notion that new ICTs are synonymous with economic growth and development of countries, the world over (Callon 1991; Kling *et al* 2003; Ngenge 2003; Pikas 2006; Mbatha 2011; Mudombi 2013; Fichman & Rosenbaum 2014). In South Africa, in particular, indications are that these forms of new media platforms – ICTs – supported by massive telecommunications infrastructure, have diffused profusely with communities in such a way there was over-dependence and over-reliance on them as primary sources of information (Thioune 2003; Montealegre 1999; Mutula & Mostert 2008; Mbatha 2011; Fichman & Rosenbaum 2014). This is explained through the *Diffusion of Innovations* theory, which seeks to explain what causes new technology or ideas to spread in the manner it does (Rogers 1983, 1995).

The theory asserts that the diffusion of a new technology is influenced four (4) elements, namely, (a) innovation (itself), (b) communication channels, (c) time, and (4) the social system (Rogers 1983, 1995, 2003; Sahin 2006). Simply put, communication or information-sharing creates awareness; time sustains it; whilst societal believes lead to an innovation to be put on trial. Eventually, when people derive some benefits from an innovation, they are more likely to adopt it as part of their culture. However, not all people are likely to adopt an innovation at the same time, hence they are classified into five (5) categories, namely, (1) the innovators, (2) early adopters, (3) early majority, (4) late majority, and (5) the laggards (Rogers 1983, 1995, 2003; Sahin 2006).

In this regard, for an innovation to be adopted, it must have a relative advantage; be compatible (with the beliefs and needs of the potential adopter); be user-friendly or easy to use (not complex); be trialable; and observable (Rogers 1983, 1995, 2003). This theory is discussed in detail in Chapter three. Evidently, with the exception of face-to-face communication, technological advancement or innovation is the backbone of the information sharing or the communication process, in this information or new media age (Ropolyi 2013). By implication, the

utilisation of appropriate channels of communication could potentially result in effective communication taking place.

1.3. Government communication as a constitutional mandate

Governments across the world have a statutory responsibility to constantly communicate with their citizens by informing and consulting them on operations and services at the disposal of citizens, to improve their socio-economic status (Viteritti 1997; Horwitz 2004; Young 2007; Piotrowski & Van Ryzin 2007; CommGAP 2011; Pasquier 2012; South Africa. GCIS 2015; United Kingdom. GCS 2015). Quebral (1975, 2001) refers to this as development communication because the intention behind it is to empower individuals and communities with information which they can use to improve their socio-economic well-being. Accordingly, OECD (1996: 7) indicates that "for a democracy to operate effectively, the government must communicate with the citizens … They have a right to know what government … [is] doing, and why administrative decisions are made. [Of significance, is that] the information provided … must be credible and timely". This effectively makes communication the umbilical cord linking any government with the citizens.

Government communication can thus be explained as information dissemination and sharing activities by public sector institutions aimed at informing citizens about the services at their disposal, and to further keep them abreast of developments which are geared towards improving their lives (Rapoo 1998; Horwitz 2004; Young 2007; Pasquier 2012; South Africa. GCIS 2015; United Kingdom. GCS 2015). Howlett (2009: 24) argues that government communication can be referred to as the process involving "the use of government informational resources to influence and direct policy actions through the provision or withholding of 'information' or 'knowledge' from societal actors." Stromback and Kiousis (2011) and Sanders and Canel (2013) have a differing view on what government communication is all about. They describe it as political public relations which political parties in government purposefully utilise, or even

abuse, to justify why they were elected by citizens. Sanders and Canel (2013: 7-8) add that political parties in government utilise government communication systems to keep the public's loyalty and trust … [by] engag[ing] in conversation with citizen voters over a long period of time." In expanding their definition, Sanders and Canel (2013) argue that government communication can be explained and understood from three (3) perspectives; namely, (1) the political communication perspective, (2) public relations/relationship building perspective, and (3) perspective on building democracy. The political communication perspective focuses on five (5) theoretical perspectives; namely, the rhetorical analysis of political discourse, propaganda studies, voting studies, mass media effects and the interplay of influence between government, press and public opinion. Through the political perspective, government communication is viewed as a mechanism to garner votes from the electorate (Sanders & Canel 2013).

The public relations or relationship building perspective asserts that effective communication can only be realised through sound relationship between an organisation and its publics. The perspective on building democracy advocates for transparency and accountability. In essence, the political party in government has the obligation to report back to the electorate regarding the progress made in implementing the will of the people – the citizens. This concurs with the view by Javuru (2010: 1) that government communication "involves the development of customer oriented services and building capacities for citizens with reliable feedback mechanisms. [Thus] neglecting to provide information to the public represents a serious impediment to good governance".

Accordingly, good governance can only be attained through transparency and accountability which can be made possible by constant communication with the citizens in a democratic setting (Viteritti 1997; Piotrowski & Van Ryzin 2007; CommGAP 2011). Horwitz (2004) takes the matter further by indicating that communication with the electorate (citizens) underpins democracy, and also stresses the need for dialogue between government and the citizens. James Madison's popular belief is that "a democracy can't survive without its citizens

having access to information"; hence the existence of government communication machinery the world-over (City Government Transparency [sa]: 1). Pasquier (2012) classified government communication into two (2) forms; namely, active and passive. Active government communication refers to "all information that is provided, unhidden and generally in an organised fashion, to the public or specific target groups by the authorities and the administration" (Pasquier 2012: 1). On the other hand, passive government communication refers to reactive dissemination of information which is normally enforced through enabling and applicable legislation, like South Africa's Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 (Pasquier 2012). Pasquier (2012) further argues that most communication activities of government are active because they are self-planned and financed.

Consequently, government communication can be classified into three (3) types; namely, (1) government-wide communication, (2) institutional communication, and (3) crisis communication (Pasquier 2012). Government-wide communication involves both political and administrative communication activities; institutional communication, or public relations, focuses on strengthening the credibility (reputation) and visibility of government; whereas crisis communication deals with allaying fears and instilling confidence in case of a crisis. According to Pasquier (2012: 2), government communication activities could "either [be] of a political or a public-oriented nature". Political-oriented government communication can be used to entrench new policies whereas the public-oriented one can be used to make citizens aware of government services at their disposal (Canel & Sanders 2012).

The functions of government communication, amongst others, involve keeping the public informed about policy priorities and explaining and motivating for decisions (Rapoo 1998; Young 2007; Howlett 2009; Javuru 2010; CommGAP 2011). Consequently, government communication is strategic communication because it is aimed at fulfilling constitutional transparency and accountability mandates of democratic governments. Heise (1985) argues that government

communication with citizens can only be effective if five conditions are met. Firstly, government should be absolutely transparent by timely disclosing of accurate positive, as well as negative information. Secondly, mass media and other channels should be utilised to ensure wide coverage and dissemination of information. Thirdly, government should ensure that it also utilises feedback-soliciting communication platforms, such as new media, to realise mutual understanding of intended messages. This concurs with the assertion of various scholars that effective communication can only take place when there is feedback on the delivered message (Mehrabian & Morton 1967; Hall 1980; Rogers 1983, 1995; Chandler 1994; Pratt 2000; Ngenge 2003; Fielding 2006; Krile 2006; Barnlund 2008; Logan 2010; Mudombi 2013). Fourthly, government communication machinery should be utilised to genuinely communicate the work of government, and not for electioneering purposes. Fifthly, communication should be considered as a strategic management function in government to enable communicators to have an insight into policy decisions that form the basis of communicating with citizens.

1.4. The history and the role of the Government Communication and Information System in South Africa

The Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) was established in 1998 by South Africa's first democratic government, to replace the South African Communication Service (SACS) (South Africa. GCIS 1996; Horwitz 2004). This was "to ensure that there is delivery of information to the people of South Africa and that a two-way system is set up to facilitate dialogue between government and the broadest possible public" (Horwitz 2004: 320). The SACS was the then South African apartheid government's communication machinery, believed to be tainted and infiltrated by agents aligned to the defunct government; hence a decision to close it down (South Africa. GCIS 1996; Horwitz 2004; Sanders & Canel 2013; Ramodibe 2014). As the propaganda machinery of South Africa's apartheid government, the SACS was its public relations agency intended to promote, position and justify its segregation policies (South Africa. GCIS 1996;

Horwitz 2004; Sanders & Canel 2013). The approach of the SACS towards communication was therefore purely a top-down (one-way) communication machinery which was aimed at protecting the interests, and persuading world countries that the white minority government was legitimate (South Africa: GCIS 1996; Horwitz 2004). The implication was that the SACS could not be trusted to be the agent of change for the new democratic government, given its constitutional mandate of constantly communicating and interacting, not only with a specific racial group – the white minority – but with all citizens of the country. The demise of the SACS was effected through recommendation 24 of the task group on government communications which was established in 1996 by South Africa's then Deputy President, Mr Thabo Mbeki (South Africa. GCIS 1996; Horwitz 2004; Ramodibe 2014).

In summary, the task group was mandated to: (a) define existing information delivery mechanisms; (b) review existing government communication policies at national, provincial and local level in comparison to developing countries; (c) examine government communications structures and systems at the three (3) spheres; (d) examine international communication functions with special emphasis on information dissemination; and (e) make recommendations on new policies, structures and budgets (South Africa. GCIS 1996; Horwitz 2004; Ramodibe 2014). In its report, following eight (8) months of consultation and benchmarking, the ten (10) member task group, which was led by Mr Mandla Langa, made 83 recommendations geared towards improving government communication in South Africa's new democratic dispensation.

Worth noting, are the task group's findings that, (a) there was dearth of central coordination of government messaging; (b) there is incoherent and inadequate planning of government information dissemination campaigns; and (c) the communication function is lowly prioritised (meagre funding and low status of government communicators) (South Africa. GCIS 1996). To address the dearth of central coordination of government messaging, the task group recommended (recommendation 3) that a new government communication and information

system should be created "to provide a network throughout the country which provides every citizen with the information required to live and to control their lives" (South Africa. GCIS 1996: 5). The GCIS was therefore conceived to be 'the government and the governed interactive' communication model that substituted the "top-down government-knows-best model of communication" which was synonymous with the SACS (Horwitz 2004: 19). The task group believed that effective communication can only be realised if government "engage[s] better with civil society [by] creating a dialogue between government and the public" (South Africa. GCIS 1996: 5). The task group's best practice learning expedition had established that two-way communication was fundamental in constitutional democracies and entrenches the legitimacy of governments by being transparent and accountable (South Africa. GCIS 1996; CommGAP 2011; Sanders & Canel 2013). This is based on South Africa's constitution which has enshrined the citizens' 'right to know' and to be consulted by their democratically elected government (South Africa 1996:s 195.108).

The GCIS is a government department reporting to the Ministry of Communications (South Africa. GCIS 1996; Horwitz 2004; Ramodibe 2014; South Africa 2015). It was established in terms of Section 7 of the Public Service Act, 1994 (as amended) as mandated by section 197 (1) of the constitution of the Republic of South Africa (South Africa. Department of Public Service and Administration 1994; South Africa 1996:s 195.108). Its sole responsibility was to fulfil government's constitutional mandate of being "accountable; and transparen[t] … by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information" (South Africa 1996:s 195.108: 107) [emphasis in the original]. This is supported by the argument that transparency and accountability are the ingredients of good governance, and consequently, the founding principles of democratic governments the world-over (Viteritti 1997; Horwitz 2004; Young 2007; Piotrowski & Van Ryzin 2007; CommGAP 2011; Pasquier 2012; South Africa. GCIS 2015; United Kingdom. GCS 2015). Consequently, this confirms the GCIS as the "central communications agency" of the South African government thus affirming it as the custodian of government communication

nationwide (South African Yearbook 2014: 214). At its inception in 1998, the GCIS was led by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who was assisted by various deputies, until it was de-established following South Africa's 2014 general elections, and replaced by the new Department of Communications (Muthambi 2014; South Africa. Parliament of the Republic of South Africa 2015: s 9.4). However, this did not last long, as the GCIS was re-established as a stand-alone agency effective from 08 July 2014, and is now led by a Director General (DG) who is assisted by various deputy directors general (South Africa. Government Gazette 2014). It has a footprint in all nine (9) provinces of South Africa – with about 80 offices countrywide – which include nine (9) provincial offices headed by directors (South Africa. GCIS 2015). The majority of these offices are situated at the Thusong Service Centres (TSCs) – one-stop, integrated community development centres created to close the information gap and to further bring services closer to the citizens.

Formerly known as the Multi-Purpose Community Centres, the TSCs address the developmental aspect of communication; that is, to provide citizens with information which they can use to improve their socio-economic well-being (Quebral 1975, 2001; South Africa. GCIS 2015; Ramodibe 2014). By November 2015, there were 185 operational TSCs in 107 of South Africa's local municipalities (South Africa. GCIS 2015). As the custodian of government communication, the GCIS is supposed to provide strategic direction and uniform guidelines on communication strategy and policy development to all three (3) spheres of government which are intended to achieve effective communication with the citizens (South Africa. GCIS 1996; South African Yearbook 2014).

It was tasked to primarily build and maintain the relationship between the new government and the citizens at all three (3) spheres; namely, national, provincial and local (municipalities), through interactive sharing of information (as per recommendation 4). Another suggestion (recommendation 5) was that the GCIS should be co-ordinated by the Presidency to ensure coherence and to affirm its strategic role (South Africa. GCIS 1996; Horwitz 2004; Sanders & Canel 2013).

Consequently, the GCIS was sub-divided to cover three (3) broad areas of government communication; namely, (1) media liaison, (2) communication services and support, and (3) provincial and community liaison, as per recommendation 10 of the task group (South Africa. GCIS 1996). Media liaison involves establishing and maintaining sound relations with the media, which is an essential channel of disseminating information to the citizens, whereas communication services and support focus on the development of messages to be communicated to citizens. The area of provincial and community liaison was intended to create a nation-wide network of structures which will facilitate the link between the three (3) spheres of government to enhance liaison with citizens at the community level. In this regard, the GCIS is supposed to co-ordinate, lead and support government communication initiatives at the provincial and local spheres (South Africa. GCIS 2015).

However, there is a possibility of 'turf battles' erupting which could affect co-ordination, given that the Mpumalanga Provincial Government (MPG) also has its own structure of co-ordinating provincial communication activities (South Africa. Mpumalanga Provincial Government 2013). This is brought about by the fact that South Africa's constitution recognises all the three (3) spheres of government as being equal, and thus it implicitly also mandates the provincial and local spheres of government to carry-out the communication function (South Africa 1996:s 195.108). Known as the Provincial Government Communication and Information Service (PGCIS), this structure also co-ordinates communication activities of municipalities in the Province. Ramodibe (2014: 31) warns that this apparent duplication of a mandate could affect co-ordination as a result of "programmatic, logistical and managerial or 'turf' barriers" which could impact negatively on the communication initiatives.

The lack of effective co-ordination is brought about by the fact that mandated people deliberately refuse to co-operate with each other because they fear to lose their power grip or decision-making powers, and further that the leading stakeholder would be the one credited once the initiative becomes successful

(Pindus, Koralek, Martinson & Trutko 2000). It is therefore essential that the GCIS and the PGCIS, in each province, should at all times collaborate to avoid brewing a challenge of co-ordination. Accordingly, the provincial and local liaison division of the GCIS is responsible for inter-governmental relations on communication matters in order to foster co-operation with the PGCIS by providing strategic direction to enable effective co-ordination of communication activities (South Africa. GCIS 2015). To carry-out its mandate, the GCIS has adopted various channels of communication and interaction with the citizens (South Africa. GCIS 1996; Sanders & Canel 2013). Having discussed the history and the role of South Africa's GCIS, the origin of the discipline of communication is now discussed, to understand the significance of communication in human daily interactions.

1.5. The origin of the communication discipline

According to Littlejohn and Foss (2008, 2011), the advancement in technology and literacy after World War 1 resulted in many scholars becoming interested in understanding the communication discipline. This was at the time when there was a desire to improve the lives of the people, and technology was seen as the possible catalyst to achieve this objective (Littlejohn & Foss 2008, 2011). It is argued that the interest in understanding how objectives can be achieved through the use of communication originated in the United States of America during the twentieth century, following "the widespread use of propaganda during [World] war [2] to disseminate the ideas of oppressive ideological regimes alerted people of the use and abuses of communication strategies" (Littlejohn & Foss 2011: 5).

This resulted in various scholars starting to have an interest in interpersonal communication, as they wanted to establish how it could be utilised to improve relationships (Littlejohn & Foss 2008, 2011). Consequently, the scholars established that communication can improve relations between people; it can influence decision making; and can influence people's way of life (Littlejohn & Foss 2008, 2011). This has led to the acknowledgement that communication is the foundational element underlying human life; that is, without communication it

is impractical for people or organisations to achieve their aims and objectives. The interest in the communication discipline has resulted in what scholars distinguished as Western and non-Western (Eastern) theories of communication (Dissanayake 1988; Littlejohn & Foss 2011). The Western communication theory argues that people are interested in achieving their own individual objectives, whereas the non-Western or Eastern one focuses on collective achievement and unity. Of significance to note between the two (2) communication theories, is that spoken communication is not valued but experience acquired through observation underlies the non-Western or Eastern theory (Kancaid 1987; Dissanayake 1988; Littlejohn & Foss 2011). What this means is that the Eastern theory of communication stresses that effective communication can only take place when the receiver decodes the transmitted message through observing what is being done, as opposed to the Western one which relies on the spoken word.

Furthermore, communication scholars argue that communication can be understood from the cultural or religious perspective as explained by the Asiacentric and the Afrocentricity theories of communication developed by Yoshitaka Miike and Molefi Asante respectively (Littlejohn & Foss 2008, 2011). Through the Asiacentric theory of communication, Miike (2006:4) argues that "communication … is the life blood of [any] society … [and] is vital to the functioning of human social order. Communication is constitutive of culture. No culture can breathe without communication". On the other hand, though Asante's Afrocentricity theory acknowledges that culture is central to communication, it stresses that Africa has also contributed a fair share to the body of knowledge on the discipline of communication (Asante *et al* 2014).

In fact, the theory disagrees with the assertion that knowledge about communication started in Europe, arguing that Africans were for centuries, aware that cultural practices and beliefs influence communication. Ramodibe (2014) defines culture as specific beliefs held by a group of people as their daily guiding principles, and are passed from one generation to another. Novinger (2001)

further argues that an unfamiliar or foreign culture to the group may hinder communication, thus creating inter-cultural communication barriers. The result could be what Adler (1991) termed, cross-cultural miscommunication; that is, the person from a different culture failing to successfully decode the message received due to cultural differences. Though a number of communication models were developed, Littlejohn and Foss (2011: 44) argue that Robert Craig's model, which they call the 'metamodel', is the one appropriate to explain the origin of communication as it covers quite a range of issues. This model divides the communication theory into seven traditions; namely, (a) the semiotic, (b) the phenomenological, (c) the cybernetic, (d) the socio-psychological, (e) the socio-cultural, (f) the critical, and (g) the rhetorical (Littlejohn & Foss 2011).

In each tradition, Craig gave his views and arguments on how human beings relate, synthesise and comprehend the various forms of messages they receive daily to derive meaning from them. Semiotics refers to the study of signs and explains how signs and symbols can transmit messages through objects, ideas and feelings. The semiotic communication tradition thus explains how people can derive meaning (decode) from signs and symbols (Littlejohn & Foss 2011). The phenomenological tradition explains how direct experiences, which are motivated by personal values, direct individuals to derive meaning from what they personally experience around them (Littlejohn & Foss 2011). In addition, the phenomenological tradition can be explained in three schools of thought; namely, the classical phenomenology, the perception phenomenology, and the hermeneutic phenomenology (Littlejohn & Foss 2011).

However, Edmund Husserl's classical phenomenology view argues that personal experiences provide a subjective interpretation of messages communicated and thus cannot be accepted (Littlejohn & Foss 2011). Consequently, the view held by Husserl on classical phenomenology was not accepted by many scholars, thus resulting in the broadly acceptable perception phenomenology which stresses personal experiences as being fundamental to the communication process (Littlejohn & Foss 2011). Furthermore, the hermeneutic phenomenology stresses

that language and personal experiences are inter-dependent variables in the communication process (Littlejohn & Foss 2011). The cybernetics tradition explains communication as an inter-linked systematic process of variables which influence one another to achieve the ultimate goal. Cybernetics could be explained as the study of how systems influence the human communication process (Littlejohn & Foss 2011). In essence, the cybernetics tradition explains how systems can influence the human communication process (Littlejohn & Foss 2011). The socio-psychological tradition focuses on understanding the individual as a social being – it focuses on social, psychological, personal and cognitive traits of the individual in the social setting. It emphasises that messages will be acceptable to people for as long as they concur with their cultural beliefs; that is, their way of life – already set communal systems of doing things; hence it is argued that it is linked to the cybernetic tradition (Littlejohn & Foss 2008, 2011).

One could thus infer that both the cybernetics and the socio-psychological traditions influenced Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovation* theory which seeks to explain how a new phenomenon quickly spreads, becomes acceptable and is adopted as the way of life by individuals (Rogers 1983, 1995). When a phenomenon abides with the people's way of life – in other words, their system of life (cybernetics and socio-psychological traditions), it could easily be accepted by others – easily diffused within the community. The socio-cultural tradition focuses on how cultural beliefs influence an individual's ability to decode messages as they were intended (Littlejohn & Foss 2011). The critical tradition focuses on "investigat[ing] how power, oppression and privilege are the products of certain forms of communication throughout society" (Littlejohn & Foss 2011: 57).

What could be deduced from the definition of the critical tradition is that it is concerned about how messages could be used to propagate and entrench the unfair and unjust treatment of others by another – for example, the notorious apartheid system which was previous adopted by the South African undemocratic state. Basically, the critical tradition is concerned all about the entrenchment and justification of oppression through communication (propaganda). Finally, the

rhetorical tradition is concerned with the effective use of meaningful symbols to communicate and influence the recipients of messages (Littlejohn & Foss 2008, 2011). The term rhetorical is derived from the word rhetoric, which originates from the Greek word, *rhētorikós,* and according to Aristotle – referred to as the father of rhetoric – simply refers to the art of persuation (James 2007; Worthington 2008; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015). Many scholars who attempted to define the term rhetoric came to a mutual definition – that, it is communication intended to persuade (Smit 1997; James 2007; Littlejohn & Foss 2008, 2011; Worthington 2008; Rapp 2010; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015; Kuypers 2016). Uypers (2016: 10) defines rhetoric as "the strategic use of communication, oral or written, to achieve specifiable goals".

Rapp (2010) defines rhetoric as the way of using communication to persuade others, although not guaranteeing that everybody will be convinced in the process, adding that a rhetorician – an expert in rhetoric – is always geared towards discovering various means of persuasion. He argues that rhetoricians are mainly concerned about persuasion and public speaking. In this regard, persuasion can either be influenced by the personal traits of the communicator (sender of the message), emotional state of the communicatee (receiver of the message), or the actual discourse between the two parties – the sender and the receiver – in the communication process (Rapp 2010). Public speaking can either be deliberative, judicial or epideictic (Rapp 2010). The deliberative public speech either encourages or discourages the receiver from doing something; the judicial public speech either accuses or defends; whereas the epideictic public speech either compliments or blames the receiving party (Rapp 2010).

Clearly, both the deliberative and judicial speeches provide options for decisions whilst the epideictic speech is judgemental or critical in nature. This explanation concurs that rhetoric is “the study of effective or persuasive speaking and writing, especially as practiced in public oratory” (Crystal 2008: 416). From a plethora of definitions of the term, it could be summed up that rhetoric refers to the art of using words or visuals to transmit meaning to others with the intention of

persuading them (Smit 1997; James 2007; Crystal 2008; Littlejohn & Foss 2008, 2011; Worthington 2008; Rapp 2010; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015; Kuypers 2016). In a nutshell, the rhetorical tradition analyses how messages can be used to persuade people to believe what is being communicated (Littlejohn & Foss 2008, 2011). Overall, the interest in the origin of the communication discipline was to establish how technology, symbols, relationships in the social setting, cultural beliefs, personal experiences and power contribute to the communication process, and how they can lead to effective or ineffective communication. Consequently, the arguments that the interest in understanding the communication discipline and its influence originated in the West (Europe), as argued by Western communication theorists, were dismissed by the Asiacentric and the Afrocentricity communication theorists who argue that no one can claim its origin, given its direct link to culture which is universal (Littlejohn & Foss 2008, 2011).

Conclusively, like the Western communication theorists, the assertion by the critical traditionalists that communication in social settings is utilised by those in power to oppress others is rejected. This is because communication is an inborn human trait – people learn to speak from an infancy stage, as they interact with each other – either verbally or through symbols and signs, like sign-language. Human beings communicate mainly to share meaning with each other for the purpose of survival.

1.6. Understanding effective communication

In order to understand the concept of effective communication, the terms ‘effective’ and ‘communication’ were defined separately. The term ‘effective’ can be defined as the capability to produce the purpose or intention (Collins English Dictionary 1999; BusinessDictionary.com 2014; Cambridge Dictionaries Online 2015). Thus, the implication is that something is considered effective, if it is able to produce the desired results. This view is supported by the systems perspective theory on effectiveness which postulates that organisations should be aware of

and consider the preference of its publics in order to realise effectiveness (Grunig 1992). Arguably, the success of any organisation is dependent on effective communication (Eisenberg & Goodall 1997; Pandey & Garnett 2006; Shockley-Zalabak 2006; Garnett *et al* 2008). On the other hand, the competing-values perspective theory on effectiveness stresses innovation as being essential towards effectiveness, whereas the strategic-constituencies perspective theory explains effectiveness in terms of "how well the organi[s]ation satisfies the demands of its relevant external publics – the people, groups and other organi[s]ations upon which the organi[s]ation depends for its survival" (Grunig 1992: 76). In terms of the goal-attainment perspective theory, effectiveness is measured in terms of the goals achieved.

On the other hand, the term communication simply refers to the act of sharing information (Shannon 1948; Drenth *et al* 1998; Pearson & Nelson 2000; Cleary 2003; Rogers 2003; Koontz & Weihrich 2007; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015; Khanna 2015; Dahiya 2015). The word communication originates from the Latin word '*communis'* – English for sharing – and can happen verbally, non-verbally, in written format, graphically or through electronic means of human interaction (Communication studies 2013). Rogers (2003: 5) defines it as "a process in which participants create and share information with one another to reach a mutual understanding". In essence, communication is the process of sharing or exchanging information between the sender and receiver through some sort of channel – be it either by way of mouth, hererin referred to as verbal or face-to-face communication (unmedited communication) or through an impersonal channel, hererin referred to as a mediated communication, such as mass media channels (Motley 1990; Ritchie 1991; Hauser 2000).

Hauser (2000: 6) further argues that information and signal are significant in the communication process, as "signals carry certain kinds of informational content". This explains that "human communication is 'nothing but' signal encoding, transmission, and decoding" (Ritchie 1991). Through communication, meaning is shared between the sender and the receiver (Shannon 1948; Drenth *et al* 1998;

Pearson & Nelson 2000; Cleary 2003; Rogers 2003; Koontz & Weihrich 2007; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015; Khanna 2015). Evidently, once the meaning of the transmitted information is mutually undertood, effective communication has taken place (Dahiya 2015). This concurs with the assertion by BenDedek and Laoshi (2006) that effective communication is simply "a conversation in which no one gets confused by the other person's meaning". Clearly, in order to ensure that there is no confusion or ambiguity about the meaning of the information or message, the two parties in the communication process should be able to interact with each other (McKay, Davis & Fanning 1995; BenDedek & Laoshi 2006; Fielding 2006; Chase & Shamo 2013). According to Shannon's communication model, effective communication can only be ascertained once feedback is received from the recipient of the message (Berlo 1960; Mehrabian & Morton 1967; Hall 1980; Rogers 1983, 1995; Pearson 1983; Chandler 1994; Pratt 2000; Ngenge 2003; Fielding 2006; Krile 2006; Barnlund 2008; Logan 2010; Mudombi 2013).

The feedback received will establish whether the transmitted message was successfully decoded, and if so, successfully concluding the two-way communication process between the sender and the receiver. Brown (2015) further agues that clear and unambiguous messages during the encoding process are fundamental towards successful decoding of the intended message. Stahl and Caprano (2014)'s study on corporate blogs to examine the characteristics of effective communication established three (3) key drivers of social media success; namely, (1) author characteristics, (2) content characteristics, and (3) interaction characteristics. With regard to author characteristics, the study revealed that the level of authority in an organisation increases the size of the audience; that is, the higher the status of the author of the message, the more effective the communication would be. In terms of content characteristics, the study revealed that story-telling attracted more people while interaction characteristics revealed that interpersonal connectivity influences people to participate in online conversations; that is, the interactivity of social media platforms motivates people to have online conversations with each other

(Stahl & Caprano 2014). Two-way communication is thus essential in ensuring that there is no confusion regarding the intended message, as this affords the receiver to get clarity, in case of not being sure. To this end, two-way or interactive communication is fundamental in realising effective communication. Baruah (2012) and Roberts (2014) assert that effective communication is beneficial, as it eliminates any chance of misunderstanding or ambiguity – that is, unsuccessful decoding of messages – which could lead to misinformation and cause confusion during emergency or crisis situations. Brusse (2012) adds that communication is considered to be effective if it creates awareness, understanding and even persuasion. Brusse (2012) and Brown (2015) further argue that effective communication has the potential to influence the recipients of the message, and this could lead to behaviour change when required.

Accordingly, well-informed employees are likely to adopt the organisation's vision as their own – they end-up regarding themselves as valuable and inextricable to the organisation they work for – hence they would consider themselves as part of the solution towards the success of the organisation (Eisenberg & Goodall 1997; Witherspoon 1997; Elving 2005; Pandey & Garnett 2006; Garnett *et al* 2008; Gall 2009). This renders effective communication inextricable to organisational change, as it eliminates ambigutity on instructions given or the vision envisaged (Eisenberg & Goodall 1997; Elving 2005; Pandey & Garnett 2006; Garnett *et al* 2008). Conversely, Elving (2005: 129) asserts that "poorly managed change communication results in rumors and resistance to change, [thus] exaggerating the negative aspects of the change".

Effective communication can thus be explained as the successful delivery and the comprehension of a message by the recipient, as intended by the sender (McKay, Davis & Fanning 1995; BenDedek & Laoshi 2006; Fielding 2006; Chase & Shamo 2013; BusinessDictionary.com 2014). For example, if a mother can understand the meaning of 'shake well before drinking' instruction on a medicine bottle, to mean that she must shake the bottle – and not the child – that would signal effective communication having taken place. Conclusively, effective

communication takes place when the information shared by one party with another is mutually understood as intended.

1.7. Communication as a strategic government function and the new media

When something is strategic, it means it is advantageous and well positioned to assist in reaching the intended goals (Collins English Dictionary 1999; Cambridge Dictionaries Online 2014; Business Dictionary.Com 2015; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015). The term strategic is derived from the Greek word, *stratēgikos* – strategy in English – which means "the art of the general", in military terms (Goodall 2014: 7). Based on the definition above, strategy is essentially a carefully constructed road-map to achieve a pre-determined goal (Collins English Dictionary 1999; Goodall 2014; Cambridge Dictionaries Online 2014; Business Dictionary.Com 2015; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015). Like in the military, a strategy is devised to ultimately win or conquer the situation. Having defined the term strategy, strategic communication is defined as "the purposeful use of communication by an organisation to fulfil its mission (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verčič, & Sriramesh 2007: 1).

Cabanero-Verzosa and Garcia (2009), Arnold (2011) and Paul (2011) refer to strategic communication as a public relations exercise considering that it is mainly concerned about making an organisation successful. From the definitions above, it could thus be argued that strategic communication is all about the utilisation of suitable communication channels to disseminate information about the aims and objectives of an organisation. When something is suitable, it means it is appropriate to lead towards the achievement of the intended objective, that is, it is fit for purpose (Collins English Dictionary 1999; Cambridge Dictionaries Online 2014; Business Dictionary.Com 2015; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015). Strategic communication is therefore intrinsic to organisations, given that well-informed employees are likely to share and adopt the organisation's vision as theirs, thus assisting it to reach its goals and objectives (Hopkins 2006; Cooren *et al* 2011; Smith and Mounter 2008; Gall 2009; Verghese 2012). However, this

can only be realised if communication is effective; that is, if the sender and the receiver share the same meaning of the message. This can only be ascertained when there is interaction between the sender and the receiver – two-way communication – whether unmediated (face-to-face or verbal communication) or mediated (information dissemination through a channel of communication) (Pratt 2000; Livingstone 2002; Ngenge 2003; Thioune 2003; Kituyi-Kwake & Adigun 2008; Cunningham 2010; Logan 2010; Mudombi 2013). The word 'interaction' explains the need for engagement – characteristic of two-way communication – which is fundamental towards realising effective communication. This concurs with the assertion by Cunningham (2010: 111), that the new media facilitates engagement, because it provides "dialogic communication and many-to-many message flow" in real-time, hence social media platforms have become popular amongst people utilising them.

Essentially, new media platforms are interactive – they are capable of eliciting instant feedback – hence they are an essential catalyst towards effective communication (Cunningham 2010; Scott 2010). On the downside, traditional or old media channels elicit "monologic communication and a one-way-to-many message flow" which is incapable of ascertaining successful transmission of the intended meaning (Cunningham 2010: 111). Scott (2010) supports the assertion by Cunningham (2010) that social media platforms – new media channels – are strategic communication tools which could be purposefully utilised to achieve desired objectives, given their capability to facilitate discourse between people. Evidently, communication is a strategic function, as it facilitates the understanding of organisational objectives, and subtly instructs those receiving the intended message to act in the best interest of their organisation (Hopkins 2006; Cooren *et al* 2011; Smith and Mounter 2008; Gall 2009; Verghese 2012).

The emergence of new media has thus provided a solution towards realising strategic communication with the citizens, as it provides real-time, two-way communication, significant in ascertaining that effective communication took place (Yates 2001; Duhé 2007; Kituyi-Kwake & Adigun 2008; Scott 2010;

Lekhanya 2013; Tracey 2014; Stahl & Caprano 2014; Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart & Madden 2015; Mcbride & Respaut 2015; Lewis & Nichols 2016).

1.8. Old versus new media: distinguishing between the two communication channels

On face value, it appears easy to distinguish between the old and the new media – with the old media referring to the information dissemination platforms that have existed for a very long time, as opposed to the new media, which as the name suggests, has recently been created or discovered. However, this is not as simple as that. According to Kituyi-Kwake and Adigun (2008: 127), old media is the form of ICTs which relate to "non-electronic media such as print and analogue technologies, i.e, radio, television, fixed line telephones, and facsimile machines" whereas "computers (in all their myriad manifestations) and data processing applications accessible through their use (e-mail, Internet, word processing, cellular phones, wireless technologies and other data processing applications)" describe the new media. Old media refers to one-way communication technologies utilised to disseminate information to the mass audience, whereas new media refers to two-way interactive computer-based communication technology which enables people to communicate with one another (Peterson 2003).

Clearly, old or traditional media is non-electronic in nature and existed prior to the information age – the emergence of the internet (Collins English Dictionary 1999; Peterson 2003; Kituyi-Kwake & Adigun 2008; Cunningham 2010). It could thus be argued that old or traditional media – such as newspapers and television – is characterised by one-way communication which essentially relegates the receivers of messages to mere recipients, as they cannot interact with the received message (Cunningham 2010). Various scholars have added that new media is characterised by its mobility, speed, immediacy and interactive nature – a description which suits information dissemination and sharing platforms, such as the social media, best (Peterson 2003; Friedman & Friedman 2008; Ikpe &

Olise 2010; Cunningham 2010; Rand Media Group 2015). Another supporting argument is that most new media platforms are digital in nature given their transmission or dissemination format (Socha & Eber-Schmid 2012). Duhé (2007: 99) argues that the "new media environment promotes interactive two-way communication rather than passive one-way communication, which was characteristic of print and broadcast mass media." Although Socha and Eber-Schmid (2012) agree that new media is underpinned by new ITCs such as the Internet, they, however, argue that it is difficult to define it because it is forever changing or improving. This makes it difficult to come up with a universal definition for it. In attempting to define new media, Socha & Eber-Schmid (2012) argue that it is the medium capable of disseminating information anytime and anywhere, utilising digital platform which facilitate "interactive user feedback, creative participation and community formation around the media content".

New media technologies are thus credited for real-time information sharing, instant messaging, feedback and time saving (Ngenge 2003; Kituyi-Kwake & Adigun 2008; Mbatha 2011). Interestingly, Cunningham (2010: 111) argues that new media allows recipients of messages an opportunity to be "prosumers because they [can] both produce and consume messages" – instead of just being mere consumers of messages – as it is the case with old media. Cunningham (2010) defines consumers as passive receivers of information, and prosumers as active information consumers who are afforded an opportunity to interact with the message. By implication, old media offers one-way passive communication – consumption of information only – whereas new media offers two-way active communication – consumption and interaction with information (Cunningham 2010; Wang & Lim 2011).

What can be deduced from the assertion, is that new media offers a solution towards realising effective communication. In addition, the information communicated via new media is detailed, when compared to the one transmitted via old media, which is characterised by limited offering due to the supposed interference of gatekeepers in the form of editors (Cunningham 2010).

Gatekeepers (discussed later) only allow information they perceive to be newsworthy or acceptable to be transmitted, without considering the actual information requirements of the intended recipient (Cunningham 2010). Tang, Gu and Whinston (2012) also assert that social media, as information sharing platforms, have even benefitted its users as it is the source of job opportunities. The implication is that employers have even turned to social media platforms to recruit potential employees, thus indicating the popularity and subsequent extent of the diffusion of the new media within communities (McQuail 2010; Holmes 2011; Tang *et al* 2012; Adegbilero-Iwari & Ikenwe 2014).

Socha and Eber-Schmid (2012) also credit new media for enabling political, social, cultural and economic discourse the world over, adding that it further serves as the source of data and information for old or traditional media platforms. This has subsequently elevated the new media to be the primary source of information, thus relegating the old media to be secondary. The assumption from the above assertions is that, dependence on the new media as the primary source of information has spread at an alarming rate, and has thus taken over from the old or traditional media (Rogers 1983, 1995; Salwen & Stacks 1996; Yates 2001; Duhé 2007; Mbatha 2011; Lekhanya 2013; Tracey 2014; Stahl & Caprano 2014; Duggan *et al* 2015; Mcbride & Respaut 2015).

The advent of the new media has thus revolutionised the process of information dissemination, given that it offers a more interactive platform; it is immediate and its virality or permeability has the ability to strengthen communication (Williams *et al* 1988; Livingstone 2002; Jenkins 2006; Duhé 2007; Agichtein, Castillo, Donato, Gionis & Mishne 2008; Logan 2010; Jewkes 2011; Rose 2011; Ramos 2013; Duggan & Smith 2013; Cornelissen 2014; Moody-Ramirez & Dates 2014; Mangini *et al* 2014; Pillay 2015). New media has now became intrinsic to the daily life of individuals, further motivated by the fact that the Internet has been overwhelmingly received and adopted as an information sharing platform worldwide, especially amongst the youth (Coopers & Lybrand 1996, 1997; Livingstone 2002). In South Africa, this is not different given that the diffusion of

new media platforms, like social media, continue to grow exponentially. By the end of 2016, almost 40 million people in South Africa were registered users of such platforms (World Wide Worx 2016). New media thus have an edge over traditional media, given that it lets "prosumers [to] repackage and repurpose the original messages conveyed" for their benefit (Cunningham 2010: 111).

1.9. The research problem

The term research problem refers to a phenomenon which has been discovered, and is believed to be hindering excellence or exceptional performance (McMillan 2004; Gall, Gall, & Borg 2006; Boudah 2011). One could thus summarise the research problem as being the foundation of the purpose of a study to address the identified problem. This study is premised on the fact that democratic governments across the world have a statutory mandate to constantly communicate and engage the citizens (Viteritti 1997; Horwitz 2004; Young 2007; Piotrowski & Van Ryzin 2007; CommGAP 2011; Pasquier 2012; South Africa). Accordingly, the democratic government of South Africa has a constitutional mandate of "providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information" (South Africa 1996:s 195.108: 107) [emphasis added]. Various studies have established that the emergence of new media have provided an opportunity to improve and strengthen communication between the sender and the receiver (Berlo 1960; Mehrabian & Morton 1967; Rogers 1983, 1995; Pearson 1983; Fielding 2006; Krile 2006; Barnlund 2008).

New media is instantaneous, timely, interactive and fulfils the two-way communication process by soliciting feedback from the recipient, which is necessary to establish whether the message communicated was understood as intended by the sender (Rice & Associates 1984; Pratt 2000; Livingstone 2002; Croteau & Hoynes 2003; Agichtein *et al* 2008; Socha & Eber-Schmid 2012). The new media is thus an essential catalyst towards the provision of instant, within-easy-reach and easily understood information and messages, as the South African government is constitutionally mandated. There is evidence that the new

media has diffused profusely amongst people, especially those who are technologically savvy, being the youth (Coopers & Lybrand 1996, 1997; Livingstone 2002). This has resulted in people preferring the new media as their primary source of information, thus rendering the traditional media such as newspapers, obsolete (Coopers & Lybrand 1996, 1997; Livingstone 2002; Ramodibe 2014). People have now aligned themselves with technological advancement by adopting the new media as part of their everyday life (Agichtein *et al* 2008). Furthermore, new media, such as social media, continues to grow in South Africa, and is recorded at 36.3 million registered users, with *facebook* accounting for the highest users at 11.8 million (World Wide Worx 2015). This is due to the huge investment in ICT infrastructure which is the backbone of the flourishing new media platforms (Montealegre 1999; Mutula & Mostert 2008; Mbatha 2011).

Lekhanya (2013) lists some of the advantages of social media as having no age barrier, and even transcending the geographical divide of the urban and rural areas in South Africa. It can thus facilitate the successful decoding of messages; that is, the underlying meaning of a message being mutually shared by the sender and the recipient, which is a prerequisite for effective communication (Berlo 1960; Mehrabian & Morton 1967; Rogers 1983, 1995; Pearson 1983; Fielding 2006; Krile 2006; Barnlund 2008). Given that new media is instantaneous and time-saving (can disseminate information in real-time), it can thus address the aspect of 'timely' (Rice & Associates 1984; Pratt 2000; Livingstone 2002; Croteau & Hoynes 2003; Agichtein *et al* 2008; Socha & Eber-Schmid 2012).

Furthermore, considering that the new media has diffused profusely in South Africa, this advantage can also address the aspect of 'accessibility' within the information dissemination mandate of the government of South Africa (Rice & Associates 1984; Pratt 2000; Livingstone 2002; Croteau & Hoynes 2003; Socha & Eber-Schmid 2012; Ramodibe 2014). The interactive nature of new media further facilitates a platform for immediate feedback which is significant in establishing whether the transmitted message or information was successfully

decoded (Rice & Associates 1984; Pratt 2000; Livingstone 2002; Ngenge 2003; Logan 2010; Mudombi 2013). Consequently, the use of new media platforms could even assist in addressing the historical information divide, especially in rural areas, thus contributing in improving government communication with the citizens (Montealegre 1999; Mutula & Mostert 2008; Mbatha 2011). In this regard, based on the identified benefits and advantages, various scholars have confidently argued that the new media continues to be the preferred primary source of information for many people, including the majority of the citizens of South Africa, especially the youth (Coopers & Lybrand 1996, 1997; McQuail 2010; Stratmann 2012; Ramodibe 2014). These scholars have thus re-affirmed the significance of new ICTs in strengthening and aiding the successful conclusion of the two-way information sharing process between the sender and the receiver (Rice & Associates 1984; Pratt 2000; Livingstone 2002; Ngenge 2003; Thioune 2003; Kituyi-Kwake & Adigun 2008; Logan 2010; Mbatha 2011; Mudombi 2013).

Accordingly, the results of a study conducted by Ramodibe (2014) on the South African government communication machinery has established, firstly that almost all South Africans (96%) are utilising various new media platforms for communication and information sharing. Secondly, that the youth interact on social media more than on any other communication channel; and thirdly that almost every South African owns a cell-phone (including those residing in the rural areas). However, on the downside, the South African government continues to prefer the use of old or traditional media as its preferred platforms to communicate on, and disseminate information to the citizens (Adegbilero-Iwari & Ikenwe 2014; Ramodibe 2014). Some of the disadvantages of the old media platforms are their slowness, passivity or unresponsiveness and non-reciprocal nature given that they offer one-way communication (Cunningham 2010; Campbell 2014). For example, one old media platform in the form of a newspaper is printed on a daily or weekly basis, thus resulting in delayed information and making the message almost stale when it reaches the intended audience. To make matters worse, government publications such as newsletters are published on a monthly and quarterly basis, thus delaying communication between

government and citizens even further (Ramodibe 2014). Thus, the delay in disseminating information disadvantages government from fulfilling its constitutional mandate of making sure that information is readily and timeous available to, and for the benefit of citizens. The implication is that by continuing to utilise near obsolete and unpopular communication platforms, such as old media, will misdirect messages and result in potential recipients being lost in the process (Muema 2012; Wille 2013; Ramodibe 2014). This will lead to a breakdown in communication which could eventually hinder effective communication (Hopkins 2006; Putnam & Nicotera 2010; Cooren *et al* 2011; Smith and Mounter 2008; Gall 2009; Verghese 2012).

1.9.1. Problem statement

A cross-sectional quantitative survey which sought to explore the effectiveness of new media platforms, conducted through standardised questionnaires, to attain effective government communication in South Africa.

1.10. Purpose of the study

Simon (2011) explains the term 'purpose' as the pre-explanation of what is hoped to be achieved, as this will guide the researcher in the right direction. In a nutshell, it refers to that which a study seeks to answer or explain at the end. This study was set to be applied communication research because it is concerned about understanding or gaining knowledge as to why one type of communication is preferred over another in order to resolve the identified research problem (Cissna 1982; Eadie 1982; Hunt 2001; Stanovich 2007). According to Cissna (1982: iv), "applied communication research involves such a question or problem of human communication or examines human communication in order to provide an answer or solution to the question or problem". The purpose of the study was to establish the extent of the diffusion of new media usage within South African communities, with particular focus on the Province of Mpumalanga. This has assisted in motivating for and in the conceptualising of the new communication model, aimed

at strengthening the communication and information system of the South African government.

1.11. Objectives of the study

An objective explains how an intention will be realised; that is, it explains the steps to be taken in order to achieve the purpose by providing clear guidance on the appropriate action to be taken (Mager 1984; Uys & Basson 1985; Kwake 2007; Mbatha 2011; BusinessDictionary.com 2014; Cambridge Dictionaries Online 2015; Farlex 2015). Therefore, in order to achieve the purpose (as stated above), the study was intended to:

1.11.1. Establish the extent of the new media usage by the citizens/residents to motivate for its adoption as the primary source of information;

1.11.2. Establish the type of new media platforms being utilised and preferred by the citizens/residents;

1.11.3. Establish the type of information the citizens/residents prefer to receive via their preferred new media platform;

1.11.4. Establish the rationale of the South African government's preference of the old media as its primary channel of information dissemination as opposed to the new media;

1.11.5. Conceptualise and propose a communication model that could be used to strengthen government communication in South Africa.

1.12. Research questions

According to Creswell (1994) and Booth (1995), a research question is meant to solicit a response to solve the research problem. In addition, like objectives,

research questions are necessary to guide the researcher to stay focused on the study area to achieve the intended objectives (Springett & Campbell 2006). Thus in order to solve the identified problem, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1.12.1. What is the extent of the new media usage by the citizens/residents?

1.12.2. Which new media platforms are being utilised and preferred by the citizens (residents)?

1.12.3. What type of information do the citizens (residents) prefer to receive via their preferred new media platform?

1.12.4. What are the reasons for the South African government's preference of the old media as its primary channel of information dissemination?

1.13. Significance of the study

There are strong arguments that research results or findings contribute significantly to the body of knowledge because they broaden the available literature scope, and can thus influence decisions made by people (Morris, Crawford, Hodgson, Shepherd & Thomas 2006). The study is thus significant due to the developmental nature of the new media because it enhances the citizen's access to information which they can use to improve their lives (McQuail 1986; Lea 1992; Livingstone 1999; Lievrouw & Livingstone 2002). Development communication is all about providing information to people for them to use it to improve their socio-economic well-being (Quebral 1975, 2001; Ramodibe 2014). Accordingly, the study could potentially provide a solution towards strengthening government communication is South Africa, including contributing to the body of knowledge on the communication discipline. It has dealt with the subject that has revolutionised communication by offering interactive web-based information sharing platforms such as social media, short-message service (SMS) and multi-

media service (MMS), amongst others (Agichtein *et al* 2008). This is because this form of media has the potential to improve and strengthen government communication, given its immediate feedback-offering capability which facilitates the understanding of the intended message (Croteau & Hoynes 2003; Socha & Eber-Schmid 2012). This study will thus contribute to applied communication given that new media strives to reduce the barriers to access communication infrastructure (Youtie, Shapira & Laudeman 2004).

Applied communication is concerned about establishing problem areas with the potential to influence or affect information dissemination processes (Cissna 1982; Eadie 1982; Hunt 2001; Stanovich 2007). To this end, Rogers (1986) argues that computers (the form of new media) have become an integral part towards effective communication by making it possible for two people in different environments to communicate with and understand each other. The rationale behind this is that people believe or trust information disseminated via computers as they equate it to face-face communication, and this is what Rogers (1986: 52) calls "social presense [sic] because it indicates the degree to which an individual feels that a communication partner is actually present during their exchange of information".

1.14. Definition of terms

Communication: This term is the foundation of this study, and refers to the process of sharing or exchanging information to transmit meaning between the sender and receiver through some sort of channel – either by way of mouth, hererin referred to as verbal or face-to-face communication (unmedited communication) or through an impersonal channel, hererin referred to as a mediated communication, such as mass media channels (Shannon 1948; Hall 1980; Corner 1983; Motley 1990; Ritchie 1991; Drenth *et al* 1998; Hauser 2000; Pearson & Nelson 2000; Cleary 2003; Rogers 2003; Koontz & Weihrich 2007; Weihrich *et al* 2010; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015; Khanna 2015; Dahiya 2015).

Communication machinery: In the context of this study, the term machinery refers to a system utilised by an organisation to fulfil a particular objective (Collins English Dictionary 1999; Webster's New Word College Dictionary 2014; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015). In social terms, the concept, communication machinery refers to a system and procedures utilised to share or disseminate information to a specific target audience, in order to achieve pre-determined objectives (Shannon 1948; Drenth *et al* 1998; Collins English Dictionary 1999; Pearson & Nelson 2000; Cleary 2003; Rogers 2003; Koontz & Weihrich 2007; Khanna 2015; Dahiya 2015; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015).

Diffusion: The penetration or spread of a substance, phenomenon, activity or information over a locality (Collins English Dictionary 1999; Yates 2001; Jackson & Yariv 2007; Mbatha 2011). In social science, it is the spread of a belief or practice within a society (Strang & Meyer 1994).

New media: Information age, web or computer-based two-way electronic communication platforms, such as social media, which are characterised by mobility, fastness, instantaneity and recriprocality, enabling human mediated discourse (Rice & Associates 1984; Collins English Dictionary 1999; Peterson 2003; Friedman & Friedman 2008; Kituyi-Kwake & Adigun 2008; Ikpe & Olise 2010; Cunningham 2010; Socha & Eber-Schmid 2012; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015; Rand Media Group 2015).

Old media: Also referred to as the traditional media, the term explains the non-computer or non-web-based one-way, passive and non-reciprocal communication platforms encompassing newspapers, books and television, amongst others (Rice & Associates 1984; Collins English Dictionary 1999; Peterson 2003; Friedman & Friedman 2008; Kituyi-Kwake & Adigun 2008; Cunningham 2010; Ikpe & Olise 2010; Socha & Eber-Schmid 2012; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015; Rand Media Group 2015).

Social media: refers to the type of new media platforms which are web or computer-based, mobile, faster, providing instant and interactive two-way communication such as *facebook*, Twitter and Instagram (Rice and Associates 1984; Agichtein *et al* 2008; Friedman & Friedman 2008; CommGAP 2009; Ikpe & Olise 2010; Sanders & Canel 2013; Mickoleit 2014; Rand Media Group 2015).

Telecommunication device: refers to physical electronic hardware which facilitates distant transmission or sharing of information, such as telephones (wired and wireless), radio, television and computers, supported by the necessary telecommunication infrastructure (Lehr 1995; Collins English Dictionary 1999; Lucky & Eisenberg 2006; Wieck & Vidal 2010; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015). In the context of this study, the concept should be understood as accordingly defined.

Telecommunication infrastructure: Also known as Information Communication Technology infrastructure, refers to the backbone or fundamental equipment which enables distant transmission or sharing of information such as transmitters (satellite and terrestrial), fibre optic cable, the Internet and data networks (Callon 1991; Lehr 1995; Kling *et al*, 2003; Lucky & Eisenberg 2006; Ngenge 2003; Pikas 2006; Wieck & Vidal 2010; Mbatha 2011; Fichman & Rosenbaum 2014; Kumar 2014). In the context of this study, the concept should be understood as accordingly defined.

1.15. Dissemination of the results of the study

The results of the study will be disseminated to all affected stakeholders, like the GCIS and the Provincial GCIS in the Mpumalanga Office of the Premier. The intention is to make them aware of possible solutions to their problem or problems, thus possibly influencing them to take action by re-considering their initial decisions (Crosswaite & Curtice 1994). They will also be distributed through articles in government's internal and external publications such as newsletters;

through articles in academic journals, and online information channels such as the Internet and Intranet.

1.16. Structural presentation of the thesis

The study will be presented in the following order:

Preface:

- Title page
- Declaration
- Dedication
- Acknowledgements
- Summary
- Table of Contents
- Lists of Figures, Tables, Annexures, and Abbreviations

Chapter One: Introduction and Background to the study

Chapter One has introduced the topic and conceptualised the study. It also defined and provided indepth discussion of the terms like communication, old/traditional versus new media, and effective communication, which were fundamental to this study. It further discussed the origin of the communication discipline; government communication; and strategic communication. The research problem; the problem statement; the purpose and objectives of the study; the research questions; and significance of the study were also discussed in this chapter. It has also defined the fundamental terms used and provided the strategy to disseminate the results. The chapter ends by outlining the structural presentation of the thesis.

Chapter Two: An overview of government communication

The chapter reviews literature on government communication system worldwide, including discussing how effective communication promotes transparency and accountability. It also discusses the power of social media on mass mobilisation and persuasion; and cyber-addiction. Books, websites, journals, newspapers, to mention but a few, were thus accordingly reviewed.

Chapter Three: Theoretical framework of the study

Chapter Three discusses the theoretical framework underpinning this study. The terms diffusion and innovation are discussed in detail, including the origin of diffusion. Three (3) diffusion theory families are also discussed which include the *Diffusion of Innovations* theory underpinning this study.

Chapter Four: Research methodology

Chapter Four details the research methodology used in the study. This includes the research design and method. It also discusses the target population; the area where the study was conducted; explains how the population was accessed; the unit of analysis utilised; how sampling was done; how the sample size was chosen; data collection instrument utilised; and ethical considerations.

Chapter Five: Data analysis and interpretation of the results

Chapter Five presents data analysis and interpretation of the results of this study. This was done utilising both descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). Data was thereafter presented in tables, figures and descriptions.

Chapter Six: The *Communigation* model: The proposed framework for seamless communication between the South African government and the citizens

This chapter introduces the *Communigation* model which proposes a framework for seamless communication between the South African government and the citizens. The model incorporates both old and new media channels, albeit promoting the latter to be the primary channel of communication.

Chapter Seven: Discussion of the results

The results of the study presented in Chapter Five are discussed in this chapter – Chapter Seven. The discussion chapter is fundamental because it provides insight, as it is where critical analysis and interpretation of the results of the study are done. The discussion ultimately paves the way for opinions to be made and creative solutions to the research problem to be recommended.

Chapter Eight: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

Chapter Eight summarises the results of the study; presents recommendations, including making recommendations for further research; discusses limitations of; and concludes the study.

1.17. Summary

This chapter has introduced and conceptualised the study. It also introduced the theory adopted for the study; defined effective communication; discussed the origin of the discipline of communication; discussed government communication as a constitutional mandate; provided an insight as to why communication is regarded as a strategic function of government; distinguished between the old and new media. In addition, it presented the research problem and statement; the purpose and objectives of the study; outlined the research questions; provided

the motivation why the study is significant to the discipline of communication; defined the terms used in the study; outlined how the results of the study will be disseminated; and concluded by presenting the structure of the thesis in terms of chapters.

The next chapter, Chapter Two, presents literature review by providing an overview of government communication.

CHAPTER TWO

AN OVERVIEW OF GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION

2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter introduced and conceptualised the study. This chapter reviews and discusses available literature on government communication systems and the benefits associated with new media, in the main. It begins by mapping government communication systems around the world, in order to understand and compare how various governments communicate with their citizens. It then proceeds to discuss how good governance is promoted by democratic governments, followed by a discussion on fostering public opinion and discourse by removing gatekeepers. Furthermore, the subject of demography and social media usage is discussed, followed by a discussion on the power of social media on effective mass mobilisation. In addition, the subject of social media, political communication and persuasion is discussed to provide a perspective on how the advent of social media has benefitted politicians to persuade potential voters during electioneering campaigns. This extends to marketeers, who continue to exploit the potential of social media platforms, to persuade potential clients to buy their products and service offerings. The subject of new media and information overload is also discussed to give a perspective that not all information can be shared via social media platforms. Finally, new media and cyber-addiction are interrogated to establish the reasons for and the level of new media addiction within communities.

2.2. Mapping government communication systems worldwide

Democratic governments, across the world, are put into office to solely represent the interests of those who elected them – the citizens – hence the citizens could be dubbed sole shareholders (What is Democracy?. 2004; Parycek & Sachs 2010; CommGAP 2011; Sanders & Canel 2013). One could effectively equate a government to a board of directors – appointed by the shareholders to act on their

behalf – to guide and oversee the performance of their business organisation towards achieving its strategic objectives (The Institute of Directors in Southern Africa NPC 2016; Nicholas 2018). Essentially, the directors have a fiduciary responsibility to protect and grow the shareholders' investment in the business (The Institute of Directors in Southern Africa NPC 2016; Nicholas 2018). Clearly, if a person represents your interests, they are obliged to regularly report back to you on the performance of your interests or shares, and the same applies to democratically elected governments. Undoubtedly, the citizens invest their votes by democratically electing a government into office to represent their interest, hence the government, as the board of directors, is obliged to continuously update the citizens – the sole shareholders – about the performance of their business (OECD 1996, 2018; CommGAP 2011). This is because the perspective on building democracy is premised on the principle of transparency and accountability to the people who voted and entrusted a particular political party with the administration of their country; hence communicating with citizens is fundamental for good governance (Parycek & Sachs 2010; CommGAP 2011; Sanders & Canel 2013).

The implication is that "for a democracy to operate effectively, the government must communicate with the citizens … They have a right to know what government … [is] doing, and why administrative decisions are made" (OECD 1996: 7) [emphasis in the original]. In supporting this view, Young (2007) argues that governments across the world co-ordinate their communication activities to promote and raise awareness about the services they offer, and at the disposal of their citizens. They have thus developed their own communication systems to fulfil this obligation (Horwitz 2004; Young 2007; Javuru 2010; Canel & Sanders 2012). This legitimises the existence of democratic governments because they were elected to represent the interest of the citizens, and not their own; hence the obligation to constantly provide feedback to the 'interest-holders' or shareholders (Parycek & Sachs 2010; CommGAP 2011; Sanders & Canel 2013). In essence, the primary function of government communication machinery, in a democracy, is to regularly inform and engage with the citizens – the sole

shareholders – on the implementation of their government's service delivery plan (CommGAP 2009, 2011; Parycek & Sachs 2010; Javuru 2010; Cornish, Lindley-French & Yorke 2011; Sanders & Canel 2013). However, governments across the world approach communication with their citizens differently; hence a few approaches and communication strategies being implemented, will be examined to support the objectives of the study. This relates to the types of communication channels or platforms being utilised by various governments in communicating with their citizens. In this regard, citizens' engagement and participation are communication priorities in a number of countries such as Sweden, Germany, the United States (U.S.), the United Kingdom, France, Australia, Spain and Singapore; hence they are ranked amongst the top 30 in the world (CommGAP 2009; Sanders & Canel 2013).

The Swedish government system of communication is premised on the democratic principles of transparency and accountability which allow interaction between government representatives and the electorate (Sanders & Canel 2013). Accordingly, the country's government communication system has been digitised, making social media fundamental platforms to engage with the citizens (Sanders & Canel 2013; OECD 2018). Just over 67% of Sweden's municipalities have adopted social media platforms, particularly *facebook*, as official communication channels, owing to their popularity amongst the citizens (Sanders & Canel 2013; OECD 2018). To show total commitment towards strengthening government communication with the citizens, the Swedish government is gearing towards full digitisation by targeting to have broadband connectivity of 98 percent – access to one (1) gigabit per second – to households and firms by 2025 (OECD 2018). Digitisation of government communication has resulted in Sweden being ranked the second in the world, in terms of Internet usage by the citizens (OECD 2018).

During his inauguration as the president of the United States of America in 2009, Barack Obama stressed that government's "openness will strengthen … democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in Government" (Parycek &

Sachs 2010). To this end, the U.S. government regards social media as a fundamental "engage and connect" communication strategy to interact with the citizens (Mickoleit 2014: 12). Effectively, the U.S government has adopted new media interactive two-way communication channels, like the social media, which enables its representatives to engage with the citizens (Mickoleit 2014). In the UK, the use of social media is deeply entrenched in the country's digital strategy, given that all local councils are obliged to utilise interactive platforms to communicate with the citizens (Mickoleit 2014). Government communication in Singapore is also characterised by digital participation, which enables regular and frequent updating of the citizens about government policy implementation (Sanders & Canel 2013).

As a member of the U.S. government-founded Open Government Partnership (OGP), the Danish government has also jumped on the new technology bandwagon and has, since 2012, made digital communication mandatory (Denmark. Danish Agency of Digitisation 2014; Du Preez 2015). This has seen the penetration and usage of new media channels increasing tremendously, thus making its public service the world leader in the adoption of new ICTs (Du Preez 2015). The OGP seeks "to promote good governance, to strengthen democracy, and to utilise digital technology to improve society ... [in order to] increase transparency in public decision processes, citizen participation and dialogue with civil society ... and accountability" (Denmark. Danish Agency of Digitisation 2014). As a result, the Danish government has passed a law that shifted government-citizens interaction from traditional (old) to new media – online communication, albeit with due consideration to those with no internet connectivity or who are technically challenged (Du Preez 2015).

In Poland, *facebook*, Youtube, Twitter, Blip and Flicker were referred to as "government communication tools" to communicate with the citizens (Sanders & Canel 2013: 165). The Chilean government communication machinery is characterised by five (5) trends, most notably, the centralisation of government communication on the country's president (Sanders & Canel 2013). This has

made the president central to government communication, meaning the president became the face and voice of communication campaigns. The measure of whether government communication was effective was thus based on the approval ratings of the president (Sanders & Canel 2013). The Chilean government thus recognises communication as being strategic to its success, and as such it had started to significantly increase funding for this function. It had even professionalised it by appointing experts to advise the president and ministers on communication (Sanders & Canel 2013). On the upside, the Chilean government had further recognised the significance and appropriateness of the electronic media, including social media platforms, in catalysing effective communication with the citizens. This had seen the Chilean president and ministers starting to communicate directly with the citizens via social media, amongst others (Sanders & Canel 2013).

As a result, there is a growing international trend by governments preferring to use the new media platforms such as social media, in communicating with the citizens. However, the experiences of the military dictatorship era of the Pinochet government (1973-1990) has tainted all communication initiatives of the democratic Chilean government, as evidenced by unsuccessful government communication campaigns due to the loss of trust by the citizens (Sanders & Canel 2013). In India, despite the country being the most populous in the world – with over 1, 2 billion citizens and more than 200 languages – its government communication system has proved to be effective owing to the adoption of strategic information dissemination platforms (Sanders & Canel 2013). This was made possible by government's massive roll-out plan of wireless Internet connectivity and e-government to the more than 250, 000 local administrations across villages (Sanders & Canel 2013).

In Canada, the government regards communication as a vital service to the citizens because it considers the citizens as their masters – their critical shareholders – who have invested their resources and entrusted a board of directors (government) with the responsibility to 'make profits for them' (Canada,

Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat 2014). In this analogy, the citizens' votes are equated to both financial and non-financial resources, and the profits equated to the electoral promises made by the political party in government. The Canadian government utilises multiple interactive information dissemination and sharing platforms to satisfy diverse preferred modes of communication (Canada. Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat 2014). Amongst others, it utilises social media to communicate important messages to the citizens and other stakeholders, following the realisation that the majority of Canadians prefer such a medium as their primary platform or channel of interaction and sharing of information (Canada. Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat 2014). Furthermore, the interactive nature of social media platforms supports the assertion that it can also be used "for collaboration and crowdsourcing to support policy development and service delivery, and to facilitate public engagement" (Canada. Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat 2014: s).

The Kenyan government, as a county based country, is mandated to ensure the existence of a myriad of platforms to facilitate public communication and information sharing in terms of section 95 of the County Government Act (Baswony 2014). This ranges from old media (such as radio, television, newspapers and public meetings) to new media platforms (such as the Internet and social media). Accordingly, the Kenyan government utilises "public forums or gatherings like barazas ... [and most significantly, what the government regards as] … effective strategies [such as] mafirimbi, social media, village elders/chiefs, church announcements and mass media announcements in print media and radio or television" (Baswony 2014). Mafirimbi is a mobile public address system used to create awareness within communities about upcoming events and gatherings. Social media is used predominantly by the government to communicate with the youth given their fondness of the interactive medium (Baswony 2014). In Singapore, the government has adopted the use of social media platforms for official communication purposes, and frequently consults and engages with the citizens to get their views on policy initiatives and its performance in implementing policies (Sanders & Canel 2013). It further utilises

its own in-house feedback unit to gather opinions of the citizens. Consequently, communication with citizens in Singapore continues to improve because the citizens appreciate that government recognised them as unique individuals and "thinking being[s] … with the rights of a citizen, instead of pure political subject[s]" (Lee 2011: 19). The implication is that by communicating via social media, individual citizens feel intimate to, and valued by their government, and this has arguably closed the communication gap between the two parties. However, too much interaction and consultation with citizens may lead to feedback fatigue which may lead to the whole transparency initiative losing its credibility, as it happened in Singapore when the citizens ended up concluding that it is "mere window-dressing exercises to give appearance of open government communication" (Sanders & Canel 2013: 311).

In Australia, although new media channels such as Twitter, Youtube, websites and blogs were predominantly utilised to communicate with the citizens, the government continued to also utilise old media channels – most significantly, radio – in the form of talkshows (Sanders & Canel 2013). Although radio continues to be classified as one of the old media channels, its talkback show or phone-in programme format enables it to metamorphose into a new media channel as well (Munson 1993; Barker 2002). A talkback show, also referred to as talk-show, is an interactive broadcast format which enables real-time engagement and feedback between the broadcaster and the listerner or viewer (Munson 1993; Barker 2002; Farlex 2015). Undoubtedly, live talkshows provide a platform for the people to express their views unambiguously and in real-time.

It was not surprising therefore, that the onetime Australian Prime Minister, John Howard (1996 – 2007), and other political leaders, preferred to utilise radio talk-shows to communicate with the citizens given that this channel offers an instant feedback mechanism, like in the case of new media channels (Sanders & Canel 2013). The utilisation of talkshows subsequently increased the penetration and accessibility of political news – government policy implementation progress reports – by the citizens (Sanders & Canel 2013). The Australian government

also relies on new media channels to communicate with the citizens during emergency and crisis situations (Sanders & Canel 2013). In Lesotho, despite freedom of speech being guaranteed in the democratic kingdom, citizens do not have a constitutional right to access government information (Kapa 2013). Those who require official government information, including the media, should do so through an application to principal secretaries (heads ministries) who have the authority to either grant or refuse the application, albeit at a prescribed fee. Furthermore, Kapa (2013) adds that the Lesotho government does not consult or interact with the citizens with regard to policy development, and thus takes unilateral decisions on behalf of the 100 percent shareholders – the citizens. Communication in Lesotho was thus characterised by incoherency and parallelism from divergent sides. This supports the argument by Young (2007: 285) that some democratic governments continue to prefer a one-way communication system which symbolises "top-down, controlled communication processes which do not invite interactivity or active participation" by citizens.

In South Africa, the government still prefers to utilise one-way passive old media to communicate with the citizens, hence the need for "the South African government to adopt new and faster means of modern social media communication tools such as twitters, Facebooks and WhatsApp's" (Sebola 2017: 31). This view is supported by Heinze, Schneider and Ferié (2013), and Maarek (2014) who argue that interactive feedback-eliciting new media channels have the potential to close the gap between a government and the citizens. Consequently, South Africa's communication strategy is ranked in the top 100, alongside countries like Poland, Chile, India, Mexico and China (CommGAP 2009; Sanders & Canel 2013). Overall, governments in countries like Austria, Belgium, Colombia, Netherlands, Korea, Norway, Portugal and Turkey have also joined the new media bandwagon, as they widely utilise social media platforms to interact with their citizens (Mickoleit 2014). Having discussed some of the government communication systems across the world, it was also essential to discuss how such systems could be utilised to promote good governance and to nurture democracy.

2.3. Promoting good governance in a democracy

According to the United Nations (2017: 9), "good governance promotes human rights … [as] it encourages public participation in government ... [and fosters] accountability [by] elected and appointed officials. It enables civil society to become actively involved in policymaking and leads to the wide representation of societal interests in decision-making". Good governance is attained when eight (8) measures are fulfiiled; namely, participation; rule of law; transparency; responsiveness; consensus-oriented; equity and inclusiveness; effectiveness and efficiency; and accountability (Plumptre & Graham 1999; Agere 2000; Graham, Amos & Plumptre 2003). This means all citizens: must participate in government decision-making processes; must be equally protected by the law; must have access to information (which must be easy to understand) and decisions made by government on their behalf – as shareholders. In addition, the board of directors – the government – must: be responsive by providing timely information to the shareholders – the citizens; listen to the views of the majority in case of diverse views; ensure that the development information needs of the vulnerable groups are also protected (Plumptre & Graham 1999; Agere 2000; Graham, Amos & Plumptre 2003).

A government must also ensure that: it utilises resources efficiently in order to meet the needs of current and future citizens; it untimately accounts for its actions aimed at protecting the interests of the shareholders – the citizens (Plumptre & Graham 1999; Agere 2000; Graham, Amos & Plumptre 2003). This is in line with the South African government's constitutional mandate of fostering transparency by "providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information" (South Africa 1996:s 195.108: 107) [emphasis in the original]. For democracy to flourish and be sustainable, democratically-elected governments – like South Africa's – must thus continuously interact with the citizens, as they have the right to know how their duly elected representatives are performing, in terms of protecting their interests (OECD 1996; Viteritti 1997; Horwitz 2004; Javuru 2010; CommGAP 2011; Wang & Lim 2011; Sanders & Canel 2013; Pillay 2015; City Government

Transparency [sa]; United Nations 2017). This concurs with the assertion by Sanford and Rose (2007: 406) that government-citizens interaction is meant to "improve the efficiency, acceptance, and legitimacy of political processes". Howlett (2009), however, warns that political parties in government sometimes abuse and manipulate government communication systems by withholding information they deem harmful to their reputation – gatekeeping – thus channelling and influencing the perception of citizens regarding the performance of the government of the day. Young (2007) also warns that politicians themselves – due to their political influence and authority – could also abuse the government communication system for their own personal gain. They may promote themselves rather than the work of government. This would essentially lead to the abuse of government resources to unfairly benefit the political party in power (Young 2007).

To avoid being accused of abusing tax payers' – the citizens' money – and unfairly benefitting the political party they represent, governments should not only consult and engage citizens during electioneering time (CommGAP 2009). To this end, government communication should be non-partisan and serve the interests of the citizens and not to promote the political party in power. Countries such as Sweden, Germany and the United Kingdom fully subscribe to non-partisan government communication which is regulated and enforced through communication policies, biased towards promoting good governance (Sanders & Canel 2013). Furthermore, "the democratic process can be damaged when communication is insincere, inadequate or incomplete" or perceived ungenuine (Cornish *et al* (2011: V). Democratic governments are perceived to be trustworthy because they perpetually provide their citizens with accurate and reliable information (de Jesus 2003; Cornish *et al* 2011).

Once trust is built, confidence is harnessed to the point that any communication by government is regarded as genuine and not intended to manipulate the citizens (de Jesus 2003; Cornish *et al* 2011). Thus, restricting access to government information by the citizens or abusing the system for personal gain,

is unconstitutional and may result in citizens turning against their elected government (Viteritti 1997; Horwitz 2004; Piotrowski & Van Ryzin 2007; Canel & Sanders 2012; City Government Transparency [sa]). Democracy is thus intentionally biased towards continuously satisfying the information needs of the citizens – the shareholders – and not the people who represent them in government. However, the mere act of communicating – one-way information flow from one party to another – does not necessarily guarantee effective communication (de Jesus 2003; Duhé 2007; Jewkes 2011; Wang & Lim 2011; Okwechime 2015). Government communication machinery exists primarily to inform and engage or interact with the citizens in order to get their views and opinions, as well as to assess whether the government is still on the right track (Plumptre & Graham 1999; Agere 2000; de Jesus 2003; Graham *et al* 2003; CommGAP 2009).

According to Wang and Lim (2011), communication with the citizens takes place at three (3) levels; namely, through: (1) dissemination; (2) consultation; and (3) participation in decision-making processes by the latter. The level of dissemination explains that government merely distributes information at its disposal to the citizens – representing passive one-way communication – herein referred to as government-to-citizens (G2C) communication. This could be done through the distribution of information material such as pamphlets, leaflets, brochures and newsletters (Wang & Lim 2011). Consultation explains that a government interacts with the citizens to solicit their comments and feedback – simply explained as citizens-to-government (C2G) communication; and participation involves the citizens actively participating in decision-making processes – although the final decision still rests the government, as the duly delegated representative of the interests of the shareholders (Wang & Lim 2011).

The phrase 'duly delegated representative' explains that a government was put into office by the citizens through a democratic election. Thus, to ascertain effective communication, there must be exchange of meaning – mutual understanding of the message – by way of engagement or interaction between

the two (2) parties in the communication process (Livingstone 2002; Lievrouw & Livingstone 2006; Duhé 2007; Agichtein et al 2008; Wang & Lim 2011; Jewkes 2011; Socha & Eber-Schmid 2012; Okwechime 2015). Simply put, communication must be a two-way process between the sender and the receiver. By implication, effective communication is dependent on the two-way communication process which is capable of eliciting feedback. Okwechime (2015) asserts that communication would be incomplete without feedback. Thus, the mere dissemination of information should not be equated with effective communication (Okwechime 2015). Accordingly, governments across the world have put in place communication policies which enable effective communication by utilising two-way information dissemination channels like new media (Rice & Associates 1984; Drenth *et al* 1998; Pratt 2000; Livingstone 2002; Lievrouw & Livingstone 2006; Duhé 2007; Agichtein *et al* 2008; Wang & Lim 2011; Jewkes 2011; Socha & Eber-Schmid 2012).

Parycek and Sachs (2010: 57) assert that "the integration of ICT tools and products [like social media] enables society to realise the principles of open government - transparency, participation, and collaboration". The new media channels are thus the most appropriate given their interactivity (two-way communication) and instantaneity (real-time feedback) (Crosbie 2002; Young 2007; CommGAP 2009; Wang & Lim 2011; Bertot *et al* 2012; Sanders & Canel 2013; Mickoleit 2014). Wang and Lim (2011: 81) also assert that as a form of new media, social media platforms enable "two-way symmetrical communication with their citizens" which is fundamental in propelling effective communication and promoting democracy. One-way communication does not promote good governance, as this makes the citizens mere consumers rather than "prosumers" of government messages (Cunningham 2010: 111).

Prosumers are able to interact with the message and provide feedback – two-way communication – as opposed to consumers who are not afforded an opportunity to seek clarity, in case of misunderstanding or requiring an explanation (Cunningham 2010). Wang and Lim (2011) argue that governments,

which still prefer one-way old media channels, basically avoid confrontation with and being blamed by the citizens, in cases of poor performance, in fulfilling their mandate of protecting the interests of the shareholders. Continuing to communicate with the citizens through one-way communication channels may ultimately frustrate them, as they are unable to reciprocate, and this may also lead to apathy and discontent which are a recipe for civil protests (Viteritti 1997; Horwitz 2004; Piotrowski & Van Ryzin 2007; Wang & Lim 2011; Canel & Sanders 2012). One could argue that the continuous utilisation of one-way communication channels by democratic governments is tantamount to a board of directors avoiding to fully account and engage with their employer – the shareholders – which is against the tenets of good governance and democracy.

Transparency and accountability nurture democracy and foster acceptance by the citizens, ultimately promoting stability within communities (OECD 1996; Sanford & Rose 2007; City Government Transparency [sa]; United Nations 2017). In this regard, the adoption and utilisation of new media will optimise government's communication machinery by "transform[ing] the way in which interactions take place, services are delivered, knowledge is utilized … the way citizens participate in governance and public administration reform" (UNDESA 2006: 3). Clearly, public opinion and discourse promote good governance which could be realised when gatekeepers are removed.

2.4. Fostering public opinion and discourse by removing gatekeepers

A layman's definition of a gate is that it is a movable barrier, used as an entrance or exit, to confine and control access towards the in or outside of a demarcated area. From this definition, a gatekeeper is simply a person who controls access at the gate (Collins English Dictionary 1999; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015). Conceptualised in 1943 by the German psychologist, Kurt Lewin, argued that gatekeeping happens when a person exercises their power to filter or close the 'gate' to block information – which other people supposedly do not need – from passing through (Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim & Wrigley 2001; Coghlan & Brannick

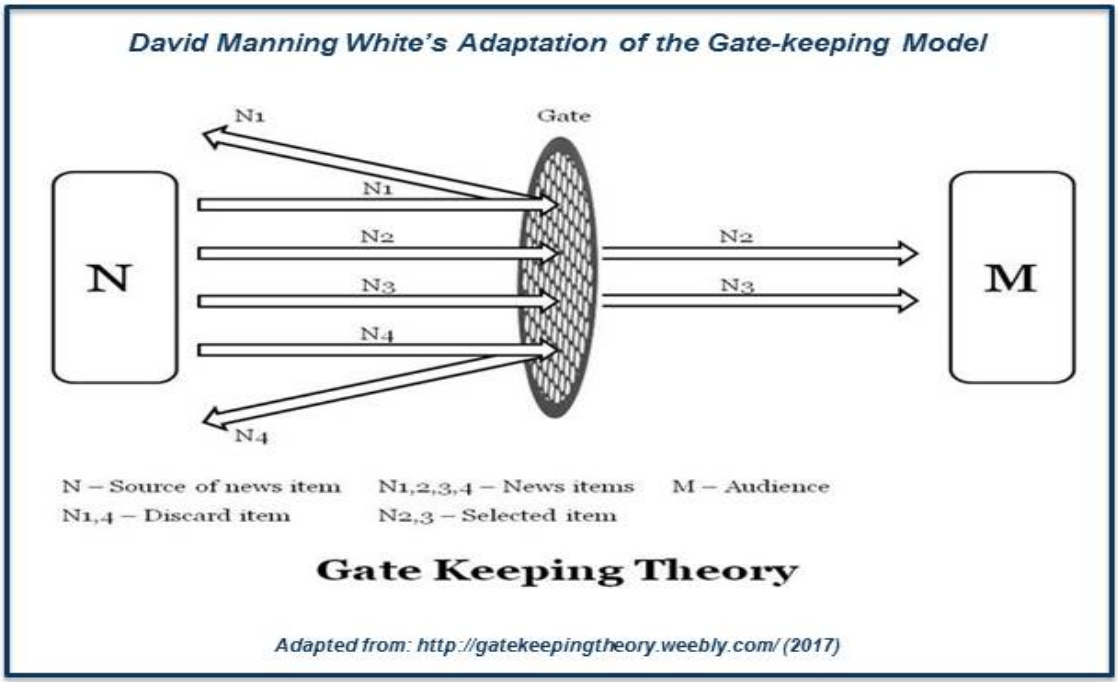
2003; Cunningham 2010; Shabir, Safdar, Imran, Mumtaz & Anjum 2015). Through the concept, Lewin wanted to understand how human beings function in their own space and subsequently become conscious of their own surroundings (Coghlan & Brannick 2003; Bennett 2004). Although the concept – gatekeeping – was initialy widely used in the fields of psychology and social psychology, it finally filtered into the communication sphere, particularly under mass communication (Coghlan & Brannick 2003; Bennett 2004). Accordingly, the gatekeeping theory explains gatekeeping as the process whereby information passes through some form of psychological gate – hence reference to a gate – in the mind of the gatekeeper who possesses the authority over information at their disposal (Shoemaker *et al* 2001; Coghlan & Brannick 2003; Cunningham 2010; Shabir *et al* 2015).

In mass media communication, gatekeeping refers to the process whereby news editors consciously filter information, and only let through or transmit what they deem newsworthy, according to their standards (Shoemaker *et al* 2001; Coghlan & Brannick 2003; Bennett 2004; Cunningham 2010; Shabir *et al* 2015). In this regard, Groshek and Tandoc (2017) and Tutheridge (2017) argue that gatekeeping is significant in this era of social media, which has opened the flood gates for all information to pass through to the receivers, to close the gate on unverified and fake news. Tandoc (2017) and Tutheridge (2017) add that the role of journalists, as gatekeepers, is to disseminate verified information which would render such information credible, when it reaches the recipients. Social media platforms deliver raw information, which in some cases could be fake news, and susceptible to be believable and accepted as the truth by the recipients (Groshek & Tandoc 2017; Tutheridge 2017).

However, given that social media platforms afford the people the ultimate control over all the information available, one could argue that this makes the people information editors as they are able to consume whatever information relevant to their needs (Groshek & Tandoc 2017; Tutheridge 2017). Figure 2.1 below denotes the gatekeeping model, as explained by David Manning White. White

argues that it is infeasible to transmit all information given the limitation of time and space; hence the need to classify information according to the level of importance and interest (Shabir *et al* 2015). His model is based on the mass media – as the gatherer of information – and postulates that it is necessary for news editors to filter information and only disseminate what they deem important for consumption. The model explains that large amounts of information are transmitted through a gate, where it is filtered to determine what is worth disseminating – referred to as newsworthy in news arena – to the potential recipient, and only information deemed as such is allowed through (Shabir *et al* 2015). Essentially, White asserts that gatekeepers use their discretion, just like a mother would to her children, to determine what they presume would satisfy the information needs of the potential information consumer (Shabir *et al* 2015).

Figure 2.1: The process of the gatekeeping model



Evidently, gatekeeping is subjective, as it is dependent solely on the decision of the gatekeeper, who is not privy to the information needs of the intended recipient (Shoemaker *et al* 2001; Coghlan & Brannick 2003; Cunningham 2010).

Gatekeeping thus alters social reality by giving a skewed and one-sided view to the receiver, which may give an impression that all is good, in cases of riots – the other part of reality. It could even be consciously used to achieve some nefarious intentions of the gatekeepers (Bird & Garda [Sa]; Shoemaker & Vos 2009; Shabir *et al* 2015). For example, in South Africa, gatekeeping was used by the apartheid government to suppress the freedom of expression amongst the blacks, and to further communicate government propaganda to the outside world – that "separation [w]as legitimate and necessary and to hide the inequality with distortions and myths" (Bird & Garda [Sa]: 1). In essence, gatekeeping was used for public relations efforts to portray the apartheid South African government to international communities in a good way. Gatekeeping was not unique to South Africa.

In Kenya, cartels – government's dereliction of their constitutional mandate of providing basic services to the citizens, particularly in poor communities, has resulted in cartels taking over the provision of these services, and also deciding what infomation should be communicated to the citizens – effectively controlling access to information or simply gatekeeping (Liko 2018). Despite the supposed negative side of gatekeeping, it is used to protect ideology, culture and dignity of the nation in Pakistan (Shabir *et al* 2015). The problem with gatekeeping is that it assumes the information being let through is what the recipients need, thus deciding on behalf of the recipients, when there is a high possibility that the blocked information could be the one required by the recipients.

Evidently, gatekeeping is tantamount to censorship which effectively hinders transparency and accountability – the tenets of good governance – and enervates democracy (City Government Transparency [sa]; Williams *et al* 1988; Salwen & Stacks 1996; Viteritti 1997; Horwitz 2004; Piotrowski & Van Ryzin 2007; CommGAP 2011; Pillay 2015). Groshek and Tandoc (2017: 201) assert that "audiences, however, are no longer passive receivers of news and have been successfully wrestling for power over information flow, challenging the gatekeeping control that used to be under the monopoly of journalists". The

emergence of social media platforms has thus closed any possibility of information control or censorship by frustrating possible gatekeeping of the views and frustrations of citizens by governments, as they are able to ventilate without restrictions (Shoemaker & Vos 2009; Groshek & Tandoc 2017). These platforms have removed the traditional decision-making 'gates' previously imposed between the information – at the disposal of government – and the citizens. Social media has enabled all interested citizens to be journalists in their own right, as they are now able to control the flow of information in their own spaces (Shoemaker & Vos 2009; Groshek & Tandoc 2017). The public is now influential and control news construction and content – what they would like to read about – as journalists are now even incorporating Tweets from the public verbatim, into their articles (Shoemaker & Vos 2009; Groshek & Tandoc 2017). This has transformed the public into what Groshek and Tandoc (2017: 203) call "*produsers*" – because they produce and subsequently consume or use the information at their disposal as they wish.

A distinction is hereby made between the word producer (with a 'c'), and the concept *produser* (with an 's' – conceptualised from the words 'produce' and 'user') – given that the former refers to a person or entity that merely creates a product or commodity for sale whereas the latter explains that the product creator does not end at the production stage, but goes further to even utilise it (Collins English Dictionary 1999; Business Dictionary.Com 2015; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015; Groshek & Tandoc 2017). Assertively, the citizens are now able to create their own 'gates' – alteit being permanently opened – through which all information is eligible to pass through without being shifted (Shoemaker & Vos 2009; Groshek & Tandoc 2017). This has given the citizens the freedom to personally select the type of information which addresses their needs. The rise of social media is accordingly, gradually thwarting attempts to control public opinion in countries like China, where the government still prefers to communicate with its citizens through the traditional media (Sanders & Canel 2013). This is despite one-third of the country's 1, 3 billion people having access to the Internet and more than 1 billion using cell phones (Sanders & Canel 2013).

According to Xiaoming, Zhang and Yu (1996), this happens because the Chinese government is cautious of the potential impact of the new media in the communication process; hence it still wants to control the information dissemination continuum. What this implies, is that some governments are still not interested in joining the communication revolution for fear of losing their grip on information and public opinion control (Sanders & Canel 2013). Evidently, social media has removed the self-imposed gate-keeping function which is synonymous with the traditional media like newspapers, which only publish edited articles selected at the discretion of editors, herein referred to as gate-keepers (Moody-Ramirez & Dates 2014). This essentially provides "endless outlets for authors to spread messages using self-publishing …. without an external gate-keeper to control the finished product" (Moody-Ramirez & Dates 2014: 71). Having discussed gatekeeping, it was also essential to discuss the demography of the users of social media platforms.

2.5. Demography and social media usage

According to Jewkes (2011), Duggan *et al* (2015) and Kemp (2014), the majority (89%) of the functional age group of 18-29 uses social media the most, followed by the 30-49 age group at 82%. In addition, Duggan *et al* (2015)'s Internet project survey established that the majority of adults utilise social media for networking and communication purposes. It has been established that *facebook* is the most popular social media platform to adults aged 65 years and older, around the world (Rose, 2011; Ramos 2013; Duggan *et al* 2015). As a result, the forever increasing number of adults who are addicted to social media has resulted in the "emergence of the 'kidult' as the media have termed adults who enjoy a prolonged (or permanent!) state of adolescence" (Jewkes 2011: 239). One such 'kidult' was an Australian woman, who in 2015 enraged her *facebook* friends with her daily minute-by-minute updates on her six-month old daughter's milestones (Pillay 2015). Jade Ruthven's addiction to *facebook* to share her delightful moments with her social media friends caused her more trouble than good after her cyber friends became irritated, and started responding by posting disgusting and

scathing comments to her (Pillay 2015). For example, one of her *facebook* friends commented that "look, we all have kids that we are besotted with – guess what – every parent thinks their kid is the best ever. But we don't ram it down everyone else's neck!!! [*sic*]. She wears a new outfit – well take a photo and sent it PRIVATELY [*sic*] to the person who gave it to her – not to everyone!!! [*sic*]" (Pillay 2015). With regards to utilisation by gender, females were more regular users than men, with *facebook* being their most preferred and accessed platform, accounting for 950 million users worldwide (Jewkes 2011; Kemp 2014; Duggan *et al* 2015; Alzahran 2016; Zephoria 2017). Alzahran (2016) argues that women predominantly use social media platform, like *facebook*, for self-preservation whereas men utilise them to find friends or seek business opportunities. In South Africa, the diffusion of social media continues to grow and was recorded at approximately 40 million registered users in 2016, with *facebook* accounting for the highest users at 14 million – also evidenced by the click-through rate on the site (*facebook*) – which increased from 48% in 2013 to 64% in 2014 (BusinessTech 2014; World Wide Worx 2016).

Other social media platforms utilised in South Africa were YouTube (8.4 million), Twitter (7.7 million), Mxit (4.9 million), LinkedIn (5.5 million), Instagram (1.1 million), Pinterest (840 000) and Google+ (466 000) (BusinessTech 2014; World Wide Worx 2016). Lekhanya (2013) asserts that the use of social media has no age barrier, and has even transcended the geographical divide of the urban and rural areas in South Africa. The fastest growing age group of *facebook* users in South Africa is that of over 60 years, as it has grown by 44% between August 2011 and August 2012 (Lekhanya 2013; Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart & Madden 2015). This is in comparison with less than 30% for the 30-39 age group and less than 20% for the 19-30 age group recorded during the same period (Lekhanya 2013; Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart & Madden 2015).

2.6. The power of social media on effective mass mobilisation

The advent of social media has essentially removed man-made boundaries around world countries, resulting into a unitary cyber-country (Livingstone 2002; Jafarzadeh 2011; Mudombi 2013; Thioune 2013; Fichman & Rosenbaum 2014). Social media's capability to simultaneously connect people all over the world, at any given time, has undisputedly proved to be effective in mass mobilisation (Jafarzadeh 2011; Stahl & Caprano 2014; Bath 2015; Mkhize & Neophytou 2015; Shaikh 2015; Van Niekerk & Blignaut 2015). Social media platforms have been successfully utilised across the world to mobilise people to take a particular action. Doerfel, Chewning and Lai (2013) credit the effectiveness of social media platforms in emergency situations, as they can reach multitudes of people simultaneously and instantaneously. Furthermore, given that social media transcends any communication or geographical barrier, it provides excellent information transmission platforms in crisis situations, when traditional or old media channels fail, for whatever reason (Baruah 2012).

The utilisation of social media platforms, in crisis situations, have subsequently increased all over the world since 2004, following disasters in countries such as Haiti, Japan and the Philippines, which experienced tsunamis, earthquakes and typhoons, amongst others (Flizikowski, Kurki, Hołubowicz, Stachowicz, Päivinen, Hokkanen, & Delavallade 2014). Citizens of the affected countries had relied enormously on social media for updates and communication purposes (Flizikowski *et al* 2014). A study aimed at establishing end users' data requirements in a crisis situation, across Europe, has also found that the majority of people "consider[ed] social media as a good communication channel both for distributing and receiving information" (Flizikowski *et al* 2014: 710). This concurs with the results of the 2012 'Social Media in Disasters and Emergencies' survey, conducted by the American Red Cross, which indicated that 69% of respondents preferred new media, such as social social media, to be utilised to update them during emergency or crisis situations (Yasin 2010). This study further established that people would like emergency response agencies to regularly monitor their

websites and social media networks to respond promptly to posted requests for assistance (Yasin 2010). Betcher (2013), however, warns that the use of social media in emergency situations should not replace the old or traditional media, but rather complement them because, like other platforms or channels, social media has certain limitations. This is because not everyone was on social media, and there were still people who prefer their comfort zone – the traditional media for communication. The impact of social media was also evidenced in South Africa when Twitter was successfully utilised to mobilise thousands of university students across the country, to revolt against the impending 2016 tuition fee hikes (Bath 2015; Mkhize & Neophytou 2015; Shaikh 2015; Van Niekerk & Blignaut 2015). It all started at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg on 08 October 2015, when the students initiated a campaign dubbed *WitsFeesMustFall* – mobilised through a hashtag with the same name. The success of the communication campaign was evidenced as it quickly spread to other universities across South Africa, when the *FeesMustFall* hashtag was adopted by other students (Van Niekerk & Blignaut 2015).

The use of Twitter was so successful, as the campaign had even transcended beyond the borders of South Africa. It resulted in more than 140 000 tweets of solidarity being shared worldwide overnight, as far as Australia, Great Britain and the United States of America (Bath 2015; Mkhize & Neophytou 2015). By 22 October 2015, over 200 000 *#FeesMustFall* tweets were shared amongst the students (Van Niekerk & Blignaut 2015). Students abroad even went as far as posting their pictures depicting the *#FeesMustFall* lettering on other social media platforms, such as *facebook* and *Instagram.* The successful trending of the *#FeesMustFall* also produced other solidarity sub-hashtags such as *#NationalShutDown; #InternationalShutDown; #UnionBuilding; and #BladeMustFall* (Bath 2015; Mkhize & Neophytou 2015; Shaikh 2015; Van Niekerk & Blignaut 2015). The *#UnionBuilding* sub-hashtag was aimed at strengthening support for the main hashtag campaign – *#FeesMustFall* – to mobilise students countrywide to join the march to the seat of the South African government – the Union Buildings in Pretoria – which houses the country's

Presidency. To show the impact of the social media information sharing campaign, more than 300 tweets were sent out every minute, as the protesting students were preparing to march to the Union Buildings on the morning of Friday, 23 October 2015 (Shaikh 2015). The *#BladeMustFall* sub-hashtag was aimed at mobilising support for the no-confidence campaign against South Africa's then Minister for Higher Education and Training, Dr Bonginkosi Emmanuel 'Blade' Nzimande, who was responsible for universities. Accordingly, social media platforms like *Twitter* have provided easy access, instant information and updates to students; hence the *#FeesMustFall* campaign was successful. This is because, for example, the students relied heavily on *Twitter* for up-to-the-minute updates on their campaign efforts, including affording them an interaction platform, in case they required clarity on certain issues (Shaikh 2015). Consequently, due to the impact of the *Twitter* campaign, mobile networks ended up offering free data to students, and other people who wanted to support the campaign were given an option of donating data to the protesting students through their mobile devices using their Google accounts and banking apps (Shaikh 2015).

Thus, the sporadic student protests which spiralled across university campuses in South Africa – the solidarity marches abroad and the successful mobilisation of a march to the Union Buildings – were attributable to the communication efficiency brought about by social media (Bath 2015; Mkhize & Neophytou 2015; Shaikh 2015; Van Niekerk & Blignaut 2015). The use of *Twitter* has therefore proved the efficacy of social media platforms in ensuring effective communication. The *#FeesMustFall* social media campaign has now been recorded as the second most tweeted hashtag in South Africa, after the death of the country's first democratically elected president, Mr Nelson Mandela (Shaikh 2015). Overall, Campbell (2014) asserts that the advent of new media, like social media, has broken communication barriers – owing to its immediacy and interactivity – and has effectively improved human communication via mediated channels of communication.

2.7. Social media, political communication and persuasion

The emergence of social media has transformed the way politicians used to lure the citizens to vote for them (Owen 2011; Tracey 2014; McBride & Respaut 2015). It has enabled politicians to connect directly with, and the citizens to instantaneously engage with their lurers. This was evidenced when former U.S Presidient, Barack Obama, successfully utilised platforms such as Twitter, *facebook*, MySpace and YouTube, amongst others, during his 2008 and 2012 United States presidential election campaigns (Owen 2011; Scherer 2012; Tracey 2014). During the 2008 campaign, his Twitter account – @BarackObama – which was used for campaigning subsequently become the third Twitter account in the world, to record at least 10 million followers (Tracey 2014). During the 2012 campaign, the number of Obama's Twitter followers increased to around 23 million, and his picture embracing his wife, Michelle, was tweeted and shared over *facebook* on election night – making it the most shared image in the history of both social media platforms (Scherer 2012).

Obama's campaign messages on *facebook* received 'likes' of up to 45 million over the presidential race period – up from 19 million during the 2008 campaign (Scherer 2012). In addition, Obama's interview on the social media platform, Reddit, recorded the highest traffic in the history of the platform (Scherer 2012). In 2012, Obama's campaign managers also exploited the potential of social media to fund-raise close to $690 million in relatively short period of time (Scherer 2012). Existing research results regarding the impact of new media on election campaigns attributed the high voter turnout to the use of social media, blogging, text messages and e-mails (Owen 2011). Again, almost 70% of those who voted for Obama were the young people aged 25 years and younger – emphasising the communication channel preference by the youth in the United States (Owen 2011). Another U.S. presidential contender, Hillary Clinton also successfully exploited social media in 2015, to announce her candidacy "in a social media strategy that earned her high marks among marketers. Clinton's tweet announcing her candidacy notched almost 90 000 retweets by the end of Sunday

[12 April 2015], her campaign video more than 1 million view on YouTube, and her *facebook* campaign … broke a million views" (McBride & Respaut 2015: 5). In South Africa, the country's Independent Electoral Commission also explored the potential of social media platforms to increase the number of first time voters – those aged 18 and above – during one of its voter registration campaigns for the 2014 general elections (Tracey 2014). Interestingly, 80% (881 011) out of the 2.5 million of those who registered to vote on the weekend of 9-10 November 2013 were young people aged 18-29 years (Tracey 2014). This demonstrates the power and impact of social media in marketing and communicating messages effectively (Lekhanya 2013; Surbone *et al* 2013; Volpe 2013; Webster 2014; Stahl & Caprano 2014; Kemp 2014; Tracey 2014; Duggan *et al* 2015; McBride & Respaut 2015).

It should however be noted that government social media accounts are 'pushed' or popularised by political principals, due to their embedded followers or supporters who believe in their capability to change their socio-economic well-being (Mickoleit 2014). Accordingly, the popularity of the U.S's @WhiteHouse and the U.K's @Number10Gov Twitter handles, and their respective *facebook* accounts, confirm "the interest of the wider population and organisations in the content provided by government institutions on social media" (Mickoleit 2014: 17). Mickoleit (2014) further argues that by re-tweeting original government messages, the citizens confirm and endorse the relevance and worth of the content of the message they have received. Consequently, further re-tweets by followers perpetuate the message to a wider audience because followers, in most cases, idolise and believe whatever their idol believes and trusts.

Furthermore, given that marketing is dependent on persuasion, Whitmore (2015: 8) asserts that "social networks, [such as] *facebook*, Twitter and LinkedIn, are exceptional avenues to meet potential clients and customers". The popularity of these platforms has even engulfed the marketing sphere by creating a new kind of conversation among consumers and marketers, which in turn, paves the way for mutual understanding, intimacy and interaction between businesses and

customers, and this challenges the existence of traditional marketing strategies (Harvard Business Review 2010). A study conducted by Stelzner (2014), to establish the usage of social media marketing, indicated that 97% of respondents were utilising social media platforms for marketing their businesses. Stelzner (2014) argues that marketing of goods and services on social media increases exposure of businesses, thereby helping them to improve their sales. This concurs with what was established by Pring (2012), that 500 million people log onto *facebook* daily, making them prospective consumers of marketing messages. Essentially, "social media is rapidly becoming a new force in organizations around the world, allowing them to reach out to and understand consumers as never before" (Harvard Business Review 2010: 18). Social media cannot, however, be used as "a one size fits all tool" in marketing initiatives. This is because "each business is unique, with its own flavour and voice in its 'community', and each business is situated within a community" (Lekhanya 2013: 3).

The term 'one-size-fits-all' refers to "a non-tailored standardised approach which does not take individual needs into consideration" (Ramodibe 2014: 39). This argument by Lekhanya (2013) is supported by Surbone, Zwitter, Rajer and Stiefel (2013), who argue that this approach may not always be appropriate considering that each person is unique and their information needs may differ from that of the next person. Webster (2014) also indicated that the results of a study conducted by *inPowered and Nielsen* entitled 'The Role of Content in the Consumer Decision Making Process' has established that "there is no one-size-fits-all content marketing approach". For example, if a person is sharing the same article on both Twitter and LinkedIn, they cannot use the same amount of content on both platforms, given that Twitter is limited to 140 characters whereas LinkedIn provides space for more details to be provided, thus confirming that one-size does not fit all in terms of awareness or marketing (Volpe 2013). It is therefore evident that marketing on each social media platform should be customised according to the requirements or characteristics of the users, in order for marketing initiatives to be successful (Lekhanya 2013; Surbone, Zwitter, Rajer &

Stiefel 2013; Volpe 2013; Webster 2014). Duhé (2007: 294) asserts that new media, such as the Internet and social media platforms, present "effective communication channel that permits direct and timely communication with various publics".

2.8. New media and information overload

Despite the benefits associated with new media, the ability of social media platforms to transmit voluminous and endless information at any given time, makes it difficult for any person to process it all at once, thus eventually affecting their decision-making process (Speier, Valacich & Vessey 1999; Gomez-Rodriguez, Gummadi & Schölkopf 2014). Accordingly, in crisis situations, communication via social media should be centrally co-ordinated to avoid confusion, misinformation and even information overload (Weiner 2006; Flizikowski *et al* 2014). Information overload refers to the difficulty to process, or confusion brought about by information received in abundance, which effectively hinders informed decision-making at the spur of the moment (Yang, Chen & Hong 2003; Gomez-Rodriguez *et al* 2014; Business Dictionary.Com 2015). It occurs because "the amount of input to a system exceeds its processing capacity" (Speier *et al* 1999: 338). Essentially, information overload results when a person is exposed to too much information, as this may result in a health condition known as information stress disorder or information fatigue syndrome (Yang *et al* 2003).

Rogers, Puryear and Root (2013) refer to information overload as infobesity – derived from the conventional term obesity – whereas Chamorro-Premuzic (2014) refers to it as infoxication (from intoxication). Ultimately, just like a blood clot happens, information overload could result in info-clot in the communication process. Significantly, time is of essence during an emergency situation; hence the information recipient is supposed to make an informed and even life-saving decision when they receive information. If not properly utilised in emergency situations, social media could create unintended panic, as some people would be unable to deal with the information they received (Jafarzadeh 2011). Weiner

(2006) adds that communication with the outside world, especially to the media, should be done as soon as a disaster occurs because it would give direction on what needs to be done for the duration of the crisis. Social media platforms are also critical and useful in controlling rumours during emergency and disaster times, as they are able to provide the affected residents with factual and real-time updates (Roberts 2014). This assists in avoiding any misinformation or miscommunication during emergency situations (Roberts 2014). Evidently, social media platforms have the ability and advantage of disseminating information in real-time (immediacy) and allow for instant feedback and clarity, if so required, thereby facilitating the successful decoding of the intended message (Yasin 2010; Jafarzadeh 2011). Notwithstanding all these motivations on the benefits of using social media in emergency situations, Betcher (2013) however advocates for the use of multiple media platforms – both old and new media – to increase the chances of the message reaching almost every person.

Information overload could potentially affect an individual's decoding and decision-making capacity, and this could hinder effective communication (Speier *et al* 1999; Gomez-Rodriguez *et al* 2014). It is thus important that during crisis or emergency situations, the amount of information transmitted via the new media, such as social media, should be limited to avoid information overload on the receiver (Weiner 2006; Flizikowski *et al* 2014; Gomez-Rodriguez *et al* 2014). The discussion on information overload was significant as it addressed one of the objectives of this study, that is, to establish the type of information citizens/residents prefer to receive via their preferred new media platforms. Clearly, not all information can be communicated via social media platforms, implying that a hybrid of both old and new media channels should be utilised by governments to communicate with their citizens.

2.9. New media and cyber-addiction

According to Rice and Associates (1984), the new media has created cyber-intimacy between the sender and the receiver of the information, and ultimately

leading to cyber-dependency. Ramos (2013) and Rose (2011) argue that people are so obsessed with the new media, in such a way that it has become a routine for a person to wake up to their mobile phone to check for text messages (SMSes) or visit social media platforms to keep abreast of developments. Such behaviour has thus made the new media indispensable to people's daily activities. Consequently, the number of people who attend meetings in community halls – face-to-face interaction – has dwindled significantly, as they now rely heavily on social media for their up-to-the-minute updates (Mangini *et al* 2014; Pring 2012; Lekhanya 2013; BusinessTech 2014; Duggan *et al* 2015; Zephoria 2017).

Williams *et al* (1988) asserts that people tend to easily adopt new innovations if they are beneficial to them, and thus societal changes can be attributed to the emergence of the new media, such as the internet or web-based social media platforms. This concurs with the findings of a study by Ramodibe (2014), that the majority of South Africa's citizens (85.6%) are interested in receiving government information via SMS, social media and e-mails. However, this has turned people into cyber-addicts, and in some instances, have contributed towards increasing the level of crime (Jewkes 2011; Guzzo, Ferri & Grifoni 2013). A cyber-addict is a person who is addicted to the Internet to a point where it controls their life, resulting in what is called Internet addiction disorder (Heffner 2003; Guzzo *et al* 2013; Grohol 2016). The potential risk is that face-to-face or inter-personal communication could be severely affected, if dependence on platforms such as social media increases (Guzzo *et al* 2013).

Such addiction could even risk the security of individuals as people disclose their every move on social media platforms – like announcing their holiday plans including the duration thereof – and even confirming their absence from their homes by sharing up to the minute photos (*City Press* 2015). This has even resulted in Britain's insurance companies increasingly checking their client's social media accounts – in case of re-imbursement claims for break-ins and theft from their houses – to establish if they ever posted information regarding their absence from their homes, and thereafter used this as a reason not to pay out

(*City Press* 2015). To this end, one could argue that social media could be termed the 'thiefigator' – a new media channel which navigates would-be thieves to a potential place of target. Consequently, although having a negative impact, the diffusion of new media has also contributed to cyber-crime – computer hacking and malicious software distribution – motivated by the desire to satisfy "intellectual curiosity/challenge, general maliciousness, revenge, establishing respect and power amongst online communities" (McGuire & Dowling 2013: 6). In South Africa, almost 50% of the population has Internet connectivity, and mobile phone connections of above 85 million (Lekhanya 2013; BusinessTech 2014; World Wide Worx 2016). The result is that the majority of South Africans were addicted to social media platforms, given that there were approximately 40 million registered users *facebook* and *Twitter* (World Wide Worx 2016). Their addition was confirmed by establishing that they wake up to their phones – it is the first thing they touch after opening their eyes in the morning – to check social media platforms (Lekhanya 2013; BusinessTech 2014; World Wide Worx 2016). This section was essential to this study, as it has established the extent of the new media usage by the citizens of South Africa/residents, in order to motivate for its adoption as a primary source of information.

2.10. Summary

In order to foster transparency and accountability, democratic governments, the world-over, are constitutionally-obliged to regularly report back to their citizens; hence the adoption of various communication strategies. In this regard, this chapter has provided an overview of government communication by mapping government communication systems around the world. It explained how transparency and accountability lead to good governance and entrenches democracy; discussed how public opinion facilitated by new media channels could remove gatekeepers. It further looked into the demographics of social media users; discussed the power of social media on effective mass mobilisation and persuasion for marketeers and politics. Lastly, it reviewed the subject of new media, information overload and cyber-addiction.

The next chapter, Chapter three, presents the theoretical framework of this study.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter has provided an overview of government communication. This chapter discusses the theoretical framework underpinning this study. A theory is significant to a research study because it lays the foundation and attempts to explain why things happen the way they do (Neuman 1997; Leedy 1997; Leedy & Ormrod 2001; Maxwell 2005). Therefore, just like a solid foundation is to a house structure, so is a theoretical framework to a research study. A theoretical framework essentially explains the founding theory of a study on a particular problem to be investigated, based on the work previously done by others. Its purpose is to demonstrate that the researcher has reviewed work previous done by others, relating to their identified problem statement (Neuman 1997; Leedy 1997; Leedy & Ormrod 2001; Maxwell 2005). To this end, mass communication theorists postulate that any form of mediated communication – transmitted via a channel or medium – has the potential to influence and is likely to be believed by the majority of the recipients (Baran & Davis 2013).

This is due to the extent of its diffusion because of its capability to reach many people at the same time (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur 1976; Crosbie 2002; Cleary 2003; Koontz & Weihrich 2007; Herman & Chomsky 2008; Sociology Central 2011). The popularity and the subsequent spiralling diffusion of the mass media in the early nineties has thus resulted in people believing and concluding that the mass media must be good and valuable, as a platform for voluminous information sharing (Eadie & Goret 2013). Theories of mass communication have thus demonstrated the significance of the communication discipline as the "shaper of public opinion … [by recognising] the role communication technology could play in society" (Eadie & Goret 2013: 18). This view is supported by McQuail (2010) who confirms that technological advancement, by way of digitisation of

messages, continues to influence, increase dependency, and ultimately strengthen the communication process. Accordingly, the objectives of the study suggest that a theoretical framework which addresses technological advancement, adoption, diffusion and effective communication, should be adopted as the foundation of the study. Various theories were examined to determine the one which best addresses all the above-mentioned requirements.

3.2. Defining the terms diffusion and innovation

The term diffusion, originates from the Latin word *diffundere* – meaning to spread out – and can be defined as the penetration or spread of a substance, phenomenon, activity or information over a locality or social setting (Rogers 1983, 1995, 2003; Strang & Meyer 1994; Collins English Dictionary 1999; Yates 2001; Sahin 2006; Jackson & Yariv 2007; Mehrer & Stolwijk 2009; Mbatha 2011; Carr [sa]). In physics, diffusion is explained as the movement of a phenomenon or substance from a high area of concentration to a low concentration area (Cussler 1997; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015). When a drop of coloured ink is poured into a glass of clear water and it spreads spontaneously with time, without the mixture being stirred, eventually uniformly colouring the water – provides a simple explaination of how diffusion takes place (Mehrer & Stolwijk 2009). In social science, diffusion refers to "socially mediated spread of some practice within a population" (Strang & Meyer 1994: 487).

Taking the definition further, Rogers (1983: 5) refers diffusion as "the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system". This study will thus adopt the social science definition as it relates to the advancement of human communication. Simply put, like in the example of the drop of ink, when something new is introduced to society, it will spontaneously permeate with time to the point that it would become known and accepted by everyone – that is, diffusion would have taken place. Unlike in chemistry where diffusion takes place from a high to a low area of concentration, it assertively happens oppositely or cumulatively in a social setting

– from unknown (low diffusion) to known (high diffusion) – according to Gabriel Tarde's S-curve diffusion process (Ryan & Gross 1943; Kinnunen 1996; Katz 1999, 2006; Valente 1999; Kaminski 2011). On the other hand, the term innovation – originating from the Latin word, *innovare* – can be explained as something new, an idea or product, intended to better or improve the performance of the existing ones (Rogers 1995, 2003; Collins English Dictionary 1999; O'Sullivan 2008; Tiwari 2008). O'Sullivan (2008: 4) explains innovation as "the process of making changes to something established by introducing something new that adds value to customers". According to Maranville (1992), innovation explains the introduction of a better solution to improve the performance of an existing phenomenon in order to meet new requirements of the current users. In the study, innovation refers to the interactive two-way new media platforms, such as social media – *facebook*, Twitter, blogs – which have the potential to harness communication amongst members of the society (Rogers 1995, 2003; Sahin 2006; Mbatha 2011; Perkins [sa]).

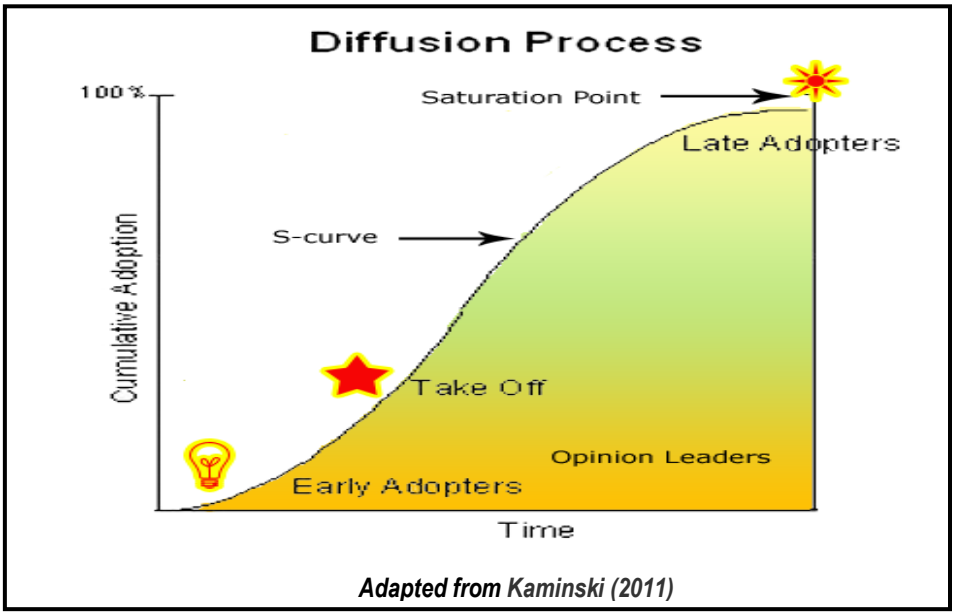
Clearly, the rationale behind an innovation is to bring about improvement to something existing. Thus, new media, such as social media, can be classified as an innovation given that it has revolutionised mediated communication channels from rendering non-reciprocal to interactive real-time service. Now, having a better understanding of the two terms, it would be easier to define the concept, diffusion of innovation. Simin and Janković (2014: 519) assert that diffusion of innovation is "a kind of social change … that involves interpersonal communication". Diffusion of innovation thus simply refers to the extent to which a new or improved phenomenon permeates within a social setting (Rogers 1983, 1995; Strang & Meyer 1994; Yates 2001; Jackson & Yariv 2007; Kaminski 2011). To this end, Rogers (1983) argues that diffusion can be classified as some form of communication – mutual sharing of a new phenomenon – given that the potential receiver of an innovation is likely to be persuaded to adopt something new, during the diffusion process. The origin of diffusion is discussed in detail below:

3.3. The origin of diffusion

The interest in understanding the concept of diffusion started in 1903 with the French sociologist, Gabriel Tarde, who illustrated the diffusion process in an S-shaped curve (Ryan & Gross 1943; Kinnunen 1996; Katz 1999, 2006; Encyclopedia.com 2018; Valente 1999; Kaminski 2011). Tarde's initial interest was however not on the actual diffusion process, but on what he termed, the adoption process, as he was interested in establishing the role of societal influence in the adoption of innovation process which he summarised in the S-curve innovation adoption model (Encyclopedia.com 2018). Tarde argued that any invention or innovation introduced to communities can easily diffuse and bring about social change – changing people's beliefs and cultural practices (Ryan & Gross 1943; Kinnunen 1996; Katz 1999, 2006; Valente 1999; Kaminski 2011). This view is supported by Katz (1999: 148) who asserts that "innovation spreads in concentric circles, flowing smoothly until it encounters hostile barriers, whether environmental or cultural, including the onset of a competing invention".

For example, a religious belief like christianity can easily diffuse within a harmonious social structure, like a church, because the members believe in the same religion. Figure 3.1 below depicts the S-curve innovation adoption process which explains that people experience and adopt innovation at different times, with the initial adopters who are normally opinion leaders, described as the early adopters (Ryan & Gross 1943; Kinnunen 1996; Katz 1999, 2006; Valente 1999; Kaminski 2011). These opinion leaders – like musicians or mass media personalities – are usually influential in society and their views unconsciously influence others to jump on the innovation bandwagon. However, with time, the new 'recruits' would gradually adopt the innovation as they are slowly indirectly convinced – herein referred to as cumulative adoption – and thus described as the late adopters (Ryan & Gross 1943; Kinnunen 1996; Katz 1999, 2006; Valente 1999; Kaminski 2011).

Figure 3.1: Gabriel Tarde's S-curve Innovation Adoption Process



Adapted from Kaminski (2011)

The adoption process would essentially take-off slowly but pick-up speed as the adoptors unconsciously convince one another during the trial period, until the saturation point – full adoption stage – is reached; hence Tarde described the diffusion process as taking an S-curve shape (Ryan & Gross 1943; Kinnunen 1996; Katz 1999, 2006; Valente 1999; Kaminski 2011). Basically, the S-curve represents the speed of adoption of an innovation. Empirical work on the diffusion of innovations could also be traced to the period between the 1920s and 1930s, when agricultural researchers in the mid-western United States – more specifically, Bryce Ryan – sought to establish whether there is correlation between technological advancement in agricultural innovation and high yields (Ryan & Gross 1943, 1950). The agricultural technological innovation was in the form of a hybrid seed which was advantageous over the normal seed, due to its proven drought resistance capability (Ryan & Gross 1943, 1950). The results of these studies established that farmers were inclined to adopt the new hybrid seed, as this would benefit them during drought seasons and even increase their yield substantially (Ryan & Gross 1943, 1950). The researchers also established

that education played a significant role in the farmers' understanding of the potential benefits of the hybrid seed; hence the highly educated farmers could easily adopt the innovation (Ryan & Gross 1943, 1950; Kaminski 2011). This confirmed that an innovation is highly likely to be adopted once its benefits are known and aligned to the expectations of the prospective adopter. The interest in diffusion research increased substantially in the 1960s, in the disciplines of business marketing; communication; and transportation-technology transfer (Encyclopedia.com 2018). Marketing researchers were interested in establishing the characteristics of prospective adopters of new products and the role played by opinion leaders in the adoption process.

Likewise, communication scholars asserted that the diffusion of an innovation essentially creates awareness about the availability of something improved or new within a social system, intended to influence the recipients over time (Stahl 1994; Greenhalgh *et al* 2004; Encyclopedia.com 2018; Crossman 2018). Over 4000 studies on diffusion were conducted to determine the duration it takes for an innovation to spread and be accepted, including coming up with mechanisms to propel the rate of diffusion of innovations within communities (Abbott & Yarbrough 1999). These studies influenced the 1954 development of the "classic diffusion model" by a group of rural sociologists (Abbott & Yarbrough 1999: 5). The model postulated that diffusion can only take place once five (5) stages have been completed; namely, awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption (Abbott & Yarbrough 1999).

Essentially, the classic diffusion model assumes that the adoption of an innovation takes place at different times and is influenced by people's differing information requirements (Abbott & Yarbrough 1999). This was followed by the diffusion process model – later improved and renamed the technology adoption lifecycle model – which was developed by Everett Rogers, Joe Bohlen and George Beal in 1957 (Rogers 1983, 1995; Abbott & Yarbrough 1999). The model postulated that people were unlikely to accept or adopt a new idea or product, all at the same time (Rogers 1983, 1995; Abbott & Yarbrough 1999). In this regard,

the technology adoption lifecycle model classifies potential adopters of an innovation into five groups; namely, the (a) innovators, (b) early adopters, (c) early majority, (d) late majority, and (e) laggards (Ryan & Gross 1943, 1950; Rogers 1983, 1995; Abbott & Yarbrough 1999; Kaminski 2011; Carr [sa]). Both the classic diffusion and technology adoption lifecycle models were adapted by Everett Rogers in 1962 and renamed, the *Diffusion of Innovations* theory, after analysing over 508 studies of diffusion across various fields (Rogers 1983, 1995; Abbott & Yarbrough 1999). Katz (1999) adds that research on the diffusion processes was to understand the role of interactive networks such as social media, in spreading or disseminating information to a wide range of people. Accordingly, the interactive and inter-connectivity of numerous media have made information flow easier, owing to technological innovations such as the mobile phones and all web-based information sharing platforms such as social media (Couldry & Curran 2003). Having contextualised the origin of the diffusion process, the theories of diffusion are now discussed in detail below:

3.4. The three diffusion theory families

Although extensive research on diffusion was conducted, literature on the subject remained scattered in different sciences like anthropology and sociology (Greenhalgh, Robert, MacFarlane, Bate & Kyriakidou 2004; Encyclopedia.com 2018; Crossman 2018). In sociology, diffusion theories provide a valuable insight to researchers to understand how innovation spreads within societies, subsequently leading to its acceptance as the way of life by members of a society (Greenhalgh *et al* 2004; Crossman 2018). Some scholars like English anthropologists, W. J. Perry and Elliot Smith, have argued that human culture originated in Egypt and had progressively diffused to other parts of the world (Encyclopedia.com 2018; Crossman 2018). Sociological researchers thus explain diffusion in terms of three (3) theories which are: (1) cultural diffusion; (2) diffusion of innovations; and (3) collective behaviour (Ryan & Gross 1943; Rogers 1983, 1995; Kaminski 2011; Carr [sa]; Encyclopedia.com 2018; Crossman 2018). These theories are discussed below:

3.4.1. Cultural diffusion theory

Cultural diffusion could simply be defined as the spread of cultural beliefs and practices of one group – such as ideas, language, religion – to another or many other groups (Stahl 1994; Encyclopedia.com 2018; Crossman 2018). Cultural diffusion was pioneered by anthropologists who sought to establish what made it possible for similar or the same cultural elements to prevail within various societies around the world, prior to the innovation of communication tools (Crossman 2018). This subsequently led to the conceptualisation of the cultural diffusion theory by British anthropologist, Edward Tylor, as an alternative to the cultural evolution theory, to explain similarities in diverse cultures around the world (Crossman 2018). Tylor's interest was in understanding how individuals end up possessing similar cultural traits – practicing the same beliefs or speaking the same language – and establishing what alters their beliefs and practices (cultural change) later on (Stahl 1994; Encyclopedia.com 2018; Crossman 2018).

German-American anthropologist Franz Boas took Tylor's theory further by attempting to explain how the process of cultural diffusion works among areas within close proximity to each other. The outcome of their studies indicated that cultural diffusion happened when different cultures come into contact with each other, and also that the continuous interaction of people from different cultural practices increased the rate of cultural diffusion (Stahl 1994; Encyclopedia.com 2018; Crossman 2018). This later gave birth to what Alfred Kroeber and Robert Lowie termed, moderate diffusionism, which is currently widely accepted in anthropology (Encyclopedia.com 2018; Crossman 2018). Diffusionism theory explains that diffusion is the cause of the existance of similar cultural practices amongst people practicing different cultures (Collins English Dictionary 1999; Cambridge Dictionaries Online 2014; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, evolutionists further argued that individual's new experiences influence other people's cultural beliefs through contact and interaction, ultimately diffusing to the entire society and bringing

about cultural change (Stahl 1994; Encyclopedia.com 2018; Crossman 2018). In this regard, the cultural diffusion theory essentially makes five (5) empirically supported claims, indicating that:

(a) Any emerging new phenomena will be modified or adapted to suite the needs of the prospective adopter in the existing culture;
(b) The new culture will only be accepted if it is compatible and conforms with the current belief system of the prospective adopter;
(c) Incompatible cultural practices and beliefs will be rejected outrightly;
(d) The acceptance of any new phenomena is dependent on its beneficialness to the prospective adopter; and
(e) Cultures with past-borrowing history are prone to borrow and accept change in future (Encyclopedia.com 2018; Crossman 2018; Stahl 1994).

Essentially, the cultural diffusion theory postulates that any new phenomenon is likely to influence and alter the existing culture once it is known and its benefits tested by members of the receiving cultural group (Stahl 1994; Encyclopedia.com 2018; Crossman 2018;). Clearly, this implies that the existing societal cultures were undoubtedly influenced by the diffusion process.

3.4.2. *Diffusion of innovations* theory

As discussed earlier, the development of the theory on diffusion of innovations was contextualised within rural sociology, specifically within the agricultural sector, when scientists wanted to establish the duration it takes for farmers to adopt a hybrid corn seed (Ryan & Gross 1943, 1950; Stahl 1994; Kaminski 2011; Encyclopedia.com. 2018; Crossman 2018). Basically, theories on diffusion of innovations focused on establishing how quickly a new idea or phenomenon spreads within social settings (Stahl 1994; Greenhalgh *et al* 2004; Encyclopedia.com. 2018; Crossman 2018). This later extended to the fields of education and public health, when researchers like Richard Carlson; Elihu Katz,

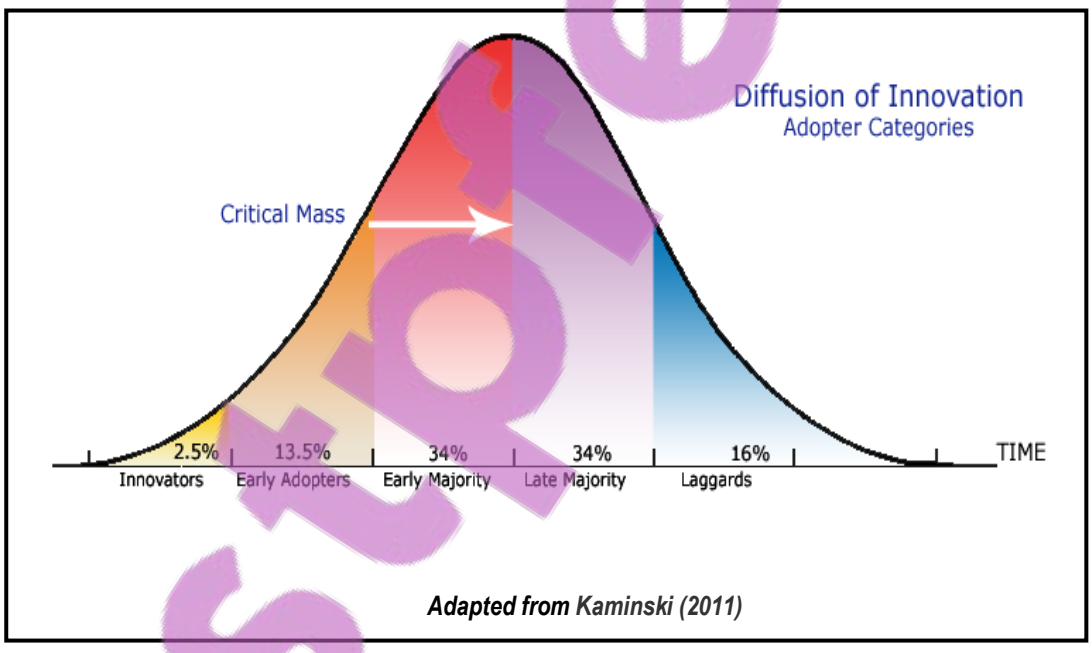
Herbert Menzel, and James Coleman, were interested in establishing the diffusion of modern mathematics and the new drug (the antibiotic known as tetracycline), respectively, within communities (Encyclopedia.com 2018). These studies and many others, greatly expanded knowledge on how human interactions and experience influence adoption of an innovation. Knowledge about the diffusion of innovations was also fundamental in the establishment of separate communication departments at universities in the U.S throughout the 1960s, as it was widely regarded as a type of the communication process (Stahl 1994; Rogers 1995; Greenhalgh *et al* 2004; Crossman 2018; Encyclopedia.com 2018). This led to extensive studies on the diffusion of news events, amongst others. The diffusion theory was thus extended to the communication discipline by the likes of Everett Rogers – a communication scholar – who developed the *Diffussion of Innovations* theory.

Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovations* theory sought to explain how a new phenomenon quickly spreads, becomes acceptable and adopted as the way of life by members of a social system (Rogers 1983, 1995; Williams *et al* 1988; Salwen & Stacks 1996; Yates 2001; Carr [sa]). In a nutshell, the theory argues that it is easier for people to subscribe to and adopt a new idea or product because of the benefit they derive from it. This is because an innovation "provide[s] a relative advantage to older ideas, and even more so if … [it is] compatible with the existing value system of the adopter" (Mbatha 2011: 146). Rogers (1995) further argues that diffusion can be better explained through four (4) theories; namely, (1) the Innovation Decision Process theory, (2) the Individual Innovativeness theory, (3) the Rate of Adoption theory, and (4) the Perceived Attributes theory.

The Innovation Decision Process theory postulates that diffusion or adoption of a new phenomenon is influenced by (a) an innovation itself; (b) persuasion; (c) decision; (d) implementation; and (4) confirmation (discussed later) (Rogers 1995). The Individual Innovativeness theory asserts that some people are naturally risk-takers and always want to be considered trend-setters; hence it is easier for them to adopt an innovation (Rogers 1995). Thirdly, as the name

suggests, the Rate of Adoption theory stipulates that the diffusion of an innovation, given that it is new and unknown, is bound to gradually permeate until it is widely accepted. Lastly, the Perceived Attributes theory postulates that diffusion of an innovation is dependent on its trialability, observability, beneficial advantage, simplicity (rather than complexity), and compatibility (Rogers 1995). This could be in the form of improved service delivery, improved communication and shorter turn-around times in terms of accountability which are fundamentals in democratic governments (Viteritti 1997; Horwitz 2004; Young 2007; Piotrowski & Van Ryzin 2007; Javuru 2010; CommGAP 2011; Pasquier 2012; South Africa. GCIS 2015; United Kingdom. GCS 2015). Figure 3.2 below is an illustration of Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovations* theory:

Figure 3.2: Rogers' illustration of the diffusion of innovation



Adapted from Kaminski (2011)

It postulates that the adopters of an innovation are classified into five (5) categories, namely, (1) the innovators; (2) the early adopters; (3) the early majority; (4) the late majority; and (5) the laggards (Ryan & Gross 1943, 1950; Rogers 1983, 1995; Kaminski 2011; Carr [sa]). Rogers (1983, 1995) explains the

innovators as those individuals who are not afraid to take risks, even if they do not have a guarantee of the success of an innovation they adopt. The innovators are also described as 'technology enthusiasts' because they are innovation junkies who are self-propelled by their interest in new things and want to be acknowledged as the trend-setters (Kaminski 2011). This makes the innovators "experimentalists and 'techies' interested in technology itself" (Carr [sa]). However, the innovators or the 'risk takers' accounts for only 2.5% of the total population (Rogers 1983, 1995). The innovators are characterised by financial stability, being educated and high social standing which makes it easy for others to follow them. Although they are discreet, the early adopters are regarded as visionaries with adventurous zest to become opinion leaders as well, and share the same characteristics as the innovators – their role models (Ryan & Gross 1943, 1950; Rogers 1983, 1995; Kaminski 2011; Carr [sa]).

As a result, the only way to differentiate the innovators from the early adopters is by characterising them as 'extrovert adopters' and 'introvert adopters', respectively. In contrast to the extrovert adopters – the innovators – the early majority are afraid of taking risks; hence they want surety or proof from the risk-takers that an innovation is beneficial and reliable. They rely heavily on a proven technology solution before they could jump on the innovation bandwagon (Rogers 1983, 1995; Kaminski 2011). These realists or pragmatists, as Kaminski (2011) refers to the early adopters, take a bit longer to adopt. Carr [sa], however, warns that the early majority are the most essential given that they account for 34% in the adoption process, and focus should largely be on influencing them.

The late majority or the conservatives – constituting 34% of the possible adopters – like the early majority, are not easily convinced to adopt an innovation; hence they require more than proof (Rogers 1983, 1995; Kaminski 2011). They require 'bullet-proof solutions' before they could follow the trend (Rogers 1983, 1995; Kaminski 2011). The late majority are sceptical that an innovation could bring about any change to the current scenario (Carr [sa]). Simplicity works well for them; hence they are not in a hurry to change and are usually technological

introverts and prudent with their finances (Kaminski 2011). Finally, to the contrary, the laggards do not necessarily believe in technological innovation; hence they believe in keeping the status quo – they believe that there is no need to fix something which is working and may ultimately never adopt it and even become antagonistic towards it (Rogers 1983, 1995; Kaminski 2011; Carr [sa]). The laggards are traditionalists who do not believe that innovation can improve what according to them, was working perfectly well – they are basically sceptical of an innovation's ability to bring about change – hence they could be labelled as anti-change proponents. However, the only way the laggards would be compelled to adapt to change is when their trusted old or traditional technology gives in due to an irreparable state (Rogers 1983, 1995; Kaminski 2011). The successful adoption of an innovation is, however, dependent on four (4) inter-dependent elements, which are discussed below:

3.4.2.1. Main elements in the *Diffusion of Innovations*

Scholars have argued that Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovations* theory is the most appropriate to explain the diffusion and adoption of technological innovations within societies, when compared to other communication theories (Sahin 2006). It is distinguishable as another form of communication due to its focus on the extent of the penetration of messages in the form of new ideas or innovation (Rogers 1983, 1995, 2003). To this end, Rogers (1995: 10) asserts that diffusion occurs when "an *innovation* is *communicated* through certains *channels* over *time* among members of a *social system*". This emphasises four (4) main inter-dependent elements in the innovation diffusion process; namely, the (1) innovation (itself), (2) communication channels, (3) time, and (4) social system (Rogers 1995; Sahin 2006; Mbatha 2011).

3.4.2.1.1. Innovation

As already explained, an innovation is advantageous as it offers an improvement to something already existing, so it is its supposed beneficial newness feature/s

which could potentially lead to its adoption (Rogers 1983, 1995, 2003; Sahin 2006; O'Sullivan 2008; Tiwari 2008). For an innovation to be accepted and subsequently adopted, its benefits should be disclosed and accordingly tested by the potential adopters. In this regard, decisions regarding an innovation can either be optional, collective, authoritative or contingent (Rogers 1995; Luhmann 1995). Optional innovation-decision refers to the individual's independent conclusion which is not influenced by other members of the social system, as opposed to the collective innovation-decision which is mutually agreed. The authority innovation-decision refers to choices made on behalf of others by relatively few individuals who are more knowledgeable and possess power.

Lastly, contingent innovation-decision explains that choice to rescind or re-confirm a prior decision (Rogers 1995; Luhmann 1995). The final influential factor is consequences, which explains changes that are likely to occur due to the decision of an individual – whether to accept or reject an innovation (Rogers 1995; Luhmann 1995). This relates to how changes to the social structure influence the social system which in turn influences the diffusion process. However, not all people will adopt an innovation at the same time; hence the rate of adoption of an innovation is influenced by five (5) factors; namely, (1) the relative or beneficial advantage; (2) compatibility, (3) complexity, (4) trialability and (5) observability (discussed in detail later on) (Rogers 1995, 2003; Sahin 2006; Perkins [sa]).

3.4.2.1.2. Communication channels

The communication channels refer to the means through which a message from the sender is conveyed or transmitted to the receiver (Rogers 2003). The communication channels can either be unmediated – interpersonal – or mediated – transmitted via mass media platforms (Sahin 2006). Interpersonal channel of communication refers to face-to-face exchange of information between two or more people, whereas mass media channels refer to channels which can transmit information to many people who are scattered all over at once and quicker, such

as radio, television, newspapers, Internet and social media (Rogers 1983, 1995, 2003; Sahin 2006). It is argued that interpersonal communication (unmediated) is the most effective, given its two-way nature which presents a platform for clarity and instant feedback, compared to the mass media (mediated) platforms such as television, radio or newspapers (Rogers 1983, 1995, 2003; Sahin 2006). Thus, given that information is shared through some channel in the diffusion process, and that it involves two parties – the sender and the receiver – it can be regarded as some special form of communication (Rogers 1995, 2003; Perkins [sa]). Rogers (2003) and Sahin (2006) assert that mass media communication channels are essential in creating knowledge about an innovation, whereas interpersonal channels are crucial for decision-making purposes. Mass media channels – mediated form of communication – have the potential to propel diffusion faster because of their ability to reach a large number of people simultaneously, as opposed to interpersonal channels – unmediated form of communication. One-to-many channels of communication, like the mass media, are thus essential in the diffusion of innovation process.

3.4.2.1.3. Time

In the context of the diffusion of innovation, time refers to the duration it takes for an innovation to be accepted and adopted; that is, the period it takes for change to be acceptable (Rogers 1983, 1995, 2003; Sahin 2006; Mbatha 2011). The time it takes for an innovation to be adopted is, however, dependent on the innovation-decision process, innovativeness stage, and the innovation rate of adoption (Rogers 1983, 1995, 2003; Sahin 2006; Mbatha 2011). According to Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovations* theory, it takes quite a considerable amount of time for an innovation to be adopted given that only 2, 5% of the people – herein referred to as the innovators – are willing to take a risk with something unproven because of their desire to be recognised as trend-setters (Rogers 1983, 1995, 2003; Sahin 2006). This concurs with the results of a study to determine the diffusion of the hybrid corn in the U.S which took more than ten (10) years (Ryan & Gross 1943, 1950; Rogers 2003). Essentially, diffusion unfolds over time. It is evident

therefore that time plays a crucial role in the diffusion process, as it entrenches awareness and experience which assist people in making informed decisions on whether to adopt or reject an innovation.

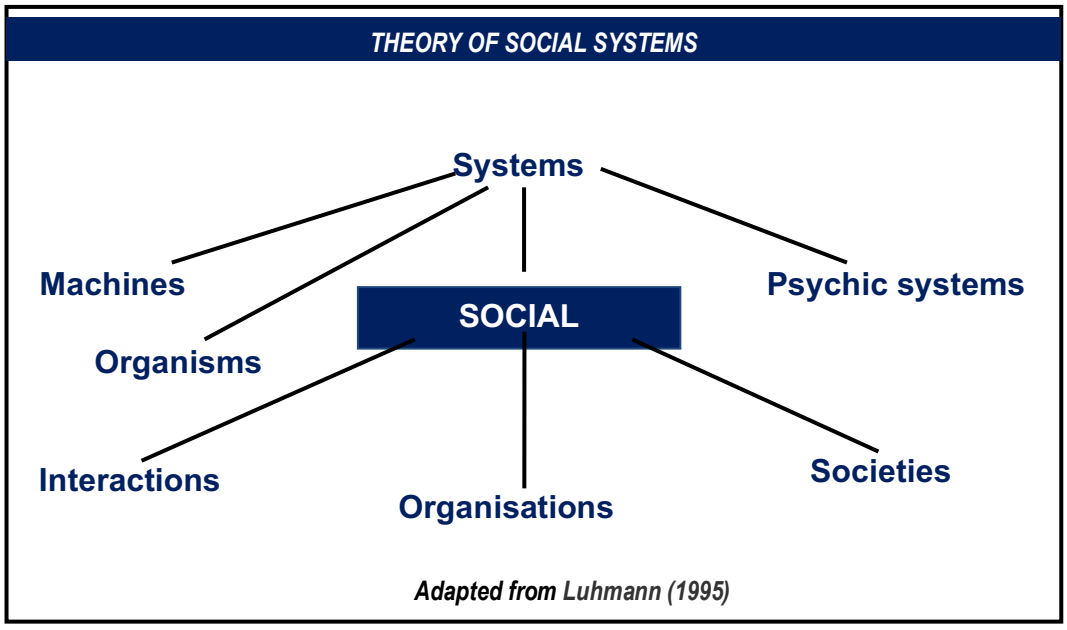
3.4.2.1.4. Social system

The social system (illustrated in figure 3.3 below) can be defined as "a set of interrelated units engaged in joint problem solving to accomplish a common goal" (Rogers 2003: 23). In sociology, it refers to consistent social engagement of individuals who have a common goal of forming a society – organised large group of people who live together (Collins English Dictionary 1999). For diffusion of an innovation to take place, the social structure of the system must be penetrated by way of influencing societal norms which are mostly influenced by opinion leaders and change agents (Rogers 1983, 1995, 2003; Luhmann 1995; Mbatha 2011). The social structure refers to "the patterned arrangements of the units in a system" (Rogers 2003: 24). This is because the type of the social system has a direct effect on how individuals will respond to anything new which is introduced to them (Rogers 2003; Luhmann 1995).

Figure 3.3 below is an illustration of social systems, according to German sociologist, Niklas Luhmann (Luhmann 1995). It depicts that society is made out of different but interrelated specialised systems whose functions are delegated to individuals to perform, according to set societal expectations. Rogers (2003) argues that diffusion within the social system is influenced by a number of factors. The first one relates to societal norms which explain behaviour patterns already adopted by members of a social system. The second one relates to the change agent – the self-propelled 'innovation junky' – who wants to be acknowledged as the trend-setter, and indirectly influences others to follow suit (Rogers 2003; Luhmann 1995; Kaminski 2011; Mbatha 2011). The third factor relates to opinion leadership and explains an individual's ability to influence the beliefs and attitudes of others to accept change. This can be explained through the Multistep Flow Model or the two-step flow of communication model which postulates that the

opinion leaders' decisions are influenced by the mass media, which in turn influence opinions of their followers (Katz & Lazarsfeld 1970). Opinion followers are created from the general public following the infiltration of the opinions of the leaders (Katz & Lazarsfeld 1970; Baran 2011).

Figure 3.3: Luhmann's illustration of Social Systems



Baran (2011) and Staubhaar, LaRose and Davenport (2014) argue that social influence or social persuasion takes place when the opinion leaders infiltrate the social structure and manage to change the opinions of others – the opinion followers. It is therefore evidently clear that most people do not depend on scientific proof to ascertain the efficacy of an innovation, but on the "subjective evaluations of near-peers who have adopted the innovation" (Rogers 1995: 36). For effective communication to take place, interacting individuals should be homophilous – possessing similar attributes such as beliefs, education and social standing (Rogers & Bhowmik 1970; Rogers 1983, 1995; McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001). It is however argued that effective communication has proved to be a challenge due to some degree of heterophily in the diffusion of innovation (Rogers & Bhowmik 1970; Rogers 1983, 1995; McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook

2001). In contrast to homophily, heterophily explains the extent to which two or more interacting individuals possess different attributes (Rogers & Bhowmik 1970; Rogers 1983, 1995; McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001). Accordingly, social systems are influenced by both internal and external phenomena such as social relationships and mass media, respectively. What this means is that individuals, as part of a social system, influence each other's behaviour and thinking through their daily interaction. In this regard, there is evidence that the social system in South Africa has been influenced and changed; hence just over 70% of the population is already communicating via social media platforms (World Wide Worx 2015, 2016; Ramodibe 2014). Evidently, the ground is fertile for the implementation and adoption of social media platforms, as additional official communication channels of the South African government.

3.4.2.2. Factors influencing the diffusion of innovation

According to Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovations* theory, the possible adoption of an innovation is influenced by five (5) factors; namely, (1) relative/beneficial advantage, (2) compatibility, (3) complexity, (4) trialability, and (5), observability (Rogers 1995, 2003; Sahin 2006; Encyclopedia.com 2018; Mbatha 2011; Perkins [sa]).

3.4.2.2.1. Relative/beneficial advantage

Relative advantage is the degree to which an innovation is viewed as being better and even more beneficial than the one it replaces (Rogers 1995, 2003; Sahin 2006; Mbatha 2011; Perkins [sa]). However, in contrast to the norm in marketing circles, the supposed benefits or advantages will be determined by the prospective adopter who is 'test driving' the innovation, and not by the innovator (Rogers 1995, 2003). As a result, it is easier for adoption to take place faster because it was not necessary to convince the prospective adopter, given that an innovation had a relative advantage over the old one (Rogers 1995, 2003; Sahin 2006; Mbatha 2011; Perkins [sa]). To this end, new media such as social media

has a relative advantage over old or traditional media, in terms of instantaneity, cost, time and reciprocity. As a benefit to government, new media platforms are far much cheaper to implement as compared to the cost of, for example, newspaper, radio or television advertisements; moreover that the citizens will indirectly subsidise the communication process by paying a portion of the cost through their data airtime which even make them reachable (Sahin 2006; Mbatha 2011). This view is supported by Rogers (1983, 1995, 2003) and Perkins [sa] who assert that lower cost, convenience and improved advantages give an innovation a competitive advantage over what it could replace – the old media. Furthermore, once the innovation is adopted by government, it will not be necessary to persuade the citizens to adopt it considering its current diffusion and preference (World Wide Worx 2015, 2016; Ramodibe 2014). Approximately 40 million (77%) of South Africa's population of 51, 770, 560 are already currently communicating via social media (World Wide Worx 2016).

3.4.2.2.2. Compatibility

Compatibility simply refers to the ability of an innovation to work hand-in-glove with the old one, without confliction or glitches (Collins English Dictionary 1999). Mbatha (2011: 148) explains compatibility as "how closely an innovation ties into existing values, past experiences and the needs of potential adopters". One could thus define compatibility as the ability to work together or being capable of being used together seamlessly. In social terms, compatibility thus relates to the consistency of an innovation with the beliefs and way of life of the potential adopters, including whether it addresses the needs of the prospective user (Rogers 1995, 2003; Sahin 2006; Mbatha 2011; Perkins [sa]). Worldwide, South Africa included, the existing ICT infrastructure is compatible with new media, given that the Internet and mobile phones, for example, allow instant and interactive communication (Thioune 2003; World Youth Report 2003; Mbatha 2011; Mudombi 2013; Kumar 2014; Fichman & Rosenbaum 2014). This concurs with the view by Fichman and Rosenbaum (2014) that "networked devices have become routine information appliances in people's social lives". In addition,

Livingstone (2002: 30) also asserts that even "young people's lives are increasingly mediated by information and communication technologies". Consequently, South Africa has now become the Internet connectivity hub for surrounding Southern African Countries, as well being Africa's tele-communications leader as it accounts for 40% of the continent's telephone infrastructure (Thioune 2003; South African Yearbook 2010). To this end, the diffusion of mobile tele-communication in South Africa was recorded at around 65% in 2011 (South African Yearbook 2010). This has created a borderless information society, as a person from one corner of the world is able to instantly dialogue or interact with another or many others in a different corner of the world, utilising the backbone of the Internet or their mobile phones to send an SMS (Short Message Service) or an MMS (Multi-Media Service) to one another (Mbatha 2011; Mudombi 2013; Kumar 2014; Fichman & Rosenbaum 2014).

A person can even use tele-conferencing and video-calling to speak to many, and even see them simultaneously. This has broken geographical or distance barriers, thus effectively overcoming historical information dissemination challenges (Mbatha 2011). Essentially, the compatibility of new media to existing ICT infrastructure "unify and standardise culture … [and] … is causing rapid transformations in all areas of life" (World Youth Report 2003: 311). New media is thus compatible with the South African social system, as it provides the citizens with what they want – up-to-the-minute information, reciprocity and instant feedback (Rogers 1995, 2003; Pratt 2000; Livingstone 2002; Croteau & Hoynes 2003; Sahin 2006; Agichtein, Castillo *et al* 2008; Mbatha 2011; Socha & Eber-Schmid 2012; Ramodibe 2014; Perkins [sa]). Social media platforms, such as *facebook* and *Twitter,* are for example, the most adopted channels of information sharing by South African citizens (World Wide Worx 2015; Ramodibe 2014). To this end, compatibility is essential to decrease any chance of potential adopters being doubtful of the capability of the innovation in making a meaningful improvement to their way of life.

3.4.2.2.3. Complexity

There is generally no universally accepted definition of the term complexity from across various sciences and disciplines, as it is used in a myriad of contexts (La Porte 1975; Dewenter, Novaes & Pettway 2001; Law & Mol 2002). Originating from the Latin word, *complexus* – English for complex, meaning to be complicated – the term complexity was conceptualised in the 1940s by the Soviet mathematician, Andrey Kolmogorov, based on Shannon and Weaver's mathematical theory of communication (Weber 2005). In everyday language, complexity refers to something complex or not easy to comprehend at face value (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015). It also explains different connected parts working together, albeit in a complicated manner, to produce the desired outcome (Collins English Dictionary 2014). Taking the explanation further, complexity explains the perceived degree of difficultness to operate or utilise (user-unfriendly) and comprehend (Rogers 1995, 2003; Sahin 2006).

In social science, complexity explains the "large number of parts that interact in a nonsimple way" (La Porte 1975: 5). Simply put, complexity in sociology explains that society is a complex but adaptive system made up of distinct but inter-connected parts working towards achieving a common goal. Despite their complexity, societal systems can easily adapt to change (La Porte 1975; Law & Mol 2002). Agreeably, culture is complex but not static – it is dynamic – as it is susceptible to adaptation to introduced innovation and eventually evolves with time (Stahl 1994; Schweingruber & McPhail 1999; Rose 2011; Crossman 2018; Killian *et al* [sa]). In computer science, complexity – still referred to as the "Kolmogorov complexity" (named after Andrey Kolmogorov) – is defined as "the intrinsic minimum amount of resources, for instance, memory, time, messages … needed to solve a problem or execute an algorithm" (Weber 2005: 2).

In business, it is explained as the state of inter-connectivity and inter-dependence of organisational operational systems, structures, processes, stakeholders and information communication technology (Dewenter *et al* 2001). Evidently, the

computer science and business definitions of complexity fits well with the objectives of this study, as they explain how innovation could be used to solve an identified problem within societies. In this regard, Rogers (1995: 242) asserts that the adoption rate of an innovation depends on "the complexity-simplicity continuum" – that is, with time and experience, what seem complex eventually becomes simple to utilise. This concurs with the assertion by Perkins ([sa]: 62) that "any innovation quickly gains a reputation as to its ease or difficulty of use, being – classified on the complexity-simplicity continuum". Clearly, the simpler an innovation, the easier it is to adopt. Evidently, the extent of the diffusion of new media channels like social media, in South Africa, has proved that these platforms were uncomplicated and easier to utilise; hence the spiralling rate of adoption of social media platforms (World Wide Worx 2015, 2016; Ramodibe 2014).

3.4.2.2.4. Trialability

Rogers (1995) argues that it is essential that people should experiment or trial an innovation, as this will afford them an opportunity to 'test drive it' to determine if it responds to their needs or requirements. Trialability refers to the degree of experimenting an innovation in order to take an informed decision – whether to adopt it or not (Rogers 1995; Sahin 2006; Mbatha 2011; Perkins [sa]). This assist to clear possible uncertainties about the efficacy of the new phenomenon, thus increasing chances of it being adopted at an increased rate (Rogers 1995; Mbatha 2011; Perkins [sa]). It is, however, not always possible to 'test drive' an innovation due to funding and time constraints. In that case, perception that anything new is effective can be created based on the assumption "that a technology will work simply because it is technology" (Perkins [sa]: 63). To this end, social media platforms have been experimented and subsequently adopted by marketers in the private sector, for recruitment purposes, and by various governments across the world, to communicate with their citizens (Webster 2014; Stahl & Caprano 2014; Kemp 2014; Tracey 2014; Duggan *et al* 2015; Mkhize & Neophytou 2015; Shaikh 2015; Van Niekerk & Blignaut 2015). Perkins ([sa]), however, warns about serious repercussions which could lead to the trust being

broken, if the adopters later discover that they were misled about the efficacy of the new thing.

3.4.2.2.5. Observability

Observability explains the extent of a new phenomenon's ability to elicit noticeable results (Rogers 1995, 2003; Mbatha 2011; Sahin 2006; Perkins [sa]). Simply put, observability describes the change that is likely to be noticed because of the introduction of an innovation (Rogers 1995, 2003; Mbatha 2011; Sahin 2006; Perkins [sa]). Accordingly, an innovation is likely to be adopted quickly when its positive results are noticeable to the prospective adopters (Rogers 1995, 2003; Mbatha 2011; Perkins [sa). To the contrary, the adoption of an innovation with no visible results diffuses at a relatively slower rate (Rogers 1995, 2003). Social media platforms offer visible or observable results such as instant messaging and feedback (reciprocity) – required by the citizens – and this has the potential to influence the adoption rate of the innovation (Lee 2011; Wang & Lim 2011; Baswony 2014; Canada. Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat 2014; Denmark. Danish Agency of Digitisation 2014; Du Preez 2015). Consequently, visible results tend to propel the rate of adoption of new ITCs – new media platforms – evidence thereof being the widely utilisation of the Internet, electronic mail (e-mail), fax-to-email, and mobile telephony by government departments across the world, including in South Africa (Mbatha 2011).

3.4.2.3. The five-stage innovation adoption process

According to Rogers (1995, 2003), the decision to adopt an innovation or not, can only happen once the potential adopter has gone through five (5) adoption stages; namely, the (a) knowledge; (b) persuasion; (c) decision; (d) implementation; and (e) confirmation stages (see figure 3.4 below). This is referred to as the innovation adoption process which can be explained as "an information-seeking and information-processing activity, where an individual is

motivated to reduce uncertainty about the advantages and disadvantages of an innovation" (Rogers 2003: 172). The stages are discussed below:

3.4.2.3.1. Stage 1: Knowledge

The first and critical stage in the innovation adoption process is the knowledge stage, which involves the prospective adopter becoming aware of an innovation (Rogers 1995, 2003; Perkins [sa]). During this stage, the prospective adopter has an opportunity to seek clarity on how the innovation is used and how it will benefit them. In this regard, the knowledge stage is categorised into three (3); namely, awareness-knowledge; usage-knowledge; and principles-knowledge (Rogers 1995, 2003; Perkins [sa]). The awareness-knowledge sub-stage refers to the potential adopter being cognisant of the existence; the usage or how-to-use knowledge sub-stage relates to the correct usage comprehension; whereas the principles-knowledge sub-stage provides a motivation on the rationale and functionality principles of an innovation.

3.4.2.3.2. Stage 2: Persuasion

The knowledge about an innovation should assist in convincing the prospective adopter to buy into the technology, and this is what is regarded as persuasion (Rogers 2003; Perkins [sa]). However, persuasion can either be pro (positive) or anti (negative), depending on whether the existing innovation meets the individual requirements of the prospective adopter. This is because the persuasion stage attempts to reveal the true feelings on an individual about the innovation (Rogers 2003; Perkins [sa]).

3.4.2.3.3. Stage 3: Decision

Once the individuals have the knowledge and are persuaded – successfully or not – about the relative advantages of the innovation, they will now decide whether to adopt or reject it. Rogers (2003: 177) explains adoption as "full use of

an innovation as the best course of action available" whilst rejection explains the dissenting decision to adopt because the prospective adopter is not convinced that the innovation will be beneficial to them. Rejection can either be active or passive (Rogers 2003). In the active rejection stage, the prospective adopters experiment with the innovation, consider adopting it, but later reconsider and eventually change their minds and decide not to adopt it. By consciously rescinding one's initial decision, results in what is termed a discontinuance decision (Rogers 2003). The passive rejection stage describes an outright decision not to consider adopting an innovation at all. Although he acknowledges that the rejection of an innovation is possible in every decision-making stage, Rogers (2003) argues that an innovation is likely to be rapidly adopted once the prospective adopter has 'test driven' or put it on trial.

3.4.2.3.4. Stage 4: Implementation

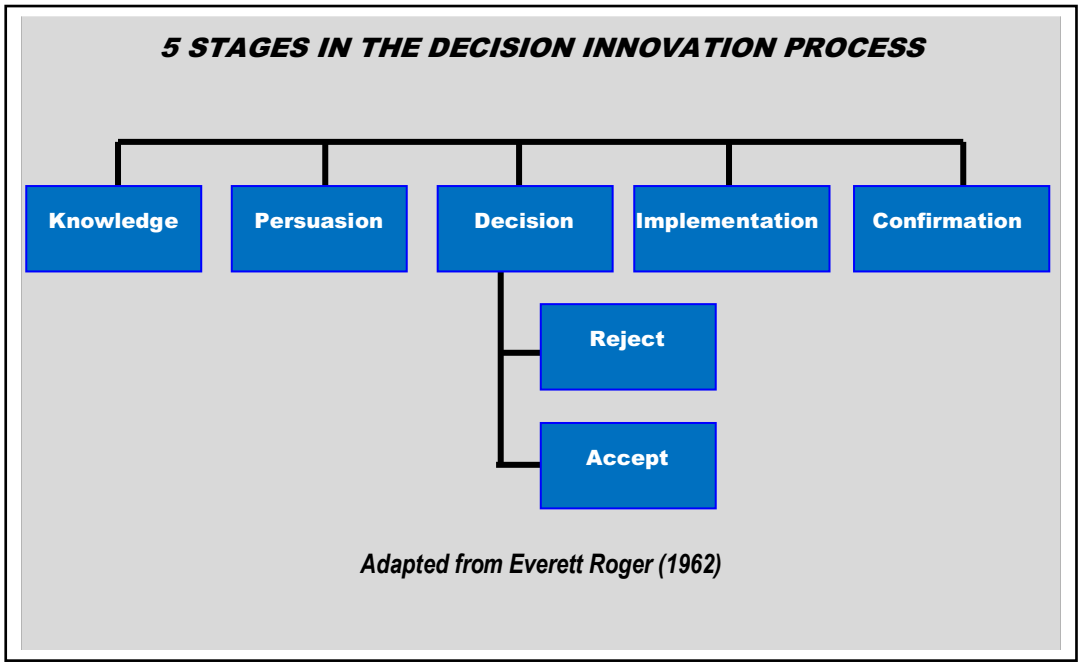
The implementation stage refers to the practical utilisation of the innovation to experience its newness (Rogers 2003; Perkins [sa]). This is a make or break stage because any uncertainty or inability to utilise the innovation may result in its rejection. Rogers (2003: 180) further indicates that reinvention – "the degree to which an innovation is changed or modified by a user in the process of its adoption and implementation" – is likely to happen during this stage. This possible opportunity should thus be exploited because reinvention improves the degree of, and further entrenches the adoption of an innovation (Rogers 2003). The forever changing mobile phone technology, for example, is thus susceptible to reinvention.

3.4.2.3.5. Stage 5: Confirmation

In the confirmation stage, the adopters seek concurrence of others, as a way of introspecting, to validate their decision (Rogers 2003; Perkins [sa]). Rogers (2003: 189) warns that this stage is very critical in the adoption process given than the adopter can decide to rescind their decision, if "exposed to conflicting

messages about the innovation". He adds that the attitude of the adopter also plays a crucial role as it can either lead to the permanent adoption or discontinuance of the innovation. If discontinuance occurs, it may happen either as replacement or disenchantment (Rogers 2003). Replacement discontinuance happens when the innovation is rejected and accordingly replaced with the one considered to be better than it, whereas disenchantment discontinuance happens when an innovation is rejected owing to its unsatisfactory performance or it not meeting the requirements of the adopter. The five (5) stages of the innovation adoption process discussed above are depicted in figure 3.4 below, which essentially explains that the potential adopter:

Figure 3.4: Rogers' Innovation Decision Process



(a) Becomes aware but not inspired to seek information about the innovation – knowledgeable;

(b) Becomes interested and start to seek explanations on how the innovation operates – persuaded;

(c) Assesses the possible benefits associated with utilising the innovation and decides whether to adopt or reject it – decides;
(d) Utilises the innovation to confirm or refute its supposed benefits – implements their decision; and finally
(e) Re-confirms their decision to adopt and continue to utilise the innovation.

Conversely, despite the proven advantages and benefits, it is not everyone who will adopt a new phenomenon quickly, as evidenced from the reluctance of the government of South Africa. This could be because the government wants to avoid being blamed for the slow delivery of services, or lack thereof, and thus deliberately avoids confrontation through dialoguing with the citizens (Viteritti 1997; Horwitz 2004; Piotrowski & Van Ryzin 2007; Wang & Lim 2011). As a result, it could be concluded that such conservative governments probably fear losing their grip on information and public opinion control (Xiaoming *et al* 1996; Sanders & Canel 2013; Kapa 2013). Accordingly, the advent of the new media has engulfed the communication systems of most governments across the world, with the usage of social media platforms currently dominating (Young 2007; CommGAP 2009; Lee 2011; Wang & Lim 2011; Sanders & Canel 2013; Baswony 2014; Mickoleit 2014; Du Preez 2015).

Rogers (1995) argues that it is significant to understand the characteristics of potential adopters of a new idea or phenomenon because people adapt in different stages. This is because there are people who are prone to follow a new trend immediately after discovering it, whereas others take long to follow suit (Rogers 1995). In motivating for their assertion, Williams *et al* (1988) argue that Roger's *Diffusion of Innovations theory* can be used to prove the popularity of the new media's interactive quality. The *Diffusion of Innovations* theory is thus a valuable model for change within social settings (Kaminski 2011). Accordingly, Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovation* theory has laid the foundation for effective communication, given that it demonstrates how the diffusion of innovation can lead to improvement (Kaminski 2011). Diffusion of an innovation could therefore be explained in terms of: (1) how an individual is motivated to participate in social

movement activities, (2) cultural beliefs and practices, and (3) the influence of the so-called trend-setters within communities (Walsh-Russo 2004). In this regard, Walsh-Russo (2004) argues that social media networks or platforms have enabled the successful diffusion process.

3.4.3. Theories of collective behaviour

The concept of collective behaviour was initially utilised by sociologist, Franklin Henry Giddings in 1908, and later by many other sociologists such as Robert E. Park, Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian, to explain some sort of spontaneous behaviour not confirming to existing societal processes and structure (Ryan & Gross 1943; Kaminski 2011; Carr [sa]; Killian, Turner & Smelser [sa]; Gordon 2014). Collective behaviour thus explains the spontaneous peer-pressure like form of common behaviour, displayed by individuals in a large group which has mutual interests and purpose (Ryan & Gross 1943; Kaminski 2011; Carr [sa]; Killian, Turner & Smelser [sa]; Gordon 2014; Encyclopedia.com 2018). Such groups are mostly informal, hence their behaviour is usually unstructured, unpredictable and uncontrollable (Schweingruber & McPhail 1999; Encyclopedia.com 2018; Killian *et al* [sa]).

Essentially, collective behaviour violates societal norms and standards given that people adopting it are presumptuously unidentifiable; hence they could act or behave in an unbecoming manner. Example of such collective behaviour could be displayed by crowds and mobs which could turn violent and destructive (Ryan & Gross 1943; Kaminski 2011; Carr [sa]; Killian, Turner & Smelser [sa]; Gordon 2014). Theories of collective behaviour thus sought to understand why it is easier for individuals to adopt collective behaviour in a crowd setting, that is, what makes the culture of a crowd to diffuse easily to individual participants within a crowd (Schweingruber & McPhail 1999; Encyclopedia.com. 2018; Crossman 2018; Killian *et al* [sa]). A crowd is defined as a gathering of individuals who are united by mutual intent and can easily influence each other's behaviour (Schweingruber & McPhail 1999; Killian *et al* [sa]). According to Killian *et al* ([sa]), there are three (3) types of

collective behaviour theories; namely, individual motivation theory; interaction theory; and social change theory. The Individual Motivation theory postulates that the individual's social frustrations often motivate them to be solidaristic; hence they assume collective behaviour, hoping that their frustrations will be amicably resolved (Killian *et al* [sa]). On the other hand, Interaction theory asserts that people are inclined to imitate or repeat the behaviour they have observed from others, thereby intensifying the sentiments of the originator whereas the Social Change theory postulates that collective behaviour influences societal traits and values, and results in culture change (Killian *et al* [sa]).

All three diffusion theory traditions – cultural diffusion; diffusion of innovation; and collective behaviour – discussed above, help to understand crowd behaviour (Gordon 2014; Killian *et al* [sa]). Crowd behaviour essentially explains that individuals in a group are likely to adopt and express or imitate the behaviour of those they come into contact with – the process known as social contagion (Burt 1987; Killian *et al* [sa]). Social contagion, also known as behavioural contagion, refers to the spread of behavioural patterns and ideas through interaction within a social grouping by way of imitation and conformity (Burt 1987; Collins English Dictionary 2014; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015).

3.5. Limitations of the *Diffusion of Innovations* theory

Although the *Diffusion of Innovations* theory has been widely used by various scholars worldwide, to understand the diffusion process, it did not however consider that not everyone would eventually be persuaded to adopt an innovation. This is because other people prefer their comfort zones due to a number of reasons. Firstly, they do not believe in changing what is not broken – if something still works fine for them, why change it? For example, there are people who still prefer the basic mobile phone – what is referred to as feature phone, also known as a dumbphone – because it is limited to voice calls and text messaging functionality only – as opposed to a smartphone (Tweedie 2015; Techopedia [sa]). This type of mobile phone was used for the first time on April 3, 1973 by Motorola's

senior engineer, Martin Cooper. Although the initial phone was too heavy and bulky to carry in one's pocket – weighing a staggering 1.1 kg – it remains even popular more than 45 years later and 26 years after the introduction of the first smartphone which was known as Simon Personal communicator (Tweedie 2015). Smartphones inventors thought they will eventually render the so-called dumbphone obsolete, but this proved wrong as they were forced to re-introduce the latter phones due to popular demand. Consequently, the people who still prefer dumbphones could arguably be named status-quoists – because they believe in maintaining things they way they are. Secondly, technology is complicated for status-quoists – they are technophobic as they are adamant that a phone was invented purely for voice calling. Evidently, Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovations* theory did not consider the possibility of innovation rejection process which recognises status-quoists as the sixth and final adopter. To this end, this study proposes six (6) adopter categories in the *Diffusion of Innovations* theory, to include the status-quoists after the laggards.

Accordingly, Chapter six proposes a hybrid model of communication channels which will continue to cater for status-quoists, who still prefer old media channels of communication. Notwithstanding its limitations, the *Diffusion of Innovations* theory was used to understand how innovation is diffused in general.

3.6. Summary

This chapter has presented the theoretical framework of the study. It started by discussing the three (3) diffusion theory families; namely, the cultural diffusion, diffusion of innovations and the theory of collective behaviour. The four (4) main inter-dependent elements in the innovation diffusion process – innovation (itself); communication channels; time; and social system – were also discussed in detail. This included a discussion of the five (5) factors influencing the innovation adoption process. These factors are: relative/beneficial advantage; compatibility; complexity; trialability; and observability. In this regard, the possible innovation adoption process takes place in five (5) stages; namely, the knowledge;

persuasion; decision; implementation; and confirmation stages. Lastly, the chapter discussed the limitations of the *Diffusion of Innovations* theory. It identified that the theory did not consider that not everyone would eventually be persuaded to adopt an innovation, as they do not believe in changing what is not broken, and because they are technophobic. Consequently, a new category of adopters was added after the laggards, referred to as the status-quoists – because they believe in maintaining things they way they are.

The next chapter, Chapter Four, presents the research methodology used in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter (Chapter three) discussed the theoretical framework of the study. For the results or findings of a study to be credible, it must employ generally accepted research methodologies to enable others to verify them by replicating the methodology previously utilised (Kothari 1985, 1991, 2004; Goddard & Melville 2004). This chapter discusses the research methodology utilised in this study. It explains and provides a motivation for the research design adopted, and also provides details of the area of study – the Province of Mpumalanga in the Republic of South Africa. It describes both the target and accessible populations; provides justification for the sampling procedure adopted, including the sample size chosen. Furthermore, this chapter explains and justifies the data collection instrument which was utilised in the study, including the process followed to test the reliability and validity of the instrument. It is essential that the type of data collection instrument selected should be appropriate to adequately address the objectives of the study. Lastly, this chapter explains the research ethics which were considered when this study was undertaken.

4.2 Research design

According to Bryman (2004), an appropriate research design should always ensure reliability, replication and validity of the findings or results of a study. This section discusses the research design in relation to the paradigm and approach.

4.2.1 Research paradigm

In research, a paradigm essentially refers to the “basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation” (Guba & Lincoln 1994: 105). To this end, a

paradigm is significant because it guides a research towards resolving the identified problem/s or challenge/s and even suggests possible solutions to them (Guba & Lincoln 1994; Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999). It further helps to explain what already exists and suggests various scientific ways to confirm the existence of such knowledge (Guba & Lincoln 1994; Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999). According to Wildemuth (1993), Wilson (2010), Dash (2015), three (3) types of research paradigms exist; namely, positivism; anti-positivism; and critical theory. Positivism – the term coined by sociologist Auguste Compte in the 19th century – refers to the view that what is presumed to exist can only be validated through applying scientific methods (Wildemuth 1993; Wilson 2010; Dash 2015). Compte's study to distinguish between empirical knowledge and metaphysics knowledge established that scientifically-acquired knowledge was almost truthful than that untested or derived from speculation (Wildemuth 1993; Wilson 2010; Dash 2015).

Positivists are thus pragmatists who believe in the existence of that which has been scientifically proven (Guba & Lincoln 1994). Positivism therefore explores what already exists in society – social reality – without the intention of influencing it (Wildemuth 1993; Wilson 2010; Dash 2015). An example in this regard, is that there is already the diffusion of new media channels like social media platforms within communities in the Republic of South Africa. Contrary to positivism, anti-positivism, also known as interpretivism, refers to the view that social reality may not be subjected to scientific verification methods, as it is deemed real and already existing (Wildemuth 1993; Wilson 2010; Dash 2015). On the other hand, critical theory – conceptualised by Germany's Frankfurt School of neo-Marxist philosophers and theorists in the 1930s – seeks to critique and change society as a whole by establishing and examining the limitations hindering knowledge acquisition (Wildemuth 1993; Wilson 2010; Dash 2015). Horkheimer (1982: 244) argues that the main aim of critical theorists is "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them". Thus, according to Dash (2015), critical theorists focus on understanding why human beings make particular decisions. On the downside, Guba and Lincoln (1994) assert that studies that adopt the

critical theory are predictably subjective as the person conducting them usually influences their outcome. The discussion and understanding of the three paradigm has assisted the researcher to make an informed decision regarding the approach which was adopted. To this end, given that studies adopting positivism paradigm are deductive in nature, and further that the researcher was relying on quantifiable data for analysis and interpretation of the results, this approach was adopted for this study. This has consequently protected this study from researcher bias or subjectivism, as positivism studies are based purely on facts – empirical evidence (Crowther & Lancaster 2008).

4.2.2 Research approach

The purpose and the objectives of a study should always be the driving factors in considering and selecting the appropriate design and methodology to be used in collecting data (Cohen, Marion & Morrison 2000). Quantitative research methodology was adopted in this study to produce numbers in relation to the diffusion of the new media in South Africa. According to Creswell (2003: 21), "if the [research] problem is identifying factors that influence an outcome", then quantitative methodology is the most appropriate. This methodology is also appropriate in testing theories and providing explanations through the utilisation of "an instrument that measures attitudes" (Creswell 2002: 20). The study was a descriptive survey research, given that the "researcher's goal [was] to describe that which exists as accurately as possible" (Mouton & Marais 1991: 44). It was intended to describe the benefits of new media platforms, such as social media, towards achieving effective communication between the adopters – those currently utilising it.

Neuman (1997) and McNeill and Chapman (2005) explain descriptive research as the process of describing variables or conditions that already exist. The rationale for adopting survey research was because of its potential for high representativeness; good statistical significance; its objectivity; and greater precision in relation to measuring the data collected (Neuman 1997; McNeill &

Chapman 2005; Smith, Banilower, MacMahon & Weiss 2002; Rosenberg, Heck & Banilower 2005; Mbatha 2011). Survey research is objective because all respondents are asked the same questions through a standardised questionnaire, utilised to gather the necessary data (Mbatha 2011). Accordingly, quantitative research methodologies have proven to be "specific, well structured, have been tested for their validity and reliability, and can be explicitly defined and recognised" (Kumar 2011: 103). In this study, standardised questionnaires were administered to the targeted population to measure their opinions and attitude on the use of new media channels, such as social media platforms. Collecting data from the targeted population through the survey method was therefore relatively time-saving and cost effective (Neuman 1997; McNeill & Chapman 2005; Smith *et al* 2002; Rosenberg, Heck & Banilower 2005).

4.3 Research methods

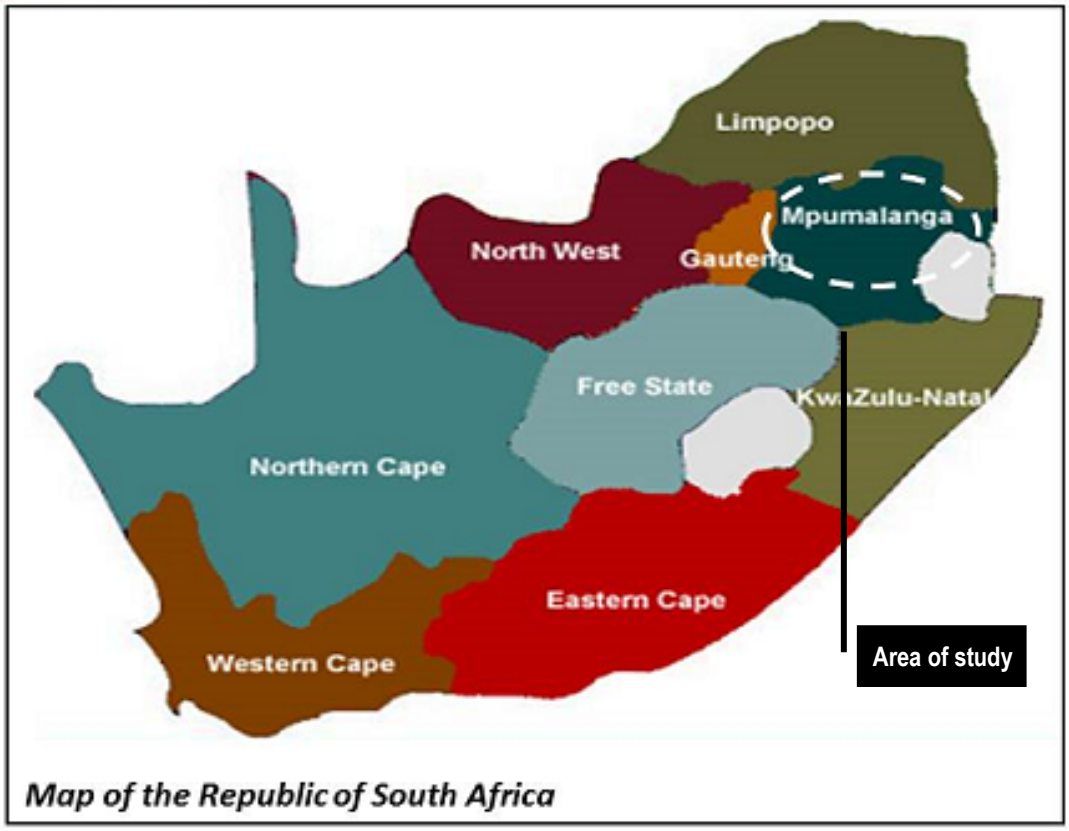
This section discusses the research area, selection of participants, data collection instrument(s), and data analysis.

4.3.1 Research area

This study was conducted in the Province of Mpumalanga – one of the nine provinces of the Republic of South Africa – selected through simple random sampling. This type of probability sampling technique has afforded all the nine provinces (depicted in Figure 4.1 below) an equal opportunity to be selected for inclusion into the sample (Kothari 2004: 60). Formerly known as the Eastern Transvaal, the province was renamed Mpumalanga on 24 August 1995, following the demise of the apartheid South African government (Sanderson 2001). The word 'Mpumalanga' is siSwati or isiZulu – two of the 11 official languages of South Africa – for 'the place where the sun rises', given that the province is geographically located in the East. The province has a population size estimated at 4, 335, 964 people, representing 7.8% of South Africa's total population (Statistics South Africa 2016). Most of the residents of Mpumalanga are black

people who on average account for 90, 9% of the total population. The majority of the province's residents (94, 2%) reside in the Ehlanzeni district (Statistics South Africa 2012, 2013). Just over 31% (1, 354, 742) of the population are economically active people between the ages of 15 and 64 years (Statistics South Africa 2016).

Figure 4.1: Map of the Republic of South Africa (indicating the 9 provinces)



Adapted from: www.gcis.gov.za (2014)

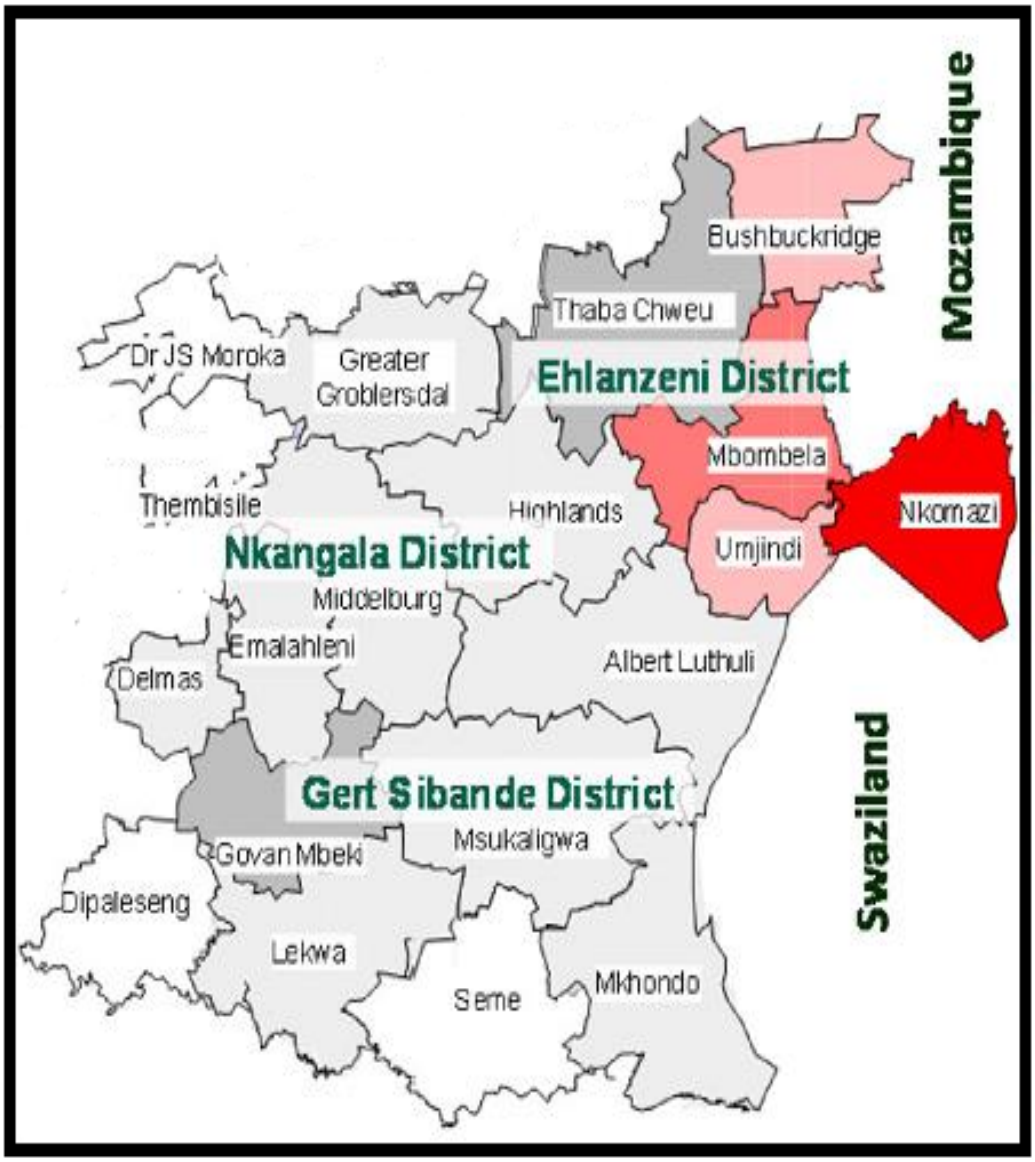
On average, only 9, 6% of the population has got higher/tertiary education qualifications and 14% have no schooling at all. The Ehlanzeni district accounts for the highest number of people with no schooling – at 16, 6% – and Gert Sibande, the lowest in relation to higher/tertiary education – at 9, 1%. The province's average poverty intensity is recorded at 42, 7% – with the Nkangala district being the hardest hit at 43, 5%, followed by Gert Sibande at 43, 1%

(Statistics South Africa 2016). In terms of headcount, a total of 338 205 people in Mpumalanga were living in poverty (Statistics South Africa 2016). Most of the residents (91, 1%) own mobile phones and the penetration of the Internet – form of new media – is at 31, 4% (Statistics SA 2013). The province spans 76, 495 square kilometres and accounts for 6.3% of the country's land (SouthAfrica.info 2015). Size-wise, when compared with international countries, the Province of Mpumalanga is slightly larger than the Central Europe-located Czech Republic, and is the second smallest province after Gauteng (SouthAfrica.info 2015). It borders the provinces of Limpopo in the north, Gauteng in the west, KwaZulu-Natal in the south, and the Free State in the south west. It also shares a border with countries like Swaziland and Mozambique (SouthAfrica.info 2015).

The province is politically led by a Premier, from the governing African National Congress, and governed by an Executive Council (under the leadership of the Premier) – a provincial equivalent of a cabinet (South Africa 1996:s 195.108). It is divided into three (3) district municipalities (depicted in Figure 4.2 below); namely, Ehlanzeni, Nkangala and Gert Sibande (Statistics South Africa 2012; Municipal Demarcation Board 2013; SouthAfrica.info 2015). These district municipalities are further sub-divided into seventeen (17) local municipalities (18 local municipalities prior to South Africa's 2016 local government elections) which are politically led by Executive Mayors. The Ehlanzeni district municipality is made up of four (4) local municipalities; the Nkangala district municipality – six (6) local municipalities; and the Gert Sibande district municipality – seven (7) local municipalities (Statistics South Africa 2012; Municipal Demarcation Board 2013).

The four (4) local municipalities forming the Ehlanzeni district are: Bushbuckridge, City of Mbombela, Nkomazi and Thaba Chweu. The City of Mbombela local municipality was created through the amalgamation of the old Mbombela and Umjindi local municipalities following South Africa's local government elections on 03 August 2016 (BusinessTech 2015; South Africa. Municipal Demarcation Board 2015; De Villiers 2016).

Figure 4.2: Map of the Province of Mpumalanga (depicting district and local municipalities)



Adapted from www.researchgate.net (2009)

The Nkangala district is made up by Dr JS Moroka, eMakhazeni, eMalahleni, Steve Tshwete, Thembisile Hani and Victor Khanye local municipalities. The seven (7) local municipalities forming the Gert Sibande district are: Chief Albert Luthuli, Dipaleseng, Govan Mbeki, Lekwa Mkhondo, Msukaligwa and Pixley ka Isaka-Seme (South Africa. Municipal Demarcation Board 2013; South Africa.

Mpumalanga Provincial Government 2013). The seat or capital city of the province is Mbombela, formerly Nelspruit, which is also the name of the local municipality in which it is based (Olivier 2009; South Africa. Mpumalanga Provincial Government 2013; SouthAfrica.info 2015). The word Mbombela is siSwati for 'a lot of people in a small space', and was the original name of the defunct settlement for black people in the area before they were forcefully removed and re-settled in the township of KaNyamazane – which is about 25 kilometres away from the current capital city – by the apartheid government in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Olivier 2009). The main languages spoken in the province were siSwati (27, 7%), isiZulu (24, 1%), xiTsonga (10, 4%) and isiNdebele (10.1%) (Statistics South Africa 2012; SouthAfrica.info 2015). The siSwati language is predominantly spoken in the Ehlanzeni district, isiZulu in the Gert Sibande district, xiTsonga in the Bushbuckridge local municipality, which falls under Ehlanzeni, and isiNdebele in the Nkangala district (Statistics South Africa 2012; SouthAfrica.info 2015).

Although South Africa has eleven official languages, which are afforded "parity of esteem and must be treated equally", the country's constitution, however, makes provision for provinces to designate languages of their choice as official provincial languages (South Africa 1996:s 195.108: 4). In this regard, the provincial government of Mpumalanga has designated four (4) languages as official provincial languages of government communication; namely, isiNdebele, siSwati, English and Afrikaans (South Africa 1996:s 195.108; South Africa. Province of Mpumalanga 2014). However, despite English being spoken by only 3.1 % of the population or 125, 238 residents of the province, it continues to be the predominant language of government communication in Mpumalanga (Statistics SA 2013; South Africa. Province of Mpumalanga 2014).

This is further confirmed by the fact that even the Mpumalanga Provincial Languages Act (Act No. 3 of 2014), which has designated the said four (4) languages as the only official provincial languages, that is, business or communication languages, is only written and gazetted in English. This, however,

is in contrast to the objectives of the Act, which amongst others, seeks "to empower the public to use language of their choice [from the designated 4] in order to access government services, knowledge and information" and "to elevate the status and advance the use of indigenous languages spoken in the Province" (South Africa. Province of Mpumalanga 2014: 2). These provisions of the Act are nevertheless disregarded by the provincial government of Mpumalanga, given that the other three (3) languages are not being afforded equal status as enshrined in the said Act. Contrary to the practice, Ramodibe (2014) asserts that most of the residents of Mpumalanga prefer government communication to be done in their own languages as opposed to English.

4.3.2 Target versus accessible population

In social terms, a population is simply the total available pool of individuals who could become subjects or participants in a research study. The individuals within a population usually have common characteristics (Sudman & Blair 1999; Du Plooy 2009). Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) refer to a population as a group of individuals the researcher is interested in studying, and upon which to further generalise the findings or results of the study. In social research, the target and accessible populations should be identified (Sudman & Blair 1999; Polit & Hungler 1999).

4.3.2.1 Target population

The target population is defined as the entire group of individuals to which a researcher is intending to generalise the findings or results of their study (Sudman & Blair 1999; Polit & Hungler 1999; Du Plooy 2009). Simply put, the target population refers to who or what the researcher is intending to study to understand or establish why they or it behave in a certain way under certain conditions (Sudman & Blair 1999; Polit & Hungler 1999; Du Plooy 2009). The target population for this study was the residents/citizens of the Province of Mpumalanga.

4.3.2.2 Accessible population

When compared with the target population, the accessible population refers to a sub-set of the target or intended study population which is available to be studied (Sudman & Blair 1999; Polit & Hungler 1999; Castillo 2009; Du Plooy 2009; Hayes 2011). However, due to the geographical vastness of the Province of Mpumalanga – the study area – time and funding constraints, it was therefore not feasible to study the entire population; hence the accessible population served the purpose. The accessible population was the citizens who visited the 24 Thusong Service Centres – government service points – over the five (5) day period of this study, and the provincial government communicators – heads of communication – in the Province of Mpumalanga. The Thusong Service Centres (TSCs) are government one-stop, integrated community development centres established to bridge access to government information and services between the urban and rural communities of South Africa (Ramodibe 2014).

Thusong is a Setswana – one of South Africa's 11 official languages – word which loosely means 'a place of help' (Ramodibe 2014). As the word suggests, TSCs are centres which provide one-stop government information and services to citizens. These centres were initiated in 1999 by the South African government to address historical challenges of limited access to information, services and participation by citizens, especially those residing in rural areas (Thusong 2013; Ramodibe 2014). At the time of this study, 24 TSCs were operational in all districts of the Province of Mpumalanga, with eight (8) of them being in the Nkangala district, seven (7) in the Ehlanzeni district and nine (9) in the Gert Sibande district (Nyaka 2016). The heads of communication are the custodians and implementers of government communication activities whereas the residents or citizens are the intended recipients of government messages.

4.3.3 Sampling frame, technique and sample size

A sample is selected to represent the population under study because it might not be practical to include the entire population in a study (Polit & Hungler 1999; Kothari 2004; Levy & Lemeshow 2008; Lohr 2009; Du Plooy 2009; Polonsky & Waller 2010). As a norm in research, sampling was done as it was going to be too expensive and time-consuming to study the entire population (Kothari 2004; Lavrakas 2008). Accordingly, the sample selected for this study possessed all the characteristics of the population from which it was selected, and was representative enough to reduce any possible bias (Kothari 2004; Mbatha 2011). Below is a discussion on the sampling frame, sampling technique and sample size determination:

4.3.3.1 Sampling frame

The sampling frame simply refers to the complete source list of all the components of the population who/which are likely to be sampled (Polit & Hungler 1999; Kothari 2004; Levy & Lemeshow 2008). A good sample frame is characterised by the following attributes: it must be complete – includes all subjects of the population; it must be accurate – ensure no existence of duplicate members of the population; and it must be recent or up-to-date to avoid obsolescence and unreliability (Polit & Hungler 1999; Kothari 2004; Levy & Lemeshow 2008). Accordingly, a complete, accurate and recent sample frame, as indicated in Table 4.1 below, was acquired. The sample frame included three (3) district municipalities of the Province of Mpumalanga, made up by a total of seventeen (17) local municipalities, and 24 government service points – referred to as Thusong Service Centres in this study. Undoubtedly, a sampling frame is fundamental in determining the sampling technique for a research study.

4.3.3.2 Sampling technique

All research studies require a sampling design – a "technique or procedure the researcher would adopt in selecting items for the sample" (Kothari 2004: 55). The sampling design was composed of a sampling scheme and a sample size, with the sampling scheme explaining the methods used to select the unit of analysis, and the sample size denoting the number of the units of analysis selected for the study (discussed later on) (Collins, Onwuegbuzie & Jiao 2007; Du Plooy 2009). In this regard, the sampling design adopted for this study was multi-stage probability sampling which was used to select participants, and this has afforded all the respondents an equal chance of being selected. Also known as random sampling or chance sampling, probability sampling affords every subject in a population an equal chance of being selected for inclusion in the sample (Kothari 2004: 60). This view is supported by Hesse-Biber (2010: 49), who asserts that sampling designs for quantitative studies "rely on laws of probability, [that is], all members of a given population have an equal and known probability of being selected in a sample".

The use of probability sampling has thus resulted in the sample of this study to be representative enough. The sample was selected in multi-stages through the use of simple random, systematic, stratified and cluster or area sampling. Multi-stage probability sampling occurred when cluster sampling was carried further and done in stages or steps to create the required sample (Kothari 2004; Collins, Onwuegbuzie & Jiao 2007; Hesse-Biber 2010; Daniel 2011). Accordingly, cluster, simple random, systematic, stratified sampling, convenience and census techniques were utilised in five (5) stages, discussed below:

Stage 1: Cluster sampling

Cluster sampling refers to the process of sub-dividing the population into groups, known as clusters, due to some common characteristics (Kothari 1985, 2004; Levy & Lemeshow 2008; Castillo 2009; Lohr 2009; Daniel, 2011; Crossman,

2012). By utilising this sampling technique, the population was clustered into three (3) district municipalities, based on the current approved municipal demarcation of the province, namely, Ehlanzeni, Nkangala and Gert Sibande district municipalities (refer to table 4.1 below). In this regard, geographical clustering was used. Census sampling was done thereafter, given that all the district municipalities of the province were included in the sample. Census sampling occurs when an attempt is made to collect data from all the subjects or clusters of the population under study (Kothari 2004). Two-stage cluster sampling was then done by way of simple random sampling to select elements of study within all the clusters. According to Kothari (2004) and Crossman (2012), two-stage cluster sampling refers to the process of randomly selecting elements from each cluster for inclusion in the final sample. Cluster sampling has thus afforded all the district municipalities in the Province of Mpumalanga to be included in the sample, thus eradicating the possibility of bias. The use of cluster sampling was appropriate as it has enabled geographical clustering of the population being studied.

Stage 2: Simple random sampling

Simple random sampling affords every member or unit of the population an equal chance or probability to be selected for inclusion in a sample; hence it is also regarded as probability sampling (Kothari 1985, 2004; Levy & Lemeshow 2008; Castillo 2009; Lohr 2009; Daniel 2011; Crossman 2012). As such, “the results obtained from probability or random sampling can be assured in terms of probability i.e., we can measure the errors of estimation or the significance of results obtained from a random sample” (Kothari 2004: 60). Accordingly, a finite population is essential in ensuring a representative sample. A finite population refers to a fixed, predetermined or foreknown pool of possible subjects, with a complete and up-to-date list of members or units (Kothari 2004). The key advantage of simple random sampling is thus its ability to select a representative sample.

Table 4.1: Distribution of local municipalities per district

Cluster	District Municipalities	Local Municipalities	Government service points (TSCs)
1.	Ehlanzeni (4 local municipalities)	**Bushbuckridge**	Casteel
			Ximhungwe#
		City of Mbombela	None
		Nkomazi	Louieville
			Mbangwane
			Matsamo
		Thaba Chweu	Mashishing
			Moremela
2.	Nkangala (6 local municipalities)	**Dr JS Moroka**	Marapyane
		eMakhazeni	Wonderfontein
		eMalahleni	Klarinet
			Phola
		Steve Tshwete	Piet Tlou
			Adelaide Tambo
		Thembisile Hani	Verena
		Victor Khanye	Botleng
3.	Gert Sibande (7 local municipalities)	Albert Luthuli	Mpuluzi
		Dipaleseng	Siyathemba
		Govan Mbeki	Tholulwazi
		Lekwa	Morgenzon
			Sakhile
			Thuthukani
		Msukaligwa	Breyton
		Mkhondo	Driefontein
		Pixley ka Isaka-Seme	Daggakraal
LEGEND: # - Starting point for systematic sampling			
Total district municipalities: 3			
Total local municipalities: 17			
Total Thusong Service Centres (TSCs): 24			
Total local municipalities included in the sample: 6			

In this regard, a finite comprehensive and up-to-date list of all local municipalities in the Province of Mpumalanga was available, and was utilised to randomly select a sample of two (2) municipalities from each cluster (see the highlighted municipalities in Table 4.1 above). The sample size was calculated based on the average of the total units (local municipalities) within the three (3) clusters of district municipalities. Accordingly, an average of seventeen (17) units equalled 5,6 which was then rounded off to 6 and this figure became the sample size of the total municipalities for the study. Simple random sampling gave an unbiased representation of all the clusters because it afforded all elements within every cluster an equal chance to be selected for this study. The number 6 was then used as an average for sample units to be sampled in each of the three (3) clusters (district municipalities). This decision is supported by Leedy and Ormrod (2001) who assert that a smaller sample is adequate if the population is homogeneous – which was the case in this regard – as the units of the population were all local municipalities. The six (6) sampled local municipalities were Bushbuckridge, Nkomazi, Dr J.S Moroka, eMalahleni, Lekwa and Mkhondo.

Stage 3: Systematic sampling

In stage 3, systematic sampling was applied to select government departments and service points (Thusong Service Centres) from the sampled municipalities (see Table 4.1 above). Systematic sampling refers to the procedure by which sample units or elements of a foreknown population are selected by applying fixed sample intervals, preceded by the selection of a random starting point (Kothari 1985, 2004; Levy & Lemeshow 2008; Castillo 2009; Lohr 2009; Daniel 2011; Crossman 2012). Like simple random sampling, systematic sampling affords each population element an equal probability to be selected for inclusion in a sample, considering that the element is known beforehand. To realise this, the selection starting point was selected randomly, and thereafter every third government service point was selected (from Table 4.1 above). Consequently, six (6) TSCs were included in the sample, as indicated in Table 4.2 below. The size of the sample was further justified by the fact that 50% of the total study units

(TSCs) were selected. This has further ensured that an equal number of TSCs were sampled from each district municipality. The application of the sampling technique has also assisted in preventing bias in the selection process, as it recognises the geographical spread of the units of study.

Table 4.2: List of local municipalities and Thusong Service Centres included in the sample

	District Municipalities	Local Municipalities	Government Service Points (TSCs)
1.	Ehlanzeni (2 local municipalities)	Bushbuckridge	**Ximhungwe**
		Nkomazi	**Matsamo**
2.	Nkangala (2 local municipalities)	Dr JS Moroka	**Marapyane**
		eMalahleni	**Phola**
3.	Gert Sibande (2 local municipalities)	Lekwa	**Sakhile**
		Mkhondo	**Driefontein**
Total number of district municipalities included in the sample: 3			
Total number of local municipalities included in the sample: 6			
Total number of Thusong Service Centres (TSCs) included in the sample: 6			

Stage 4: Stratified sampling

Stratified sampling occurs when the population is segmented into different sub-groups, herein referred to as strata, owing to some heterogeneous characteristics being measured (Levy & Lemeshow 2008; Castillo 2009; Lohr 2009; Daniel 2011; Crossman 2012). Stratification was done to segment the sample into government service points – the Thusong Service Centres (TSCs). The advantage of stratified sampling is that it has a higher statistical precision when compared with simple random sampling because sub-groups have lower variability within themselves compared to whole populations (Levy & Lemeshow 2008; Castillo 2009; Lohr 2009; Daniel 2011; Crossman 2012).

Stage 5: Convenience and census sampling

The final stage was done in two steps, with the first step adopting convenience sampling. Convenience sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique, was used to select respondents in queues at the six (6) TSCs (government service points indicated in table 4.2 above), whereas census sampling was conducted for government communicators. As the name suggests, convenience sampling simply refers to the type of sampling technique wherein respondents are conveniently available and accessible to the researcher (Farrokhi 2012; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2012). Farrokhi (2012: 785) refers to convenience sampling as a "non-random sampling in which members of the target population … are selected … if they meet certain practical criteria, such as geographical proximity, availability at a certain time, easy accessibility, or the willingness to volunteer".

One outstanding advantage of convenience sampling is that it does not require finite lists of possible respondents, as is the case with a probability sampling technique like random sampling (Farrokhi 2012; Saunders *et al* 2012). However, despite convenience sampling being regarded as being unreliable by various scholars – due to their assertion that it does not provide the citizens an equal chance of being selected for a study – the researcher holds a different view which is supported by Farrokhi (2012). From the above definition by Farrokhi (2012), it is clear that a researcher is inclined to opt to use convenience sampling because the respondents, the citizens – the intended recipients of government communication messages and services – were mainly only available at government service points, such as TSCs, during certain times; were easily accessible; and willing to take part in the study.

In the case of this study, the respondents were conveniently sourced given that they were the type of people required – the citizens or shareholders – and they were sourced at appropriate places, such as TSCs, which are government information and service points. Simply put, the researcher was aware that the

convenient places to find citizens, in large numbers daily, were at the TSCs – established to provide one-stop government information and services to citizens. As indicated, TSCs are convenient; hence the use of convenience sampling technique, given that they were established "as one of the primary vehicles for the implementation of development communication and information" and to integrate government services into primarily rural communities … [thus] enabling them to engage in government programmes for the improvement of their lives (Thusong 2013). From the explanation above, it is clear that TSCs were conceptualised as "primary vehicles" or channels of government communication and services machinery, given the constitutional mandate of "providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information" (South Africa 1996:s 195.108: 107) [emphasis in the original].

The rationale for opting for the convenience non-probability sampling technique was due to the fact it was not possible to gain access to a list of all citizens visiting the TSCs, as required in the simple random probability sampling technique, given that different people visited such centres on a daily basis. The convenience non-probability sampling technique was thus the most appropriate to gain access to the citizens who require government information and services. The second step adopted was census sampling which was used to select government communicators. Census sampling is an attempt to collect data from all members of the population under study (Kothari 2004; Ramodibe 2014). Accordingly, the population census can be explained as "the total process of collecting, compiling, evaluating, analysing and publishing … social data pertaining, at a specified time, to all persons in a country or in a well delimited part of a country" (United Nations 2008: 7).

A census offers the researcher an opportunity to collect data from all members of the population, and in the case of the study, it was possible given that the population size was small and manageable. Various scholars assert that census sampling is appropriate for a small, manageable finite population (Krejcie &

Morgan 1970; Creative Research Systems 1982; Leedy 1997; Greenfield, Kuhn & Wojtys 1998; Du Plooy 2009; Simon & Goes 2012; Scott 2013; Du Plooy 2009).

4.3.3.3 Sample size

Tefft, Weber and Staatz (1990: 26) argue that the "sample size cannot be decided in isolation but must be viewed in the context of the sampling design … cost and available personnel, logistics and management capability, the user's needs, and proposed plans for analysis." In addition, researchers have indicated that it is essential that the sample size should be proportional to the size of the population from which it was selected, for the results of the study to be credible and inferential (Krejcie & Morgan 1970; McLaren 1994; Gay 1996; Leedy 1997; Du Plooy 2009). Mugo (2002) further argues that the scope, nature of the study and the kind of analysis to be done further dictate the appropriate sample size. In addition, Leedy (1997), Powell (1997) and Du Plooy (2009) argue that larger sample sizes significantly reduce the margin of sampling error. Sampling error refers to the error of relying on the characteristics of the sample as a true reflection of the whole rather than the entire actual population (Powell 1997; Heiman 2002; Burns & Grove 2009; Castillo 2009; Du Plooy 2009; Qualtrics 2010).

Accordingly, five (5) sampling errors should be avoided; namely, (1) population specific error, (2) sample frame error, (3) selection error, (4) non-response, and (5) sampling errors (Qualtrics 2010). Furthermore, it is critical that the confidence interval and the confidence level be considered when determining the sample size (Creative Research Systems 1982; Simon and Goes 2012; Scott 2013). The confidence Interval or the margin of error, as it is also known, is a range of values that is likely to contain the true value of the population by determining how much higher or lower than the population mean, the researcher is willing to let the sample mean fall (Creative Research Systems 1982; Simon and Goes 2012; Scott 2013). Simon (1986) and Sim and Reid (1999) assert that Confidence Intervals assist in testing the hypothesis in relation to the data collected, adding

that they are also significant in assisting to determine the appropriate sample size for a study. On the other hand, the confidence level refers to the degree to which a sample is believed to be depicting the true characteristics of a population (Creative Research Systems 1982; Simon & Goes 2012; Scott 2013). The confidence level is presented in percentages and the most common levels are 90% confident, 95% confident and 99% confident (Creative Research Systems 1982; Simon and Goes 2012; Scott 2013). The percentage indicates the level of confidence that the sample size is a proportional representation of the population in question. However, given the cost factor and time constraints, amongst others, most researchers prefer to use the 95% confidence level (Creative Research Systems 1982; Greenfield *et al* 1998).

It is therefore evident that the confidence interval and confidence level are intertwined because the determination of one affects the other, and thus cannot be applied independently of each other (Creative Research Systems 1982; Leedy 1997; Greenfield *et al* 1998; Du Plooy 2009; Simon & Goes 2012; Scott 2013). The size of the confidence interval for a specified confidence level is determined by three (3) factors; namely, (1) sample size, (2) percentage, and (3) population size (Krejcie & Morgan 1970; Creative Research Systems 1982; Leedy 1997; Greenfield *et al* 1998; Du Plooy 2009; Scott 2013). Various scholars assert that the sample size matters only when the population size is too small, as bigger samples are unlikely to result in sampling errors given that the margin of error is almost non-existent at 0.014 or 1.4% (Creative Research Systems 1982; Leedy 1997; Greenfield *et al* 1998; Simon & Goes 2012). The sample size should be adequate to represent the population size (McLaren 1994; Leedy 1997; Powell 1997; Kothari 2004; Burns & Grove 2009).

As a result, the sample size becomes irrelevant once the size of the population exceeds 5000 (Creative Research Systems 1982; McLaren 1994; Leedy 1997; Heiman 2002; Castillo 2009; Qualtrics 2010; Simon & Goes 2012). Krejcie and Morgan (1970) and Powell (1997) assert that excessively large sample sizes are unnecessary, as they end up increasing the time and money needed for a study.

Accordingly, a sample size of 379 is adequate for a population exceeding 30 000. In this regard, the total sample size of 379 respondents – comprising 347 citizens at TSCs and 32 government communicators (heads of communication) – was selected and questionnaires were administered to the targeted population. For the respondents at the TSCs, the calculation was based on the population size of 27120 people who visited the 24 TSCs in the Province of Mpumalanga over a period of five (5) days. This was based on the information received from the managers of the TSCs, who indicated that an average of 226 people visits these centres daily, in pursuit of government services and information. The Sample Size Calculator was also utilised to ascertain and confirm the adequacy of the sample size selected, based on the confidence interval of 5 and the confidence level of 95%.

Any sample size calculated at the said confidence interval and level is adequate and representative enough to enable a researcher to generalise the findings or results of the study, on the population from which the sample was selected (Creative Research Systems 1982; McLaren 1994; Gay 1996; Leedy 1997; Powell 1997; Van Dessel 2013; Simon & Goes 2012; Scott 2013; Penwarden 2014). In addition, a census of 32 government communicators, who were representing 12 departments of the Mpumalanga Provincial Government and the 20 local and district municipalities in the Province of Mpumalanga, was conducted.

4.3.4 Data collection instrument

Data collection is a systematic way of gathering information to be analysed to assist the researcher to resolve the research problem and answer research questions in order to fulfil the intended purpose of the study (Zaza, Wright-De Aguero, Briss, Truman, Hopkins, Hennessy, Sosin, Anderson, Garande-Kulis, Teutsch & Pappaioanou 2000; Kothari 2004; Conway 2004). Therefore, “unless [the researchers] gather[s] the right data, there is no way [they] can fully answer [the] research problem and objectives” (Polonsky & Waller 2010: 127). It is thus

significant that the researcher selects the appropriate data collection instrument which will at least gather the appropriate information to answer the research question and address objectives of the study. A data collection instrument could thus be described as a tool used to gather information for research purposes (Zaza *et al* 2000; Kothari 2004; Conway 2004). In evaluating the data collection methodology to be adopted, the researcher must therefore ensure that, (1) the instrument to be adopted is reliable and can be validated (reliability and validity), (2) the study will be conducted within the available financial means, (3) the study will be concluded within the agreed time frame (with regards to academic studies), and (4) potential errors are minimised at the planning phase (Polonsky & Waller 2010). In addition, Greg Kearsley's model for data collection has suggested five (5) significant steps which must be carried-out in collecting data for research purposes (Conway 1990).

The steps are: (a) identification of data needs, (b) identification of data collection methods, (c) designing of data collection instruments, (d) collection of preliminary data, and (e) validation of the data. This is because research "is a repeating cycle rather than a one-shot effort … [and] the research will need to go back for additional data a number of times, possibly using different data-collections methods and tools" (Conway 1990: 1-2). It is thus evident that the type of data collection instrument to be used should be carefully selected based on the purpose of the study. In this regard, Conway (1990) asserts that a questionnaire is the most appropriate for conducting survey research; hence it was adopted for this study.

4.3.4.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire could be described as "one means of eliciting the thoughts, feelings, beliefs, experiences, and attitudes of a sample group of individuals" (Conway 1990: 3). It is an instrument used for "gathering information from respondents about attitudes, knowledge, beliefs and feelings" (Polit & Hungler 1997: 466). A questionnaire consists of a series of questions which are used to

gather data from respondents in a uniform way; that is, all the respondents are asked the same questions (Polit & Hungler 1997; Powell 1997; Zaza *et al* 2000; Kothari 2004; Conway 2004; Kielhofner 2006). The questions asked can either be open-ended or closed-ended (Powell 1997; Reja, Manfreda, Hlebec & Vehovar 2003). Open-ended questions provide the respondents free-will to answer in whatever way they wish. An example of such a question would ask the respondent: 'what do you think is the cause of road accidents?' On the other hand, a close-ended questionnaire provides an upfront list of possible responses for the respondents to choose from – no free-will. The questionnaire can also be structured or unstructured (Powell 1997; Timpany 2011). A structured questionnaire asks similar pre-determined questions whereas the unstructured one is flexible and allows the researcher free-will to ask whatever question is motivated by the knowledge and responses of the respondent (Powell 1997; Timpany 2011).

Powell (1997) and Beiske (2002) argue that a well-designed questionnaire has the potential to motivate respondents to answer accurately, respond to all questions, thereby increasing the possibility of collecting relevant data intended to be collected by the researcher. The data collection instrument adopted for this study were structured questionnaires which were utilised for both the citizens at TSCs and government communicators, and were developed by the researcher. The rationale for utilising a questionnaire, and particularly, structured ones, was because:

(a) They provided a uniform measurement given that all prospective respondents were asked the same questions, thus rendering the instrument unbiased, reliable and valid (Neuman 1997; McNeill & Chapman 2005; Smith *et al* 2002; Rosenberg, Heck & Banilower 2005);

(b) Standardised questionnaires guide responses to reduce discrepancies in responses, although this could not be guaranteed by the researcher;

(c) They were reliable, cheaper and cost effective to administer;

(d) They removed the possibility of interviewer bias as opposed to face-to-face interviews; and

(e) They were the most appropriate instruments to collect quantitative data required to achieve the objectives of this study. The questionnaires also afforded respondents an opportunity to expatiate their responses where necessary.

Both questionnaires were categorised into four (4) sections, with the one administered to citizens/residents respondents, comprising a total of fifteen (15) questions, and the one administered to government communicators comprising twelve (12) questions. Section A of both questionnaires largely contained a request for the respondents' demographic information. The one for citizens/residents respondents requested information on gender, age, type of area of residence, employment and educational status whilst the one for government communicators focused primarily on acquiring information regarding their government sphere of employment and level of responsibility, amongst others. Section B of both questionnaires gathered data on access and usage of new media platforms. The citizens were asked four (4) questions whereas government communicators were asked five (5) which were intended to establish the extent of the new media usage.

The questions asked included requesting information on the tele-communication devices owned by the citizens, and the type of information source channels and their appropriateness in satisfying the citizens' information needs or requirements. Government communicators were asked questions around the type of tools of trade provided to them; which communication channels they utilised to communicate to/with the citizens; and who decided on them, amongst others. Section C of the citizens' questionnaire consisted of three (3) questions which sought to establish the type of new media platforms they utilised and

preferred, whereas two (2) questions were posed to government communicators in order to establish the rationale of the South African government's preference of the old media as its primary channel of information dissemination as opposed to the new media. The last part, Section D of the citizens' questionnaire comprised three (3) questions which sought to establish the type of information they preferred to receive via their preferred new media platforms. The one for government communicators consisted of two (2) questions which were intended to conceptualise and propose a communication model that could be used to strengthen government communication in South Africa. For the citizens/residents, one questionnaire was personally administered at the six (6) sampled TSCs to 347 respondents. Personally-administered questionnaires have the advantage of producing good and immediate responses, as proven by this study (Trochim 2006).

Out of 347 questionnaires administered to the citizens at the six (6) TSCs, 320 were duly completed and retrieved – representing a response rate of 92%. Questionnaires were also self-administered to 32 government communicators in their own time without any pressure. One outstanding advantage of self-administered questionnaires is that they can be distributed to many people at a relatively low cost, thus increasing the chances for a greater number of responses (Trochim 2006). The researcher had direct access to the government communicators who were his colleagues. Out of 32 questionnaires administered to government communicators, 27 were successfully retrieved – representing a response rate of 84%.

According to Visser, Krosnick, Marquette and Curtin (1996), surveys which produce a response rate of at least 70% are adequate and would certainly produce accurate measurements, provided that all questions asked are answered. They argue that a response or completion rate is significant in determining whether the data collected will produce accurate measurements. In social research, the response rate refers to the total number of duly completed questionnaires or conducted interviews with respondents from the sample

population (Visser *et al* 1996; American Association for Public Opinion Research 2015). However, a high response rate does not guarantee accurate measurements if respondents do not duly answer all the questions. Likewise, a low response rate does not necessarily mean that the results or findings of a study would be unreliable (Visser *et al* 1996). Evidently, in the case of a high response rate, all retrieved questionnaires should be duly completed in order for the collected data to be reliable, as was the case in this study. Consequently, the quality of responses or completeness of the data collecting instrument confirmed the reliability of the data collected (Visser *et al* 1996).

4.4 Pilot study: Assessing the reliability and validity of the data collection instrument

A pilot study can be described as a "small scale version or trial-run done in preparation for the major study" (Polit, Beck & Hungler 2001: 467). It is used to check, in advance, whether the methods and data collection instruments proposed to be used in a bigger study can be reliable and valid (Baker 1994). In essence, a pilot study tests the reliability and validity of a data collection instrument (Leedy 1997; Neuman 1997). A pilot study further provides the researcher an opportunity to correct any shortcomings discovered, prior to conducting the actual study. Reliability refers to the degree of eliciting the same results upon subsequent re-tests (Carmines & Zeller 1979; Kirk & Miller 1986; Leedy 1997; Phelan & Wren 2005; Radhakrishna 2007). There are four (4) types of reliability tests; namely, (a) test-retest, (b) parallel forms, (c) inter-rater, and (d) internal consistency (Phelan & Wren 2005).

Test-retest reliability measures the consistency degree of the same instrument upon it being re-used, whereas parallel forms reliability measures the consistency degree of two (2) different versions of an instrument probing the same issues and administered to the same group of individuals. As the term 'rater' suggests, inter-rater reliability focuses on the degree to which different judges agree on their rating of the same phenomenon (Phelan & Wren 2005). An example thereof is

the subjective judging of a beauty pageant. The last one is internal consistency reliability which is used to evaluate the extent to which a test using different items can produce the same results (Phelan & Wren 2005). On the other hand, validity refers to the degree of being able to measure what was intended (Baker 1994; Moskal & Leydens 2000; Phelan & Wren 2005). There are five (5) types of validity tests; namely, (a) face or content validity, (b) construct validity, (c) criterion-related validity, (d) formative validity, and (e) sampling validity (Phelan & Wren 2005). Face validity, as the term suggests, measures validity on face-value without scientific proof. Construct validity measures the degree to which a construct measures what was intended. Criterion-related validity is used to predict future measurement of an instrument based on its current performance. Formative validity measures the extent to which an instrument can help improve a phenomenon being studied. Lastly, sampling validity measures a wide range of issues within one area of study to assess it in its entirety (Phelan & Wren 2005).

To this end, Phelan and Wren (2005) argue that the reliability of a test is dependent on its validity, that is, something is considered to be reliable if it can be validated. In a nutshell, reliability measures consistency whereas validity measures accuracy (Carmines & Zeller 1979; Kirk & Miller 1986; Leedy 1997; Phelan & Wren 2005; Radhakrishna 2007). In this regard, a pilot study was conducted during May 2016 at the Dipaleseng local municipality which was not included in the sample of the study. A total of fifteen (15) residents/citizens and four (4) government communicators participated in the pilot study. The pilot study has assisted in testing the clarity, relevance and possible shortcomings of the questionnaire which were subsequently addressed. It revealed that the initial questionnaire was a bit long, as it took almost 45 minutes to personally administer and complete. The questionnaire was subsequently redesigned, made shorter and more succinct, without compromising the objectives of the study. The pilot study has also enabled the researcher to check whether he has adhered to protocols for questionnaire design, amongst others. It proved to be a 'litmus test' to ascertain the reliability and validity of the data collection instrument (Leedy 1997; Neuman 1997).

4.5 Data analysis

The first crucial step in analysing data is to organise it in a way it will make sense to the researcher for easier analysis and extrapolation. Data analysis could be explained as the procedure of systematically organising raw data in such a way that the underlying meaning could be extracted from it (Polit & Hungler 1999; Bryman & Cramer 1999; Mbatha 2011). Tukey (1962) defines data analysis as "procedures for analyzing data, techniques for interpreting the results of such procedures, ways of planning the gathering of data to make its analysis easier, more precise or more accurate, and all the machinery and results of (mathematical) statistics which apply to analyzing data". According to Judd, McClelland and Ryan (2009), the rationale behind data collection and analysis is to answer research questions, test the hypotheses and confirm or disapprove theories underlying a study.

Data analysis is better explained through a science known as data analytics which refers to the process of analysing the data collected to extrapolate meaning, make an inference and derive conclusions “based solely on what is already known by the researcher” (TechTarget 2016). In this regard, data analytics is divided into two types; namely, exploratory data analysis which involves the discovery of new features in the data collected, and confirmatory data analysis which relates to proving the existing hypotheses to be true or false (TechTarget 2016). In preparing the data collected for analysis, tables, graphs, frequencies and percentages were utilised for presentation through the help of the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). Data was thereafter analysed through the three (3) procedures of quantitative data analysis, namely, (a) data tabulation, (b) descriptives, and (c) data disaggregation (Bryman & Cramer 1999). The use of these procedures has made the comprehension of the analysis easier.

4.6 Ethical considerations

All research studies should adhere to research ethics without fail, to ensure that no form of harm is inflicted on a subject participating in a study, amongst others, (The Belmont Report 2007; Babbie & Mouton 2010; Polonsky & Waller 2010). Ethics provide guidelines to a researcher on how to act, what procedures to follow, and how to deal with subjects in a study (Belmont Report 2007). Ethical principles for social research involve "respect for person, beneficence and justice" (The Belmont Report 2007). The researcher thus has the responsibility to ensure that no psychological, physical, and financial harm should be inflicted on the subject participating in the research study. Research ethics (as discussed underneath) were adhered to by the researcher from the very first step of selecting participants, through to the last one of presenting the results/findings of the study:

4.6.1 Consent from authorities

Consent was obtained from authorities for the study to be conducted in the areas under their control. They were informed that the study is not meant for personal gain, but to bring about efficiency in government communication.

4.6.2 Informed consent from participants

Informed consent was obtained from each participant to ascertain willingness to participate in this study, and to verify their understanding of why the study was being conducted. The participants were also informed about the nature of the study, and their verbal permission to participate in the study was received. To this end, all the participants participated voluntarily without being coerced. The respondents were also informed that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, should they wish to do so.

4.6.3 Protection from harm and assurance of confidentiality

Care was taken to ensure that all participants were not at any risk and not exposed to embarrassment, unusual stress, or any demeaning treatment. The participants were assured that their responses will remain confidential and anonymous, and will be used solely for the study. This meant that their individual rights, including protection from disclosure of information, and respect for their privacy were protected at all costs.

4.6.4 Adherence to professional standards

The researcher has read and understood the ethics policy of the university (University of South Africa 2009) and has abided by all the ethical requirements of the university to ensure the intended study does not cause any harm to the respondents and all those related to the study in any way. The results of the study were presented honestly, without fabricating any data to support any view held by the researcher. The researcher has further maintained the confidentiality of all data collected from or about research participants, and maintained security procedures for the protection of privacy.

4.7 Summary

This chapter has presented the research methodology which was used in conducting the study. Justification was also given for the research design of this study. This study was a descriptive quantitative survey. The area of the study was also described in detail. Sampling was done in multi-stages which comprised clustering, simple random, systematic, stratified sampling techniques, and convenience and census sampling. The sample size selected was justified as well. Data was collected utilising two (2) standardised questionnaires – one for the residents/citizens and another for government communicators (head of communication) in the Province of Mpumalanga. It was personally-administered for the residents/citizens and self-administered for government communicators.

The reliability and validity of the data collection instrument – the questionnaires – were pre-tested for clarity, relevance and possible shortcomings through a pilot study was conducted in one municipality which was not selected for this study. The results of the pilot study indicated that the initial questionnaires were too long, given that some of the respondents indicated that it was taking too much of their time. The questionnaires were subsequently re-worked to shorten them without compromising the objectives of the study. Research ethics were also followed by way of receiving consent from authorities and participants in this study, amongst others. All participants were also protected from any harm and they were assured that the information they provided will be kept confidential.

The next chapter (Chapter five) presents and analyses the data collected.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

According to Yohannan (2010: 317), data analysis begins with the “categorisation and organisation of data in search of patterns, critical themes and meanings that emerge from data". This chapter thus deals with the analysis and interpretation of the data collected. In essence, data analysis assists the researcher to interpret and make sense of the information collected, in order to make informed conclusions. In this regard, data was analysed utilising both descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS), formerly Statistical Package of Social Sciences. Descriptive statistics enabled the researcher to describe the emerging pattern, summarise and present data in a more meaningful way, thus making data interpretation simpler (Turkey 1977; Ho 2006; Blaikie 2013; Leek 2013). On the other hand, inferential statistics has enabled the researcher to infer and generalise the results or findings of the study to the population from which the sample was drawn (Turkey 1977; Ho 2006; Blaikie 2013; Leek 2013).

5.2 Data presentation

Data was presented in the form of tables, diagrams, pie charts and bar charts, and presented in two (2) parts. Part one presents data collected from the citizens, whereas part two presents data from government communicators.

5.2.1 Part One: Presentation of data collected from the citizens

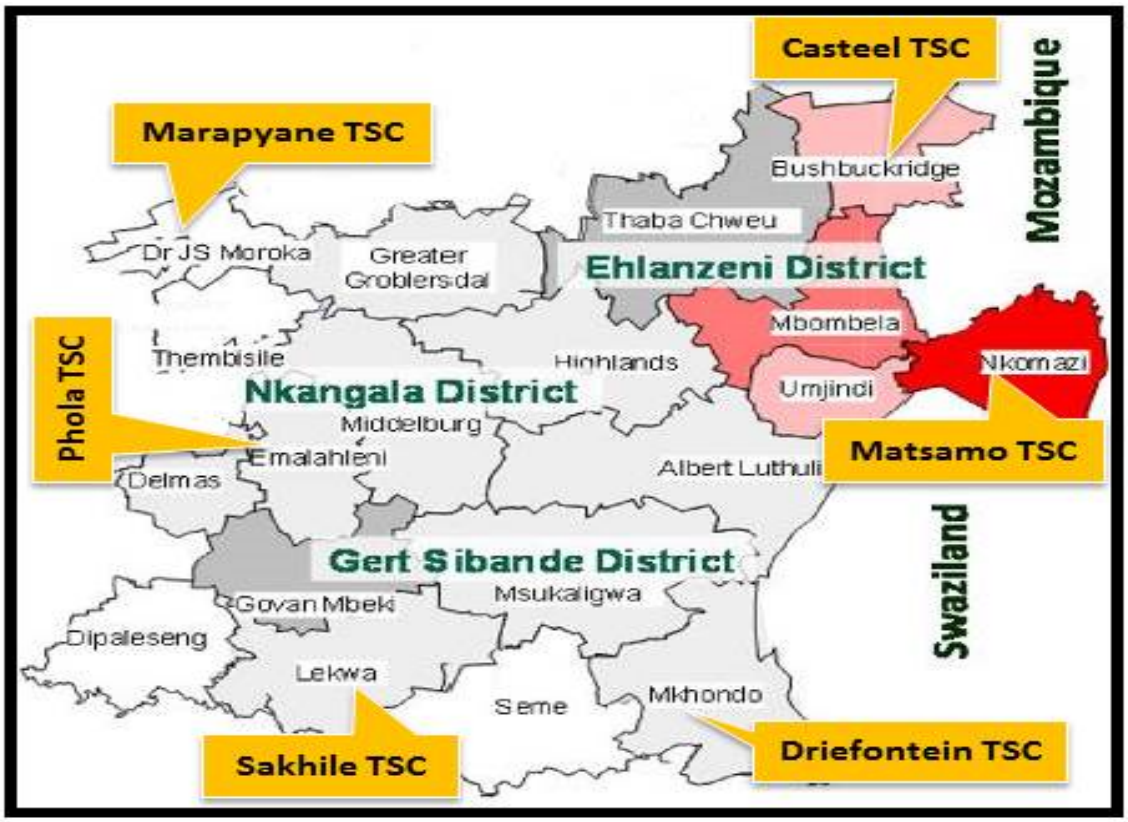
Table 5.1 below indicates the distribution of the respondents per district municipality, local municipality and TSC. It indicates that the Ehlanzeni district municipality had a high number of respondents (116; 36, 0%), followed by the

Nkangala district municipality (104; 32, 3%). On the third place was the Gert Sibande district municipality at 31, 1% or 100 respondents. However, the margin of difference between the responses was marginal as it averaged 33, 0% or 107 respondents, and as such it could be argued that the responses were representative enough. Figure 5.1 below is a graphic presentation of the location of the TSCs where this study was conducted:

Table 5.1: Geographic spread of respondents by Thusong Service Centre and district municipality (N= 320)

THUSONG SERVICE CENTRE	FREQUENCY	%
1. Casteel (Bushbuckridge Local Municipality)	56	17.4
2. Matsamo (Nkomazi Local Municipality)	60	18.6
Sub-total (Ehlanzeni District Municipality)	***116***	***36.0***
3. Marapyane (Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality)	55	17.1
4. Phola (eMalahleni Local Municipality)	49	15.2
Sub-total (Nkangala District Municipality)	***104***	***32.3***
5. Sakhile (Lekwa Local Municipality)	53	16.5
6. Driefontein (Mkhondo Local Municipality)	47	14.6
Sub-total (Gert Sibande District Municipality)	***100***	***31.1***
TOTAL	**320**	**100.0**

Figure 5.1: Map depicting the location of the Thusong Service Centres (per municipality) where this study was conducted



Adapted from www.researchgate.net (2009)

5.2.1.1 Section A: Personal information/demographic profile of respondents (citizens at the TSCs)

Demographics provide an insight into the type of person or people the researcher is dealing with (Salkind 2010; Temple 2011; Wyse 2012. This section thus presents data on gender, age group, type of area of residence (urban, semi-urban or rural), employment status and highest educational qualifications of the citizens. The rationale for establishing the demographic profile of the respondents was to determine if there was any relationship between the demographic characteristics and the adoption of new media channels. Figure 5.2 below indicates some of the TSCs where the study was conducted.

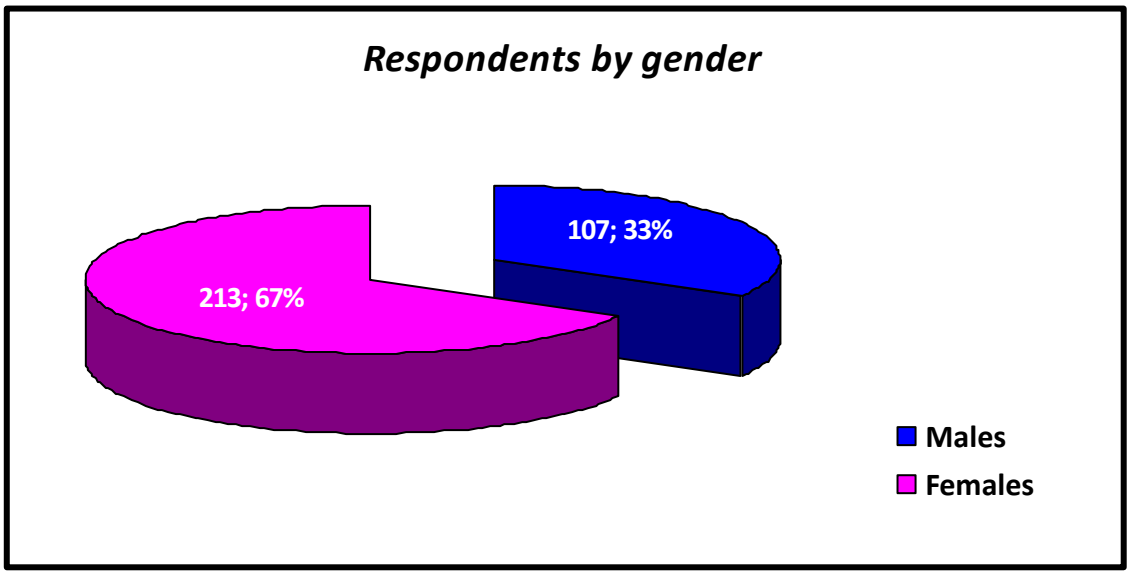
Figure 5.2: A collage depicting some selected Thusong Service Centres where this study was conducted

Pictures by: Silence Mhlaba (2016)

5.2.1.1.1 Distribution of respondents by gender

Respondents were asked to indicate their gender. The reason behind the question was to establish whether both males and females were equally reliant on government information for their socio-economic well-being. According to a study conducted by Thanuskodi (2015: 135) in three (3) Bangladeshi villages, "women, irrespective of location, need information on family health, food and nutrition, family planning and child education". Similarly, Olorunda (2004: 2) argues that information is fundamental to women because they are "the bedrock of any society." Accordingly, the results presented in figure 5.3 below, indicate that the majority of respondents (213; 67.0%) were females when compared to males (107; 33.0%).

Figure 5.3: Distribution of respondents by gender (N= 320)

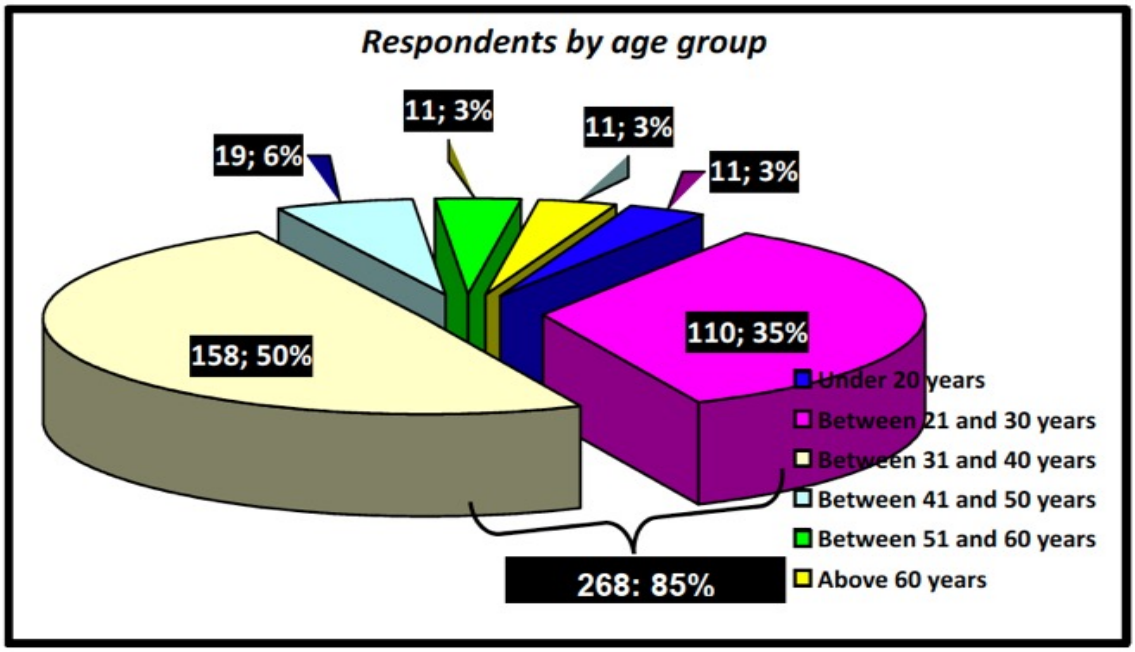


The results suggest that more females rely on the TSCs for government services and information when compared with males. They confirm the assertion by Olorunda (2004) that women need information for socio-economic growth and the well-being of their families and communities in general, more than men.

5.2.1.1.2 Distribution of respondents by age group

Respondents also were asked to indicate their age group. The rationale of the question was to establish the distribution of respondents by age group. The results, presented in Figure 5.4 below, indicate that most of the respondents (158; 50%) were in the age group of 31 to 40 years, followed by the age group of 21 to 30 years (110; 35%). This was followed by those in the age group of 41 to 50 years (19; 6%); and those in the age groups of 51 to 60 years, above 60 years and under 20 years at 11; 3% each. The majority of the respondents were thus in the age groups between 21 and 40 years (268; 85%).

Figure 5.4: Distribution of respondents by age group (N= 320)

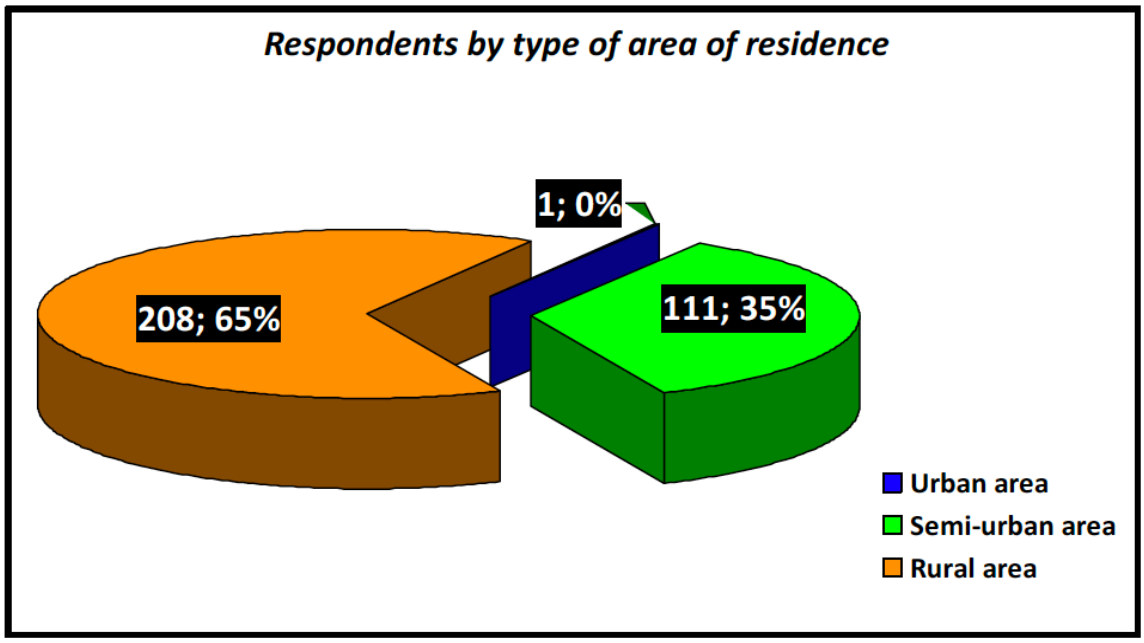


5.2.1.1.3 Distribution of respondents by type of area of residence

Respondents were further asked to indicate the type of area of their residence; that is, whether they reside in an urban, semi-urban or rural area. Urban areas refer to properly planned human settlements with roads, water, sanitation, electricity, tele-communication and information technology infrastructure, which facilitate better living standards for the residents such as towns and cities (Murgante & Danese 2011; Surbhi 2016). On the other hand, rural areas are places like villages which are the opposite of urban areas, given their under-developed status and lack of amenities and social infrastructure (Murgante & Danese 2011; Surbhi 2016). The reason behind the question was to compare the government information needs of citizens residing in the three (3) types of areas. Figure 5.5 below presents the results which indicate that the majority of respondents (208; 65%) resided in rural areas, followed by those in semi-rural area at 111; 35%. Although one (1) respondent resided in an urban area, this figure (1; 0%) is insignificant when calculated based on the total respondents, as

it translates to below half-a-percentage. This concurred with the assertion by Hossain and Islam (2012) that access to information resources and the lack of information and communication technology infrastructure remain a critical challenge facing people in rural areas, particularly women, who require information for socio-economic activities to feed their families. Adequate information is therefore significant for the survival of rural families and communities.

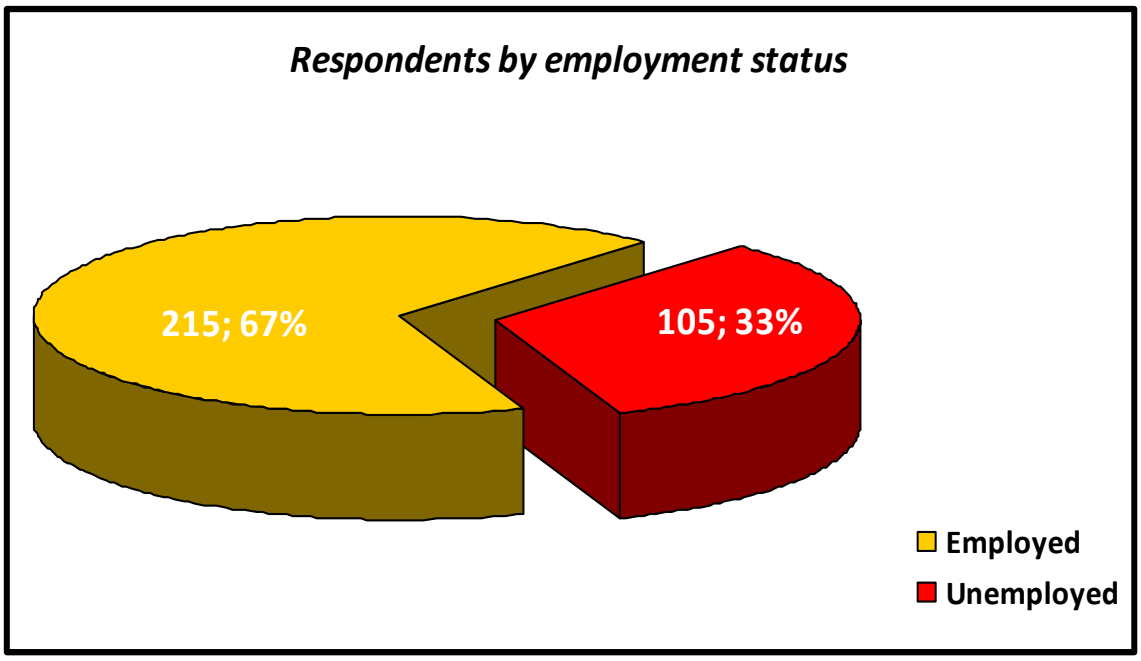
Figure 5.5: Distribution of respondents by area of residence (N= 320)



5.2.1.1.4 Distribution of respondents by employment status

Respondents were asked to indicate their employment status. The reason behind the question was to establish whether the employed and unemployed citizens' requirements for government information are equally the same. The results of the question are presented in Figure 5.6 below. The results indicate that the majority of respondents (215; 67%) were employed when compared to those unemployed (105; 33%).

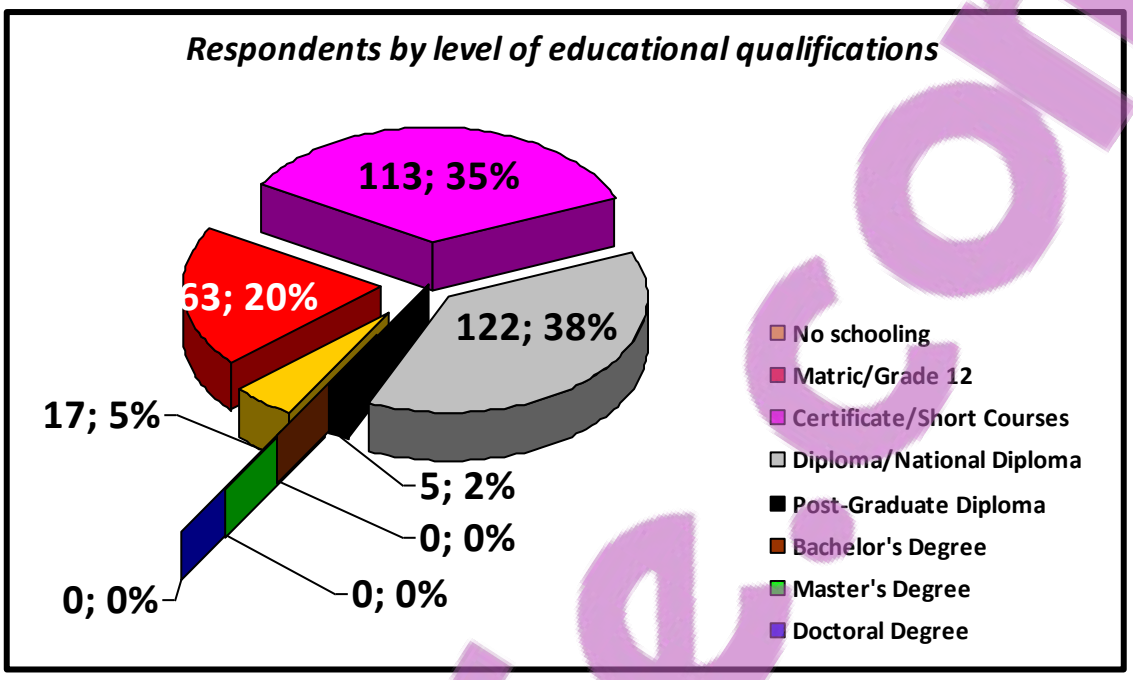
Figure 5.6: Distribution of respondents by employment status (N= 320)



5.2.1.1.5 Distribution of respondents by level of educational qualifications

Respondents were then asked to indicate their level of educational qualifications. The reason behind the question was to establish whether there was a causal relationship between the level of education and the need for government information. The results, presented in Figure 5.7 below, indicate that 38% (122) of the respondents possessed a diploma/national diploma qualification, followed by those with a certificate or short course qualification (113; 35%). In the third place were those with a matric or grade 12 qualification (63; 20%); fourthly those with no schooling (17; 5%) and fifthly those with post-graduate diplomas (5; 2%). It should be noted that none of the respondents had qualifications beyond a diploma or national diploma; that is, no respondent had a bachelor's degree and above. Collectively, the educated people were in the majority – accounting for 95% of the population.

Figure 5.7: **Distribution of respondents by level of educational qualifications *(N = 320)***



5.2.1.2 Section B: Access and usage of new media platforms

Section B focused on accessibility and utilisation of new media platforms by the citizens. The rationale was to determine the appropriateness of the channels being used by government to communicate with the citizens, given the accessibility of requisite infrastructure or lack/inadequacy thereof, in some areas.

5.2.1.2.1 Type of telecommunications devices owned by or infrastructure accessible to the citizens

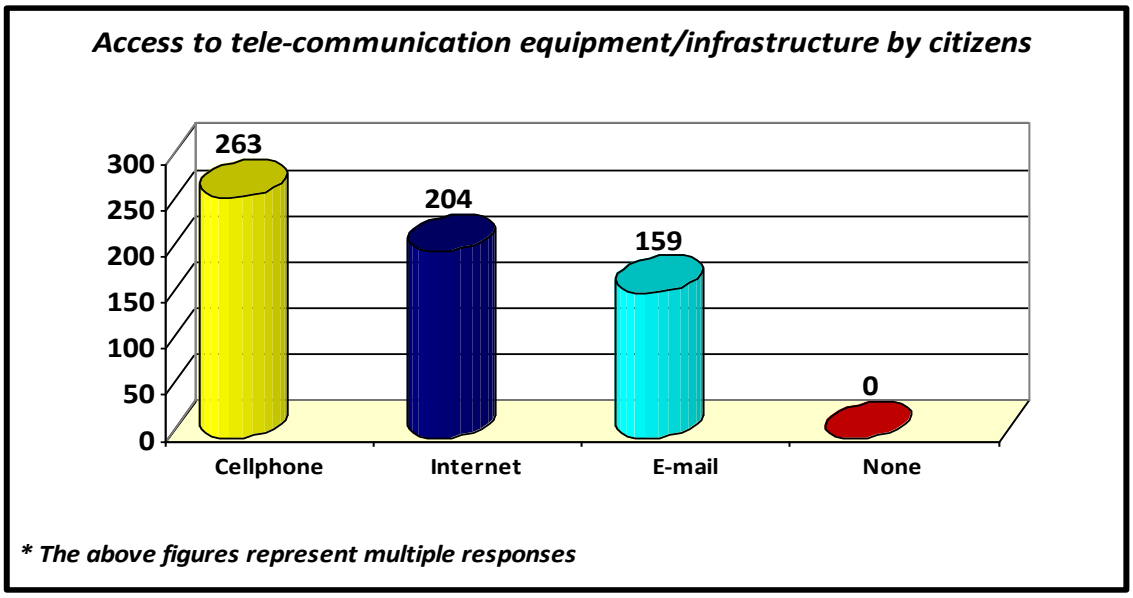
Respondents were asked to indicate the type of telecommunications devices they owned or infrastructure they had access to. Table 5.2 below presents the results in this regard, which indicate that the majority of respondents had access to cell-phones (263; 82.1%), followed by those who had access to the Internet (204; 63.7%), and e-mail (159; 49.6%). It should be noted that these figures present

multiple responses, given that respondents were afforded an opportunity to provide multiple responses, where appropriate. Figure 5.8 below is a graphic presentation of the results as presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Access to telecommunication devices owned by or infrastructure accessible to the citizens (N= 320)

N=320	FREQUENCY (MULTIPLE RESPONSES)		
CHANNELS	**COUNT**	**PERCENTAGE (COUNT) 100*Count/626**	**PERCENTAGE (CASES) 100*count/320**
Cellphone	263	42.0	82.1
Internet	204	32.5	63.7
E-mail	159	25.3	49.6
Other: None	0	0.0	0.0
**** The figures above represent multiple responses***			

Figure 5.8: Access to telecommunication devices/infrastructure by the citizens (N= 320)



5.2.1.2.2 Channels utilised by government to communicate with the citizens

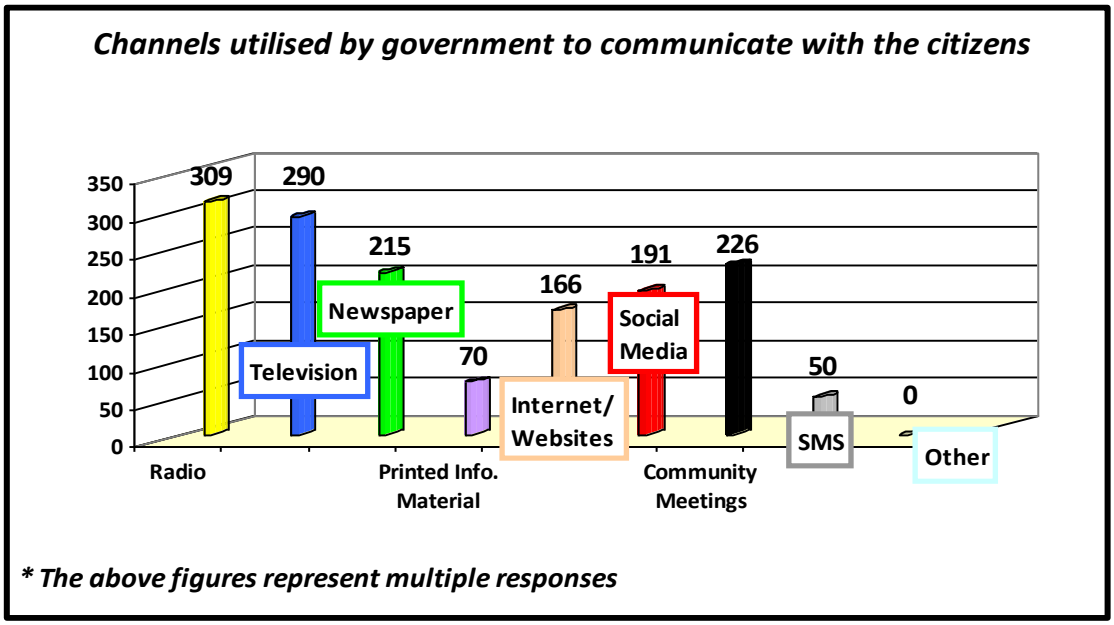
Respondents were then asked to indicate the type of channels utilised by government to communicate with them. They were again afforded an opportunity to provide multiple responses. The results in this regard are presented in the table below, which indicates that the majority of respondents (309; 96.6%) were receiving government information/messages via the channel of radio, followed by television (290; 90.6%). In the third place was community meetings/face-to-face communication (226; 70.6%), fourthly, newspapers (215; 67.2%), fifthly, social media (191; 59.6%).

Table 5.3: Channels utilised by government to communicate with the citizens (N= 320)

N=320	FREQUENCY (MULTIPLE RESPONSES)		
CHANNELS	**COUNT**	**% (COUNT) 100*Count/ 1517**	**% (CASES) 100*count/ 320**
Radio	309	20.4	96.6
Television	290	19.1	90.6
Newspaper	215	14.1	67.2
Printed information material (e.g. brochures, pamphlets, government newsletters)	70	4.6	21.9
Internet/Websites	166	10.9	51.9
Social media (e.g. *facebook*, Twitter)	191	12.6	59.6
Community meetings/face-to-face	226	14.9	70.6
SMS	50	3.3	15.6
Other, please specify:	0	0.0	0.0

In sixth place was Internet/Websites (166; 51.9%), in seventh place, printed information material (such as brochures, pamphlets, government newsletters) (70; 21.9%) and lastly, SMSs (50; 15.6%). Figure 5.9 below is a graphic presentation of the results presented in Table 5.3 above:

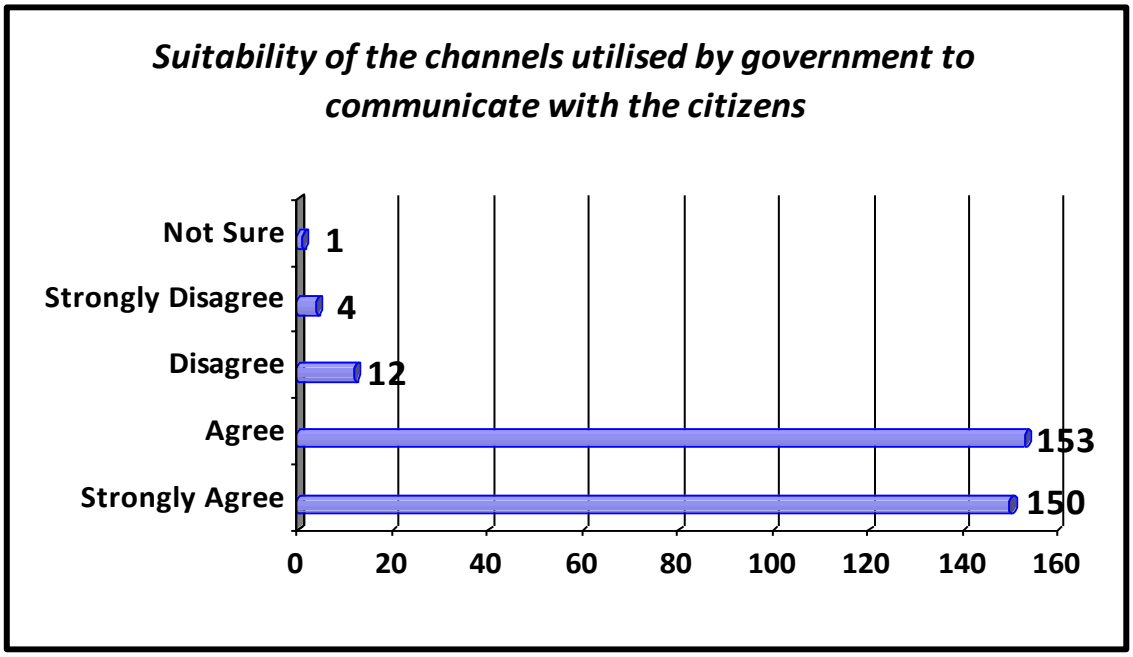
Figure 5.9: Channels utilised by government to communicate with the citizens (N= 320)



5.2.1.2.3 Suitability of the channels utilised by government to communicate with the citizens

Respondents were also asked, using the *Likert Scale,* to indicate whether or not they believe the channels being utilised by government to communicate with them are suitable to them. The results, in this regard, are presented in Figure 5.10 below and indicate that most of the respondents (153; 47.7%) agreed that the channels being utilised by government to communicate with them are suitable, followed by those who strongly agreed (150; 46.9%). In the third place were those who disagreed (12; 3.8%), fourthly those who strongly disagreed (4; 1.2%) and finally those who were not sure (1; 0.38%).

Figure 5.10: Suitability of the channels utilised by government to communicate with the citizens (N= 320)



Consequently, the combination of those who agreed and strongly agreed were in the majority (303; 94.6%), against the combination of those who disagreed and strongly disagreed (16; 5%). Respondents were thereafter asked to provide reasons for their response as indicated in figure 5.10 above. They were provided with six (6) pre-determined reasons to select from, and were also provided an opportunity to select more than one reason (multiple responses). This was meant to establish why they believe or not, that the current government communication channels are suitable to them. The results are presented in Table 5.4 below and indicate that the majority of respondents (245; 76.6%) mentioned that community meetings/face-to-face communication make them feel closer to the government. This was followed by those who believed that new media platforms such as SMS, *facebook* and Twitter were the 'in thing', because they provided them with up-to-the minute information and were capable of providing them with instant feedback (201; 62.8%).

Table 5.4: Reasons for the suitability of the channels utilised by government to communicate with the citizens (N= 320)

N=320	FREQUENCY (MULTIPLE RESPONSES)		
REASONS	**COUNT**	**% (COUNT) 100*Count/ 545**	**% (CASES) 100*count/ 320**
I do not own nor have access to any channels of communication	27	5.0	8.4
They are in most cases not easy to understand	23	4.2	7.2
They are communicated mainly in English which I do not understand well	33	6.1	10.3
Current communication channels are not providing me with instant feedback	16	2.9	5
New media platforms such as SMS, *facebook* and Twitter are the 'in thing' and provides me with up-to-the minute information and capable of providing instant feedback	201	36.9	62.8
Community meetings/face-to-face communication makes me feel closer to our government	245	45.0	76.6
**** The figures above represent multiple responses***			

Thirdly, 10.3% (33) of respondents believed that the use of English as a medium of communication in the channels utilised by government hinders effective communication, given their limitation of understanding the language. Fourthly, some of the respondents (27; 8.4%) indicated that they did not own nor have access to any channels of communication. This was followed, in the fifth place, by those who indicated that government messages were in most cases not easy to understand (23; 7.2%), and lastly five (5) % or 16 of the respondents indicated that the current communication channels adopted by government were not providing them with instant feedback.

5.2.1.3 Section C: Citizens' preferred new media channels for communication

This section presents new media channels of communication preferred by the citizens.

5.2.1.3.1 Communication channels/platforms preferred by the citizens

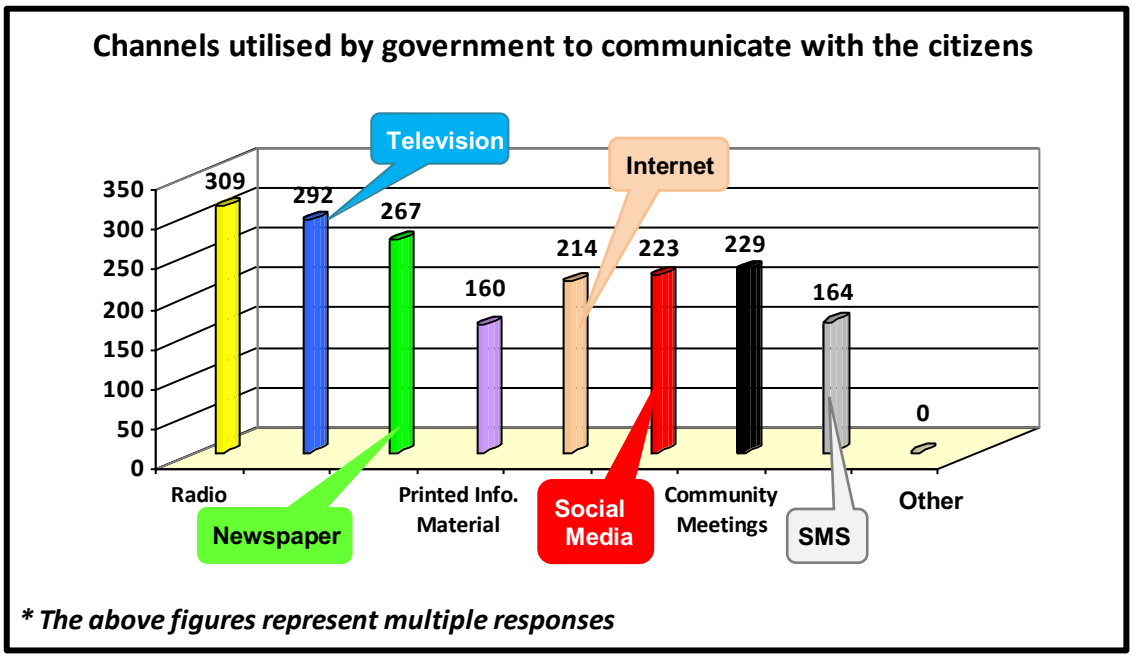
Respondents were asked to indicate their preferred channels of communication. The rationale was to establish whether the citizens preferred channels of communication differed from those being utilised by government in communicating with them.

Table 5.5: Communication channels preferred by the citizens (N= 320)

N=320	FREQUENCY (MULTIPLE RESPONSES)		
CHANNELS	**COUNT**	**% (COUNT) 100*Count/1858**	**% (CASES) 100*count/320**
Radio	309	16.6	96.5
Television	292	15.7	91.1
Newspaper	267	14.3	83.4
Printed information material (e.g. brochures, pamphlets, government newsletters)	160	8.6	50.0
Internet/Websites	214	11.5	66.9
Social media (e.g. *facebook*, Twitter)	223	12.0	69.6
Community meetings/Face-to-face	229	12.3	71.5
SMS	164	8.8	51.1
Other, please specify:	0	0.0	0.0
**** The figures above represent multiple responses***			

The citizens were provided with a list of both old and new media channels to choose from, and were also afforded an opportunity to provide multiple responses, where appropriate. The results in this regard are presented in Table 5.5 above. The results show that the majority of respondents, per case, preferred radio (309; 96.5%) as their means to receive government messages/information, followed by television (292; 91.1%), newspaper (267; 83.4%), community meetings/face-to-face (229; 71.5%), social media (223; 69.6%), Internet/websites (214; 66.9%), SMS (164; 51.1%) and lastly printed information material (160; 50.0%). It should be noted that these figures present multiple responses. Figure 5.11 below is a graphic presentation of the results presented in table 5.5 above:

Figure 5.11: Communication channels preferred by the citizens (N= 320)

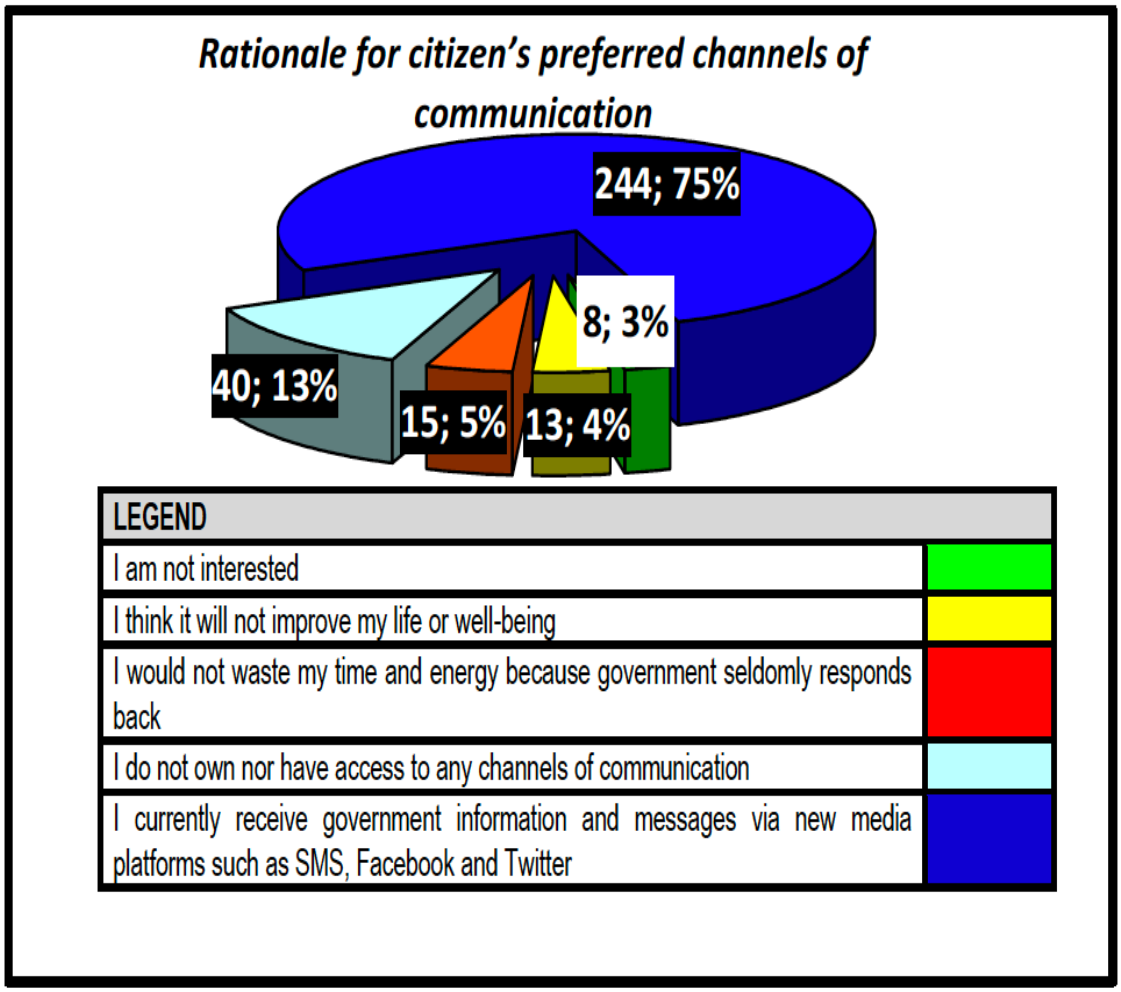


** The above figures represent multiple responses*

Respondents were thereafter asked to provide reasons for their responses as indicated above. This was meant to establish whether there were benefits associated with their choice or preference of the communication channels. The respondents were provided with five (5) pre-determined supporting reasons to choose from. The results in this regard are presented in figure 5.12 below. The

results indicate that the majority of respondents (244; 75%) were receiving government information and messages via new media platforms such as SMS, *facebook* and Twitter. This was followed by those who did not own nor had access to any channel of communication (40; 13%), then those who indicated that they would not waste their time and energy because government seldom responds (15; 5%), those who believed that government information will not improve their well-being (13; 4%), and those who indicated that they are not interested in receiving government information (8; 3%).

Figure 5.12: Rationale for the citizens' preferred channels of communication (N= 320)



5.2.1.3.2 New media channels preferred by the citizens

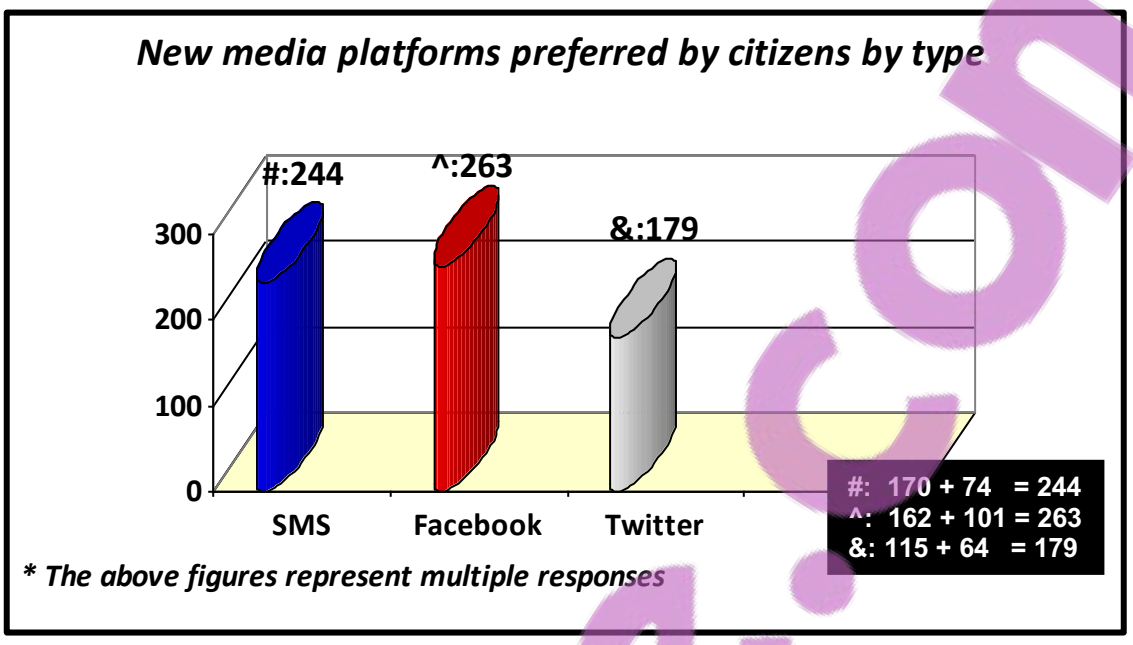
Respondents were also asked, using a *Likert Scale*, to indicate whether some new media platforms such as SMS, *facebook* and Twitter were convenient, interactive and inducing immediate feedback for them. The rationale was to establish the type of new media platforms preferred by the citizens for communication purposes. The results hereof are presented in Table 5.6 below:

Table 5.6: Distribution of new media channels preferred by the citizens, per type (N= 320)

	FREQUENCY (MULTIPLE RESPONSES)														
	Not Sure			**Strongly Disagree**			**Disagree**			**Agree**			**Strongly Agree**		
	C	**100*Count/**		**C**	**100*Count/**		**C**	**100*Count/**		**C**	**100*Count/**		**C**	**100*Count/**	
		893	**320**		**893**	**320**		**893**	**320**		**893**	**320**		**893**	**320**
SMS	71	7.9	22.1	6	0.6	1.8	5	0.5	1.5	170	19.0	53.1	74	8.2	23.1
facebook	36	4.0	11.2	5	0.5	1.5	6	0.6	1.8	**162**	18.1	**50.6**	**101**	11.3	**31.5**
Twitter	57	6.3	17.8	11	1.2	3.4	10	1.1	3.1	115	12.8	35.9	64	7.1	20.0
**** The above figures represent multiple responses***															
LEGEND: C = Count															

The results indicate that the majority of the respondents (263; 82.1%) agreed/strong agreed that *facebook* was convenient, interactive and afforded them an opportunity for immediate feedback. This was followed by SMSes (244; 76.2%) and lastly Twitter (179; 55.9%). Figure 5.13 below is a graphic presentation of the analysis presented above:

Figure 5.13: New media channels preferred by the citizens, per type (N= 320)



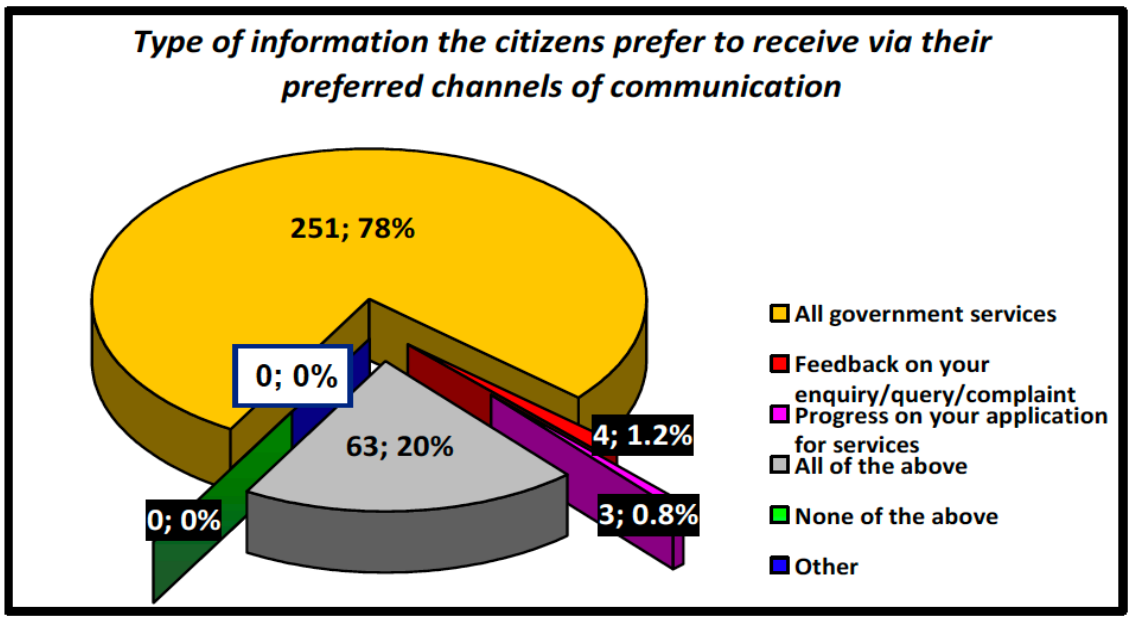
5.2.1.4 Preferred type of information

Section D presents the type of information preferred by the citizens.

5.2.1.4.1 Type of information the citizens prefer to receive via their preferred channels of communication

Respondents were asked to indicate the type of information they preferred to receive from government via their preferred channels of communication. The results in this regard are presented in Figure 5.14 below, and indicate that the majority of respondents (251; 78.0%) preferred to receive only government services-related information via their preferred channels of communication. This was followed by those who preferred to receive a combination of information – all government services, feedback on their enquiry/query/complaint and progress on their application for services such as social grants (63; 20%). In the third place were those requiring feedback on their enquiry/query or complaint only (4; 1.2%) and lastly those requiring progress on their application for services (3; 0.8%).

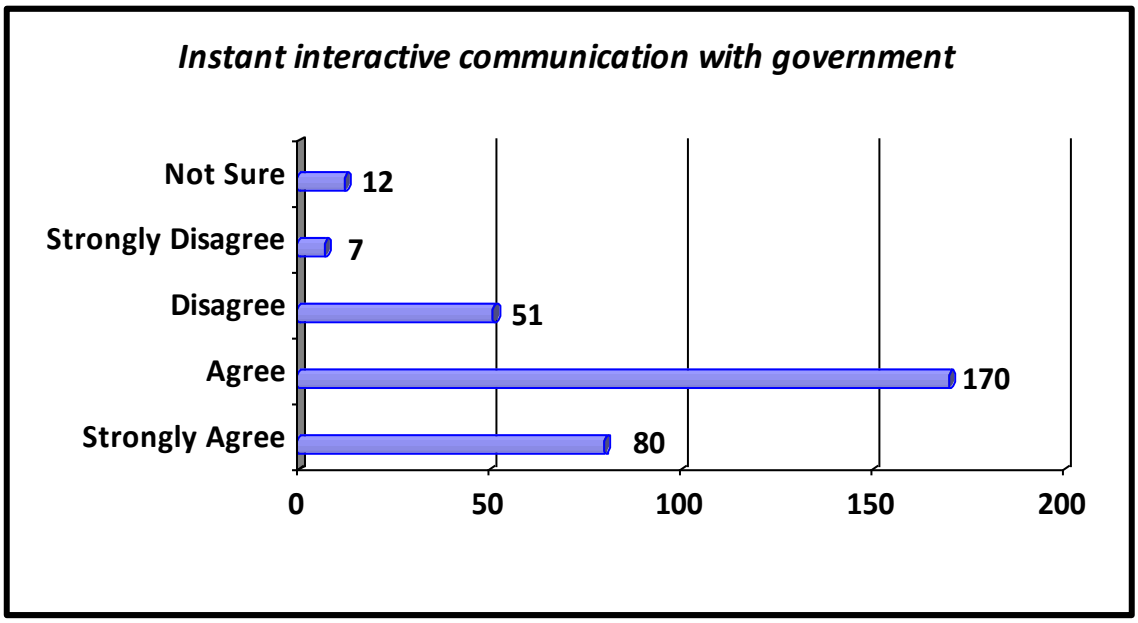
Figure 5.14: Type of information which the citizens prefer to receive via their preferred channels of communication (N= 320)



5.2.1.4.2 Instant interactive communication with government

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they would be interested in chatting (instant communication) with a government representative about their concerns or enquiries, as and when they need to. The rationale was to establish whether respondents believed instant/interactive communication strengthens communication between them and their government. The results are accordingly presented in Figure 5.15 below, and indicate that the majority of respondents (170; 53.2%) agreed that they would like to have instant interactive communication (chat) with government representatives regarding their concerns or enquiries. This was followed by those who strongly agreed (80; 24.9%), thirdly, those who disagreed (51; 15.8%). Those who were not sure accounted for 3.8% (12) and finally those who strongly disagreed at 2.3% (7). In summary, the majority was the combination of those who agreed and strongly agreed (250; 78.1%) followed by those who disagreed and strongly disagreed (58; 18.1%), and finally those who were not sure (12; 3.8%).

Figure 5.15: Interactive communication with government (N= 320)



The respondents were thereafter asked to provide a motivation for their responses, as indicated in figure 5.15 above. This was meant to establish whether the citizens derive any instant benefit or advantages from utilising the instant feedback-eliciting new media channels of communication. In this regard, they were provided with four (4) pre-determined supporting reasons to choose from. The results thereof are presented in Table 5.7 below, and indicate that the majority of respondents (227; 70.9%) asserted that chatting is interactive because it provides instant feedback. This was followed by those who indicated that they had limited money for SMSes or data bundles (99; 30.9%). In the third place was those who indicated that they would not waste their time and energy because government seldom responds (58; 18.1%), and lastly those who indicated that they were not interested in chatting with government representatives in any way (5; 1.6%).

Table 5.7: Interactive communication with government (N= 320)

N=320	FREQUENCY (MULTIPLE RESPONSES)		
CHANNELS	**COUNT**	**% (COUNT) 100*Count/ 389**	**% (CASES) 100*count/ 320**
I am not interested	5	1.3	1.6
I would not waste my time and energy because government seldom responds	58	14.9	18.1
I have limited money for SMSes or data bundles	99	25.4	30.9
Chatting is interactive because it provides instant feedback	227	58.4	70.9
**** The figures above represent multiple responses***			

5.2.2 Part Two: Analysis of data collected from government communicators

Part Two presents data collected from government communicators.

5.2.2.1 Section A: personal information/demographic profile of respondents (government communicators)

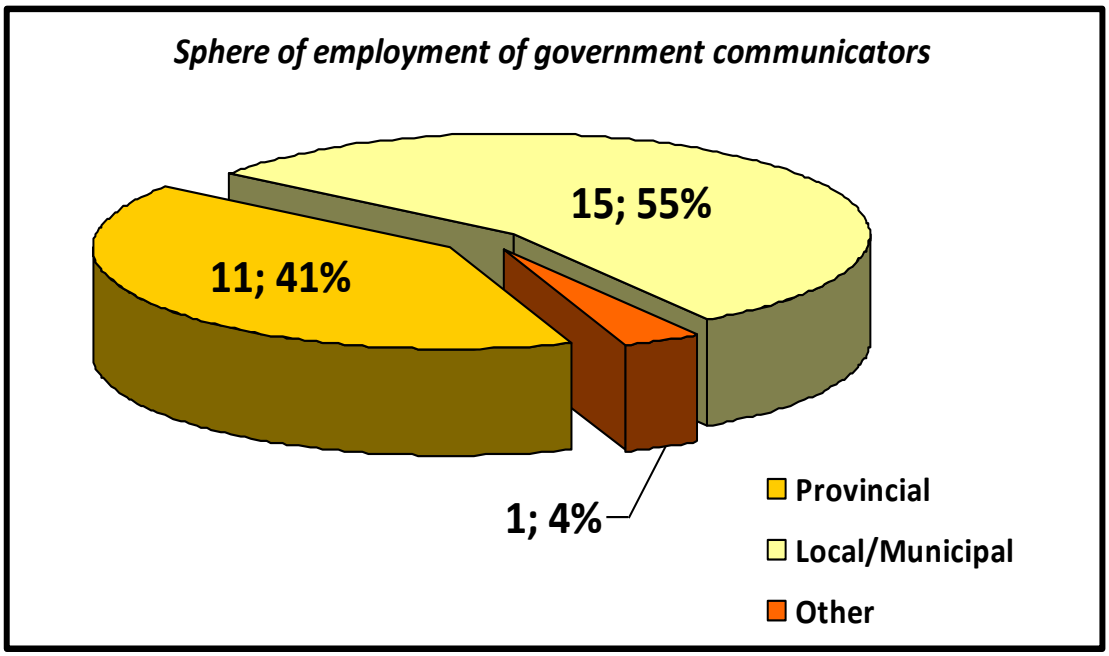
Section A presents the demographic profile of government communicators, specifically about their government sphere of employment; level of management; and the number of years in their respective level of management.

5.2.2.1.1 Distribution of communicators per sphere of government

The respondents were asked to indicate their employment sphere of government. The rationale was to compare the extent of the recognition of the function of communication within the spheres of government. Three (3) categories of

possible responses where utilised to solicit responses. The results, as presented in Figure 5.16 below, indicate that more government communicators from the local/municipal level (15; 55%) responded to the questionnaire than from the provincial level (11; 41%) and other (1; 4%).

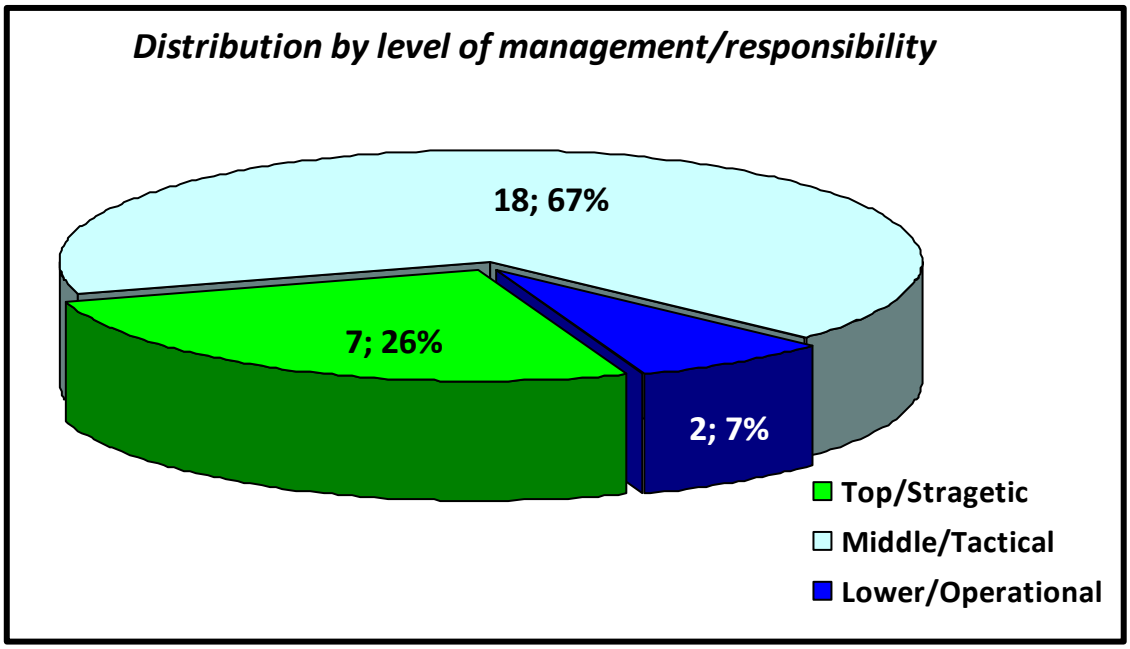
Figure 5.16: Distribution of government communicators per sphere of government (N= 27)



5.2.2.1.2 Level of management/responsibility

The respondents were asked to indicate their responsibility level to establish the extent to which communication is recognised as a strategic or top management function in government. Four (2) categories of possible responses were utilised to determine their level of responsibility. Figure 5.17 below summarises the responses: the results show that the majority of government communicators (18; 67%) were employed at the middle or tactical level, followed by 26% at top or strategic level and 7% at lower or operational level.

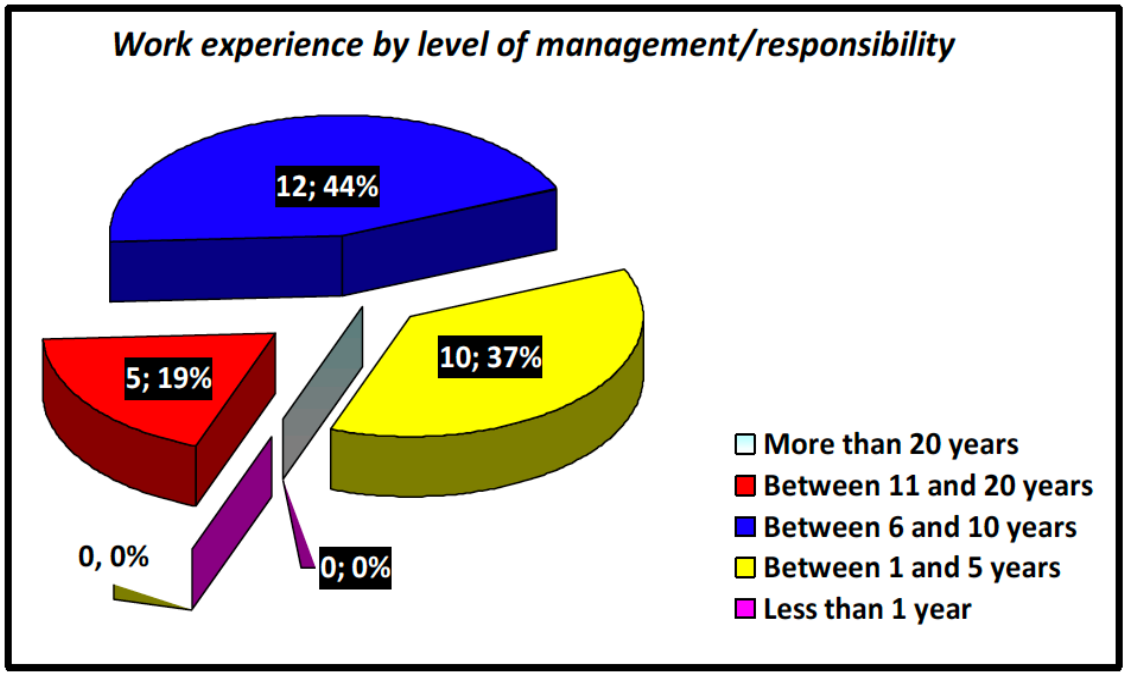
Figure 5.17: Distribution of government communicators by level of management/responsibility (N= 27)



5.2.2.1.3 Work experience

The respondents were further asked to indicate how long they had occupied the level of responsibility they were occupying at the time of the study. This was meant to establish their work experience in implementing the current applicable government communication policy. Five (5) categories of work experience ranging from one (1) to 20 years were used in this regard. Figure 5.18 below shows that the majority of respondents (12; 44%) had work experience of between 6 and 10 years in government communication, followed by those with between 1 and 5 years (10; 37%) and between 11 and 20 years (5; 19%). There were no government communicators with less than 1 year or more than 20 years' work experience.

Figure 5.18: Work experience by level of management/responsibility (N= 27)



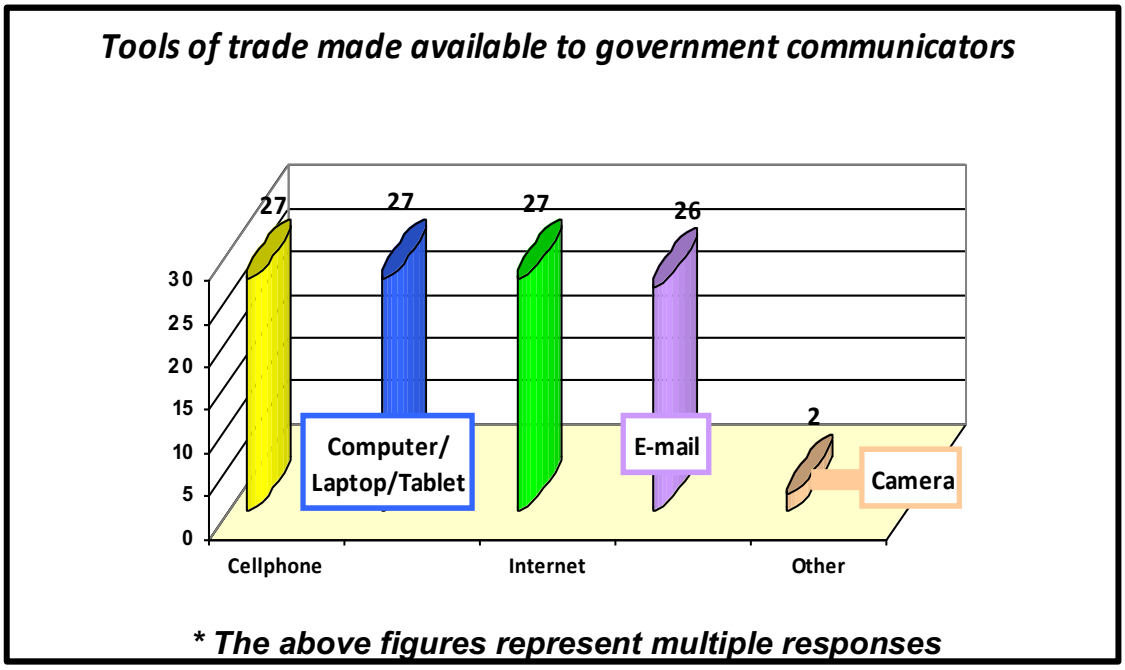
5.2.2.2 Section B: Access and usage of new media channels

Section B sought to establish the extent of the access to, and usage of, new media platforms by government communicators in implementing government communication policy.

5.2.2.2.1 Tools of trade provided to communicators to perform their duties

The respondents were asked to indicate the communication tools of trade provided to them or given access to, in their line of duty. This was meant to establish the type of communication platforms which the communicators were authorised to utilise in communicating with the citizens. For this question, five (5) categories of possible responses were provided, and the respondents were afforded an opportunity to provide multiple responses, where applicable. Figure 5.19 below summarises the multiple responses received from the respondents:

Figure 5.19: Tools of trade provided to government communicators (N= 27)



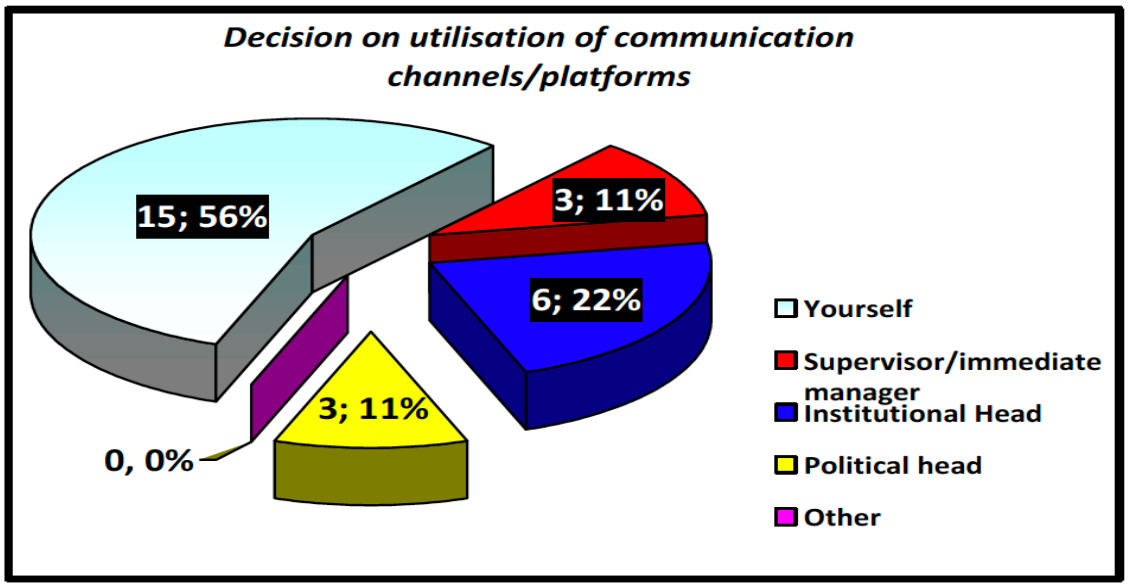
The figure above shows that all respondents (27; 100.0%) had access to cell-phones, computers/laptops/tablets and the internet that enabled them to perform their duties. The majority of them indicated that they (26; 96%) had access to e-mail, and 7% (2) of them further indicated that they had access to other tools of trade and even mentioned a camera in this regard.

5.2.2.2.2 Decision-maker/s on the utilisation of communication channels/platforms

The respondents were asked to indicate who had the final say in relation to the channels/platforms of communication being utilised in disseminating information to citizens. The rationale was to establish whether government communicators had an influence in determining the type of communication channels/platforms being utilised. The results are accordingly presented in figure 5.20 below. The figure below indicates that the majority of respondents (15; 56%) were the

decision-makers in terms of the channels/platforms utilised to communicate with the citizens, followed by institutional administrative heads (6; 22%). The supervisors/immediate managers and political heads accounted for 11% (3) each.

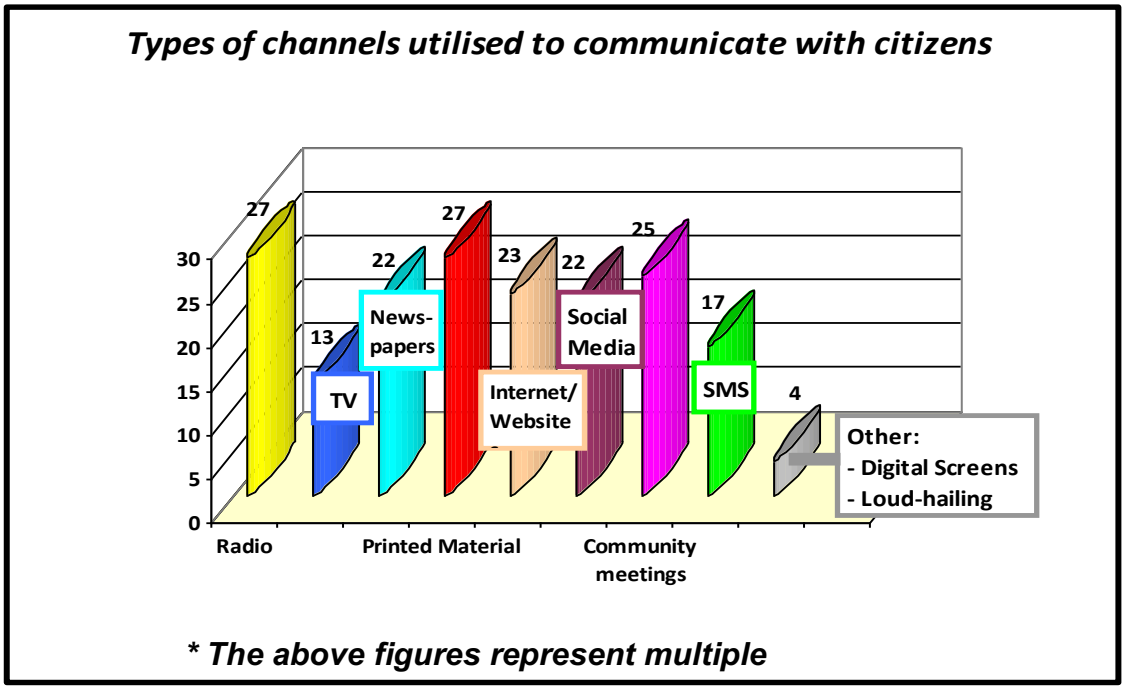
Figure 5.20: Distribution of respondents by decision-making authority (N= 27)



5.2.2.2.3 Channels utilised for communicating with the citizens

The respondents were asked to indicate the channels of communication which they normally utilise to disseminate government messages or information to the citizens/residents. This was meant to establish whether government communicators still prefer to utilise old media channels of communication as against new media channels in disseminating information to the citizens. For this question, nine (9) categories of possible responses were provided, and the respondents were afforded an opportunity to provide multiple responses where applicable. Figure 5.21 below summarises the multiple responses received from the respondents:

Figure 5.21: Types of channels utilised to communicate with the citizens (N= 27)



The table above represents multiple responses. It shows that all respondents (27; 100.0%) utilised both radio and printed information material to disseminate information to the citizens. These were followed by community meetings/face-to-face communication (25; 93%), Internet/websites (23; 85%), both newspapers and social media (22; 81%), SMS (17; 63%), television (13; 48%) and lastly other, which they described as digital screens and loud-hailing (4; 15%).

5.2.2.2.4 Appropriate channels versus communication technological advancement

Using the *Likert Scale*, the respondents were asked to indicate whether they believe the current channels they are utilising to communicate with the citizens (as indicated in question 5.2.2.2.3 above) were appropriate or not, in the light of the advancement in communication technology.

Table 5.8: The appropriateness of the current channels utilised to communicate with the citizens (N= 27)

N=27	FREQUENCY/PERCENTAGE				
CHANNELS	**Not sure**	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
Radio	0/ 0.0%	0/ 0.0%	0/ 0.0%	5/ 18.5%	21/ 77.7%
Television	8/ 29.6%	0/ 0.0%	2/ 7.4%	10/ 37.0%	5/ 18.5%
Newspaper	5/ 18.5%	0/ 0.0%	2/ 7.4%	10/ 37.0%	4/ 14.8%
Printed information material (e.g. brochures, pamphlets, government newsletters)	2/ 7.4%	0/ 0.0%	2/ 7.4%	11/ 40.7%	2/ 7.4%
Internet/Websites	0/ 0.0%	0/ 0.0%	5/ 18.5%	12/ 44.4%	11/ 40.7%
Social media (e.g. *facebook*, Twitter)	0/ 0.0%	0/ 0.0%	2/ 7.4%	7/ 25.9%	17/ 62.9%
Community meetings/face-to-face	0/ 0.0%	0/ 0.0%	0/ 0.0%	8/ 29.6%	20/ 74.0%
SMS	7/ 25.9%	2/ 7.4%	0/ 0.0%	10/ 37.0%	6/ 22.2%
Average	**3/ 10.1%**	**2/ 7.4%**	**13/ 6.0%**	**9/ 33.7%**	**11/ 39.7%**
**** The figures above represent multiple responses***					

The justification for the question was to establish the extent of the usage of both old and new media channels by government in communicating with the citizens. Table 5.8 above represents multiple responses to the question, and indicate that the majority of respondents (21; 77.7%) strongly believed that radio is the most appropriate channel of communication. This was followed by community meetings (20; 74.0%), social media (17; 62.9%), Internet/websites (11; 40.7%), SMS (6; 22.2%), television (5; 18.5%), newspapers (4; 14.8%) and printed information material (2; 7.4%). In contrast, 18.5% (5) disagreed that the Internet/websites were appropriate, followed by television, newspapers, printed information material and social media at 7.4% each. Only 7.4% (2) of the respondents did not believe SMSes were an appropriate channel of

communication. On average, 10% (3) of the respondents indicated that they were not sure whether all the mentioned channels were appropriate. The respondents were further asked to provide reasons for their responses, for utilising the communication channels mentioned in table 5.8 above. They were provided with four (4) reasons to choose from and were afforded an opportunity to provide multiple answers. The results, as presented in Table 5.9 below, indicate that the majority of respondents (17; 63%) believed that new media such as social media platforms enabled instant communication and feedback with the citizens, and that if they are adopted, they will improve and strengthen government communication with citizens. Fifty-six (56) percent of them further believed government should amend its communication policy to include the use of social media for official communication with citizens. Thirty-seven (37) percent of them believed that old media channels, such as printed information material, were outdated and no longer relevant.

Table 5.9: Reasons for government communicators' choice of communication channels (N= 27)

N=27	**FREQUENCY**	**%**
Old media such as printed information material provides one-way communication hence they are outdated and barely read by citizens	10	37
Government should amend its communication policy to include the use of social media for official communication with citizens	15	56
New media such as social media platforms enable instant communication and feedback with the citizens	17	63
I believe this will improve and strengthen government communication with citizens	17	63
**** The figures above represent multiple responses***		

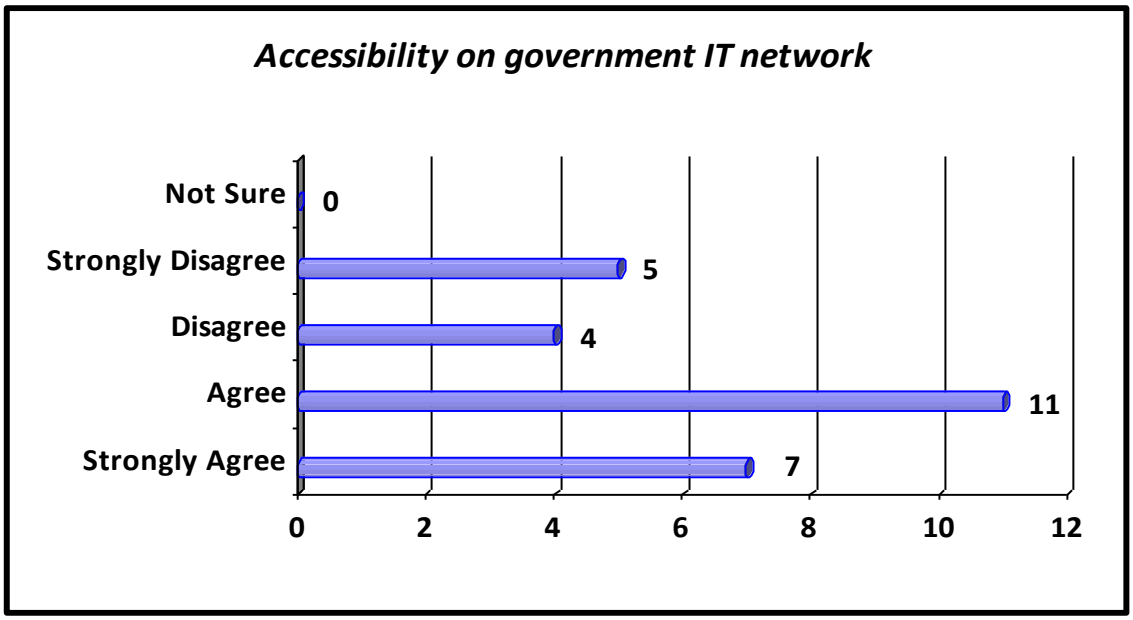
5.2.2.3 Section C: old versus new media

Questions in Section C sought to establish whether government communicators were permitted to access social media platforms on the government information technology network, to communicate with the citizens, including the social media platforms they were permitted to access for this purpose.

5.2.2.3.1 Social media platforms accessibility on government information technology network

The respondents were asked to indicate whether government permitted them to access social media platforms from its information technology network to communicate with the citizens, and to further indicate the platforms they were permitted to access. The rationale was to establish the extent of government's commitment in adopting new media platforms for communicating with the citizens. Figure 5.22 below provides a summary of the results in this regard:

Figure 5.22: Access on government information technology network (N= 27)

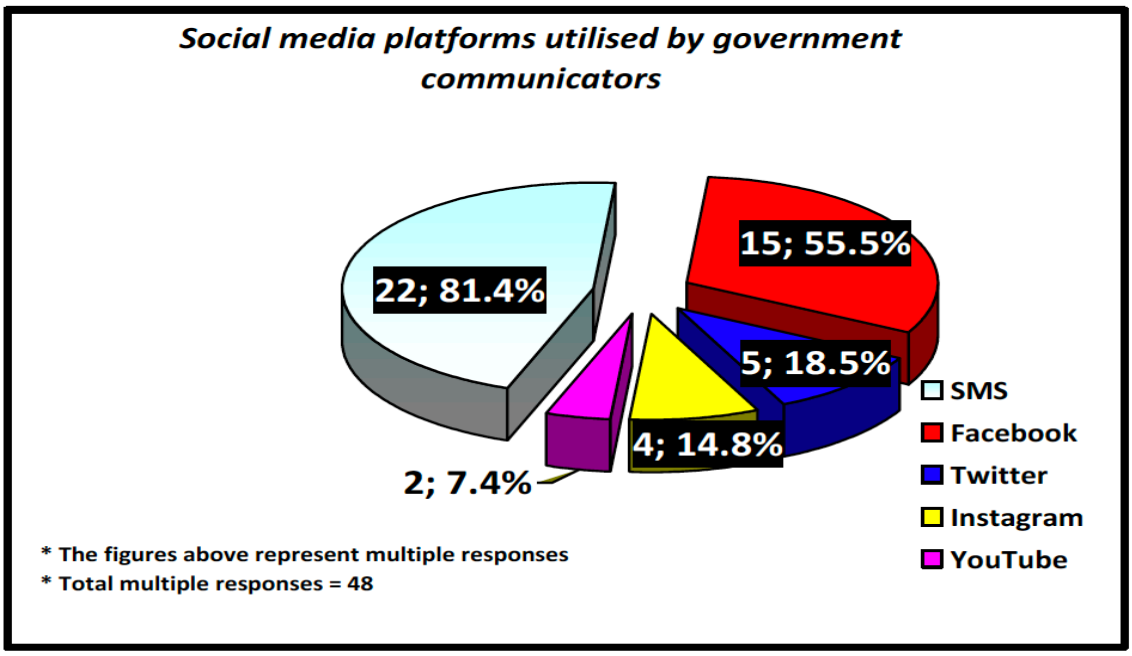


The results above indicate that the majority of respondents (18; 66.6%), combined, agreed and strongly agreed that they were permitted to access social media platforms from the government information technology network for the purpose of communicating with the citizens. This was followed by those who disagreed and strongly disagreed (9; 33.4%), combined.

5.2.2.3.2 Permitted social media platforms on government information technology network

Afterwards, the respondents were asked to motivate for their responses as stated in figure 5.22 above, by indicating the type of platforms they were permitted to access via the government information technology network. They were provided with a list of five (5) options and could provide multiple answers. The rationale for asking the question was to determine the type of social media platforms they could utilise to communicate. Figure 5.23 below summarises the responses from the respondents:

Figure 5.23: Permitted social media platforms on government information technology network (N= 27)



The results indicate that the majority of the respondents (22; 81.4%) were utilising SMSes, followed by *facebook* (15; 55.5%), Twitter (5; 18.5%), Instagram (4; 14.8%) and lastly, YouTube (2; 7.4%).

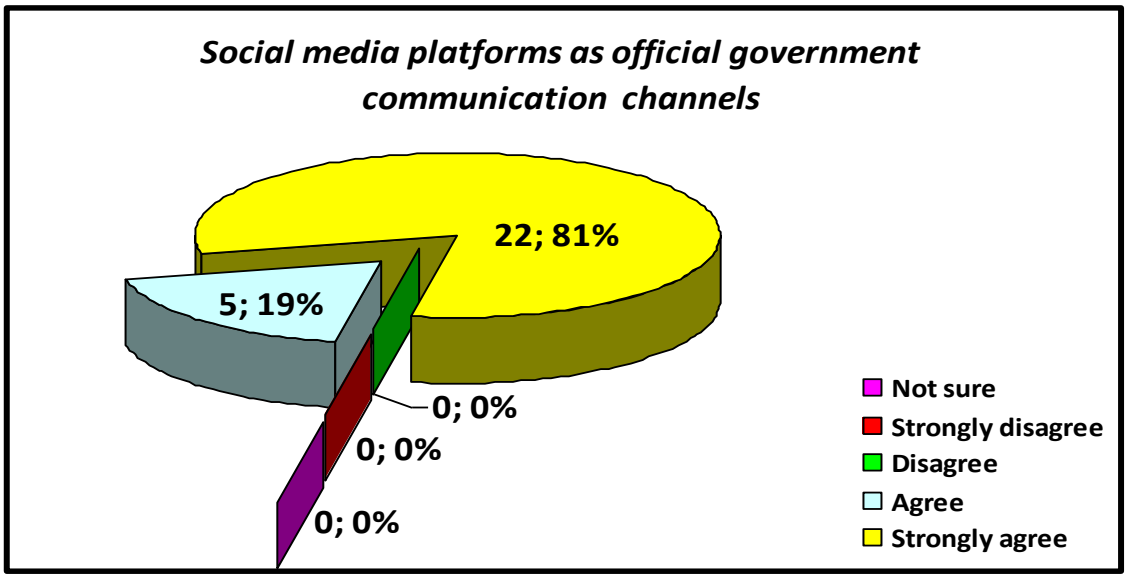
5.2.2.4 Section D: improved government communication model

Questions in Section D sought to establish whether government communicators agreed or disagreed that government should adopt social media platforms as official communication channels, and to further support their responses with reasons.

5.2.2.4.1 Adoption of social media platforms as official government communication channels

The respondents were asked, using a *Likert Scale,* to indicate whether government should adopt social media platforms as part of its official communication channels.

Figure 5.24: Social media platforms as official government communication channels (N= 27)



The rationale of the question was to establish whether government communicators view social media as being the contemporary communication platform which was preferred by the recipients of government information and messages, that is, the citizens. The results, as presented in Figure 5.24 above, indicate that all respondents (27; 100.0%) agreed that social media platforms should be adopted as official government communication channels. The majority of the respondents (22; 81%) strongly agreed while the rest agreed (5; 19%).

5.2.2.4.2 Rationale for adopting social media platforms as official government communication channels

After the respondents answered the question on whether government should adopt social media platforms as official government communication channels, they were then asked to provide reasons for their responses. They were provided with a list of five (5) pre-determined reasons to choose from. Table 5.10 below provides the results thereof:

Table 5.10: Rationale for adopting social media platforms as official government communication channels (N= 27)

	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
This will not make any difference	0	0.0
Social media platforms are for informal chatting or communication	1	3.7
They enable instant communication and feedback with the citizens	9	33.3
They have diffused profusely within communities across South Africa	3	11.1
This will improve and strengthen government communication with citizens	14	51.8
TOTAL	**27**	**100.0**

The results above indicate that the majority of respondents (14; 51.8%) believed that communicating via social media platforms will improve and strengthen government communication with citizens. This response is followed by those who believed that social media platforms enable instant communication and feedback with the citizens (9; 33.3%); then those who believed that social media had diffused profusely within communities across South Africa (3; 11.1%). Only one (1; 3.7%) believed that social media platforms were meant for informal chatting or communication.

5.3 Correlation between communication channels utilised by government and channels preferred by the citizens

The mean score – or simply the average of the variables – and the standard deviation were calculated, and regression analysis was done to determine if there was any difference with regards to the preferred channels of communication by the South African government versus those preferred by the citizens. Table 5.11 below presents the results in this regard:

Table 5.11: Correlation between communication channels utilised by government and channels preferred by the citizens (N = 320)

	CHANNELS	PREFERRED BY GOVERNMENT			PREFERRED BY THE CITIZENS			
		X	Variance: $(X - \bar{X})$	Sq Deviation: $(X - \bar{X})^2$	Y	Variance: $(Y - \bar{Y})$	Sq Deviation: $(Y - \bar{Y})^2$	$(X-\bar{X})(Y-\bar{Y})$
1.	Radio	309	140.44	19724.64	309	102.56	10517.64	14403.36
2.	TV	290	121.44	14748.75	292	85.56	7319.75	10390.25
3.	Newspaper	215	46.44	2157.09	267	60.56	3666.98	2812.47
4.	Printed Info	70	-98.56	9713.20	160	-46.44	2157.09	4577.36
5.	Internet/ Web	166	-2.56	6.53	214	7.56	57.09	-19.31
6.	Social Media	191	22.44	503.75	223	16.56	274.09	371.58

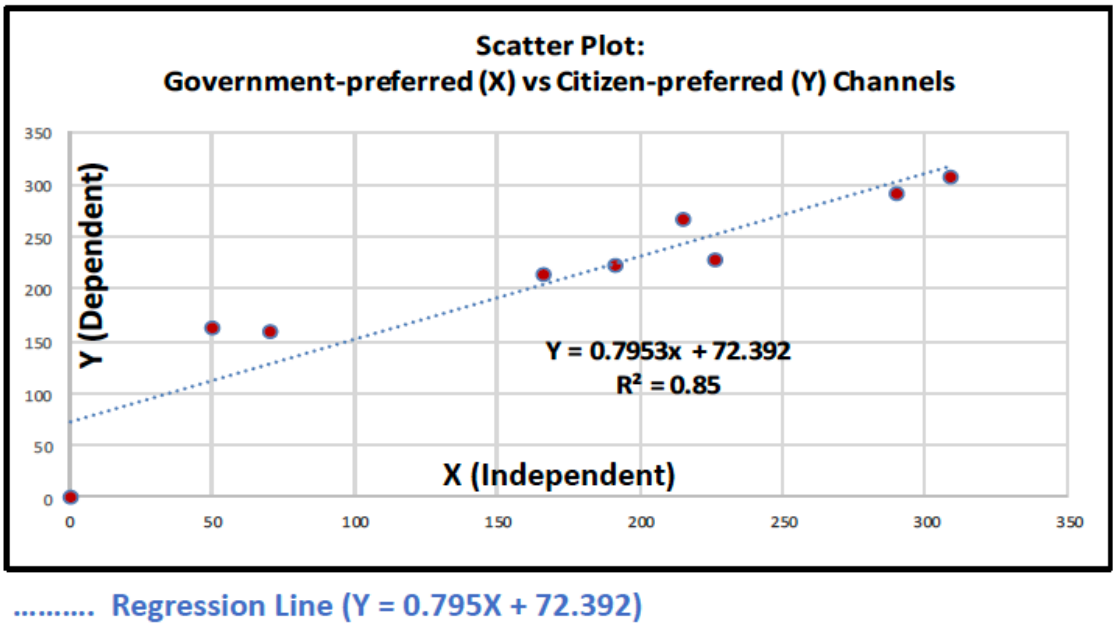
	CHANNELS	PREFERRED BY GOVERNMENT			PREFERRED BY THE CITIZENS			
		X	Variance: $(X - \bar{X})$	Sq Deviation: $(X - \bar{X})^2$	Y	Variance: $(Y - \bar{Y})$	Sq Deviation: $(Y - \bar{Y})^2$	$(X-\bar{X})(Y-\bar{Y})$
7.	Community Meetings	226	57.44	3299.86	229	22.56	508.75	1295.69
8.	SMS	50	-118.56	14055.42	164	-42.44	1801.53	5032.02
9.	Other	0	-168.56	28410.98	0	-206.44	42619.31	34797.36
Sum		**1517**	**0.00**	**92620.22**	**1858**	**0.00**	**68922.22**	**73660.78**
Mean:		168.56			206.44			
n = 9		n-1=8						
Variance: = Sum Sq Deviation/(n-1)				**11577.53**			**8615.28**	
σ: Standard Deviation = Sqrt (variance)				**107.60**			**92.82**	
Covariance (X,Y):		9207.60						
Variance X* Variance Y		99743617.79						
SqRoot {Variance X* Variance Y}:		9987.17						
Co-variance (X,Y)/ SqRoot {Variance X* Variance Y}		0.92						
i.e correlation coefficient =		**0.92**						

**** The study uses a sample and not the whole population thus when calculating the standard deviation (σ), it is divided by n-1 instead of n.***

The results, as per Table 5.11 above, indicate the mean scores of 168.56 and 206.44 with standard deviations of 107.60 and 92.82 for communication channels preferred by the South African government and the citizens, respectively. The government's preferred channels indicate a higher level of dispersion or variation at 107.6 against the citizens' at 92.82, signalling less diverse preference. The results further indicated a correlation coefficient of 0.92, and this according to Taylor (1990), signals a strong positive linear relationship between the channels of communication utilised by the government and those preferred by the citizens on average. Radio, television, newspapers and community meetings indicated a strong positive linear relationship – averaging 81.2% (260) for the government

and 85.6% (274) for the citizens – whereas printed information, social media, the Internet and SMS indicated a strong negative correlation – 37.1% (119) for the government and 59.3% (190) for the citizens. Government utilised the SMS the least at 15.6% (50) against the citizens' preference at 51.2 % (164). Figure 5.25 below shows a linear regression analysis calculated utilising information in Table 5.11 above, where Y = 0.7953*X* + 72.39237:

Figure 5.25: Regression analysis: government-preferred versus citizen-preferred channels of communication



Calculation Summary

Sum of *X* = 1517
Sum of *Y* = 1858
Mean *X* = 168.5556
Mean *Y* = 206.4444
Sum of squares (SS_X) = 92620.2222
Sum of products (*SP*) = 73660.7778

Regression Equation = $\hat{y} = bX + a$

$b = SP/SS_X$ = 73660.78/92620.22 = 0.7953

$a = M_Y - bM_X$ = 206.44 - (0.8*168.56) = 72.39237

$\hat{y}$ = 0.7953*X* + 72.39237

Figure 5.25 above indicates that the greatest divergence (disconnect) between government preferred channels, as opposed to those preferred by the citizens, is in the channel of SMS, followed by printed information, newspapers and community meetings. The preference by the citizens for these types of channels of communication was not necessarily influenced by the government's provision/lack of provision of such channels. The greatest connection fit for government communication with the citizens was via the use of social media, followed by radio, Internet/web and then television. The coefficient of variation (R^2) is 0.85, thus showing a reasonably strong fit in model – relationship between X and Y.

5.4 Summary

This chapter has organised and presented the data collected in a meaningful way and presented its analysis. The presentation of the data was based on the objectives of the study as presented in Chapter one. The analysis was based on the data collected from 347 respondents comprising 320 citizens at six (6) Thusong Service Centres and 27 government communicators from the Province of Mpumalanga. In this regard, the response rate was 92% based on the total of 379 questionnaires which were initially administered. Data was presented in tables, graphs and pie charts. The chapter was presented in two (2) parts wherein Part one (1) was the analysis of data collected from the citizens and Part two (2) from government communicators. This study has established that there was a strong positive linear relationship between the channels of communication utilised by government and the channels of communication preferred by the citizens.

The next chapter (Chapter Six) conceptualises a Model for adopting new media platforms to strengthen government communication in South Africa.

CHAPTER SIX

THE *COMMUNIGATION* MODEL: THE PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR SEAMLESS COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT AND THE CITIZENS

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter (Chapter five) has analysed and presented the results of the study. The study was a descriptive survey which was aimed at describing the benefits of good communication channels, and further to motivate for the adoption of new media platforms, such as social media, by the South African government in order to achieve effective communication with the citizens. The focal point of this chapter is therefore to conceptualise, propose and present a communication model that will assist in strengthening the South African government communication machinery, based on the results of this study. To provide an insightful understanding of the term conceptual model, and what it is perceived to address, it will be necessary to begin the chapter by attempting to define or explain the word 'conceptual'.

6.2 Understanding a conceptual model and its significance

The word conceptual is an adjective derived from the word concept and originates from the Medieval Latin word, *conceptualis,* which refers to the mental, thought-provoking process that leads to the conceptualisation of an idea (Webster's New Word College Dictionary 2014). Olivé (2007: 12) describes a concept as "something that we have formed in our mind through generalization from certain instances … [or simply as the] spectacles" through which human beings see their world. A concept is formed in one's mind to assist a person to differentiate things and assists in the decision-making process (Adams & Campbell 1999). It could thus be argued that concepts are mental representations which eventually transform into ideas, based on personal experiences, and usually assist in the

process of making decisions (Olivé 2007). The term concept, in the context of this study, could mean navigation towards achieving a pre-determined objective. This is because navigation involves pre-determination, experimentation and validation of ways towards an intended destination. In the case of the communication process, it will assist to navigate the user towards realising the intended outcome – that is, the successful or effective dissemination of information. Based on the explanations above, the term conceptual model can be explained as a design or representation of a conceived idea which may assist to explain why a certain phenomenon works the way it does (Collins English Dictionary 1999; Webster's New Word College Dictionary 2014). Conceptual models are therefore fundamental in the field of information systems which are described as "a system that facilitates communication among its users" (Olivé 2007: 2).

One could then argue that a conceptual model is a strategic plan for enhancement to attain efficiency. It is strategic because it provides step-by-step possible solutions or a road-map towards reviving something which previously worked but is nearing its sell-by date or on the verge of becoming totally irrelevant. Conceptual models thus assist human beings to better understand their surroundings and thus guide social communication processes (Mylopoulos 1992). They are significant in problem-solving initiatives as they suggest possible interventions and their likely outcomes, if they are implemented as proposed. Clearly, a conceptual model could therefore be likened to a navigator, given that a navigator provides step-by-step directions towards the pre-determined destination (Collins English Dictionary 1999; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015).

The term, navigator, which was first recorded in the 1580s, originates from the Latin word nāvigāre – meaning to sail or steer a ship – and is synonymous with seamanship (Thurman 1994). Navigation was initially concerned with effectively directing vessels at sea and guiding them to a pre-determined destination (Thurman 1994). Arguably, if a navigator can successfully lead a person to their desired destination – bring about efficiency by providing the correct direction –

then given their interactivity, new media channels could be referred to as *communigators* as they lead to effective communication. *Communigator* is a new term conceptualised by the researcher – from the terms communication and navigator – to explain a device capable to navigate towards effective communication. As the objective for communicating is to achieve mutual understanding of the transmitted message, the navigation process towards achieving this pre-determined objective is thus referred to as *communigation*.

6.3 New media as *communigators* towards effective government communication

According to Ramodibe (2014), the South African government preferred to communicate with the citizens via one-way old media channels which have been proven to be ineffective. This is supported by the fact that, despite these channels being used to communicate with the citizens, South Africa continued to experience sporadic community service non/delivery protests which the political principals have attributed to the lack of information dissemination by government communicators (Ramodibe 2014). The emergence of new media has thus brought a solution in this regard, as they provide two-way interactive communication platforms, which elicit instant feedback essential to validate the occurrence of effective communication (Rose 2011; Socha & Eber-Schmid 2012; Ramos 2013; Campbell 2014; Mangini *et al* 2014; Ramodibe 2014; Whitmore 2015; World Wide Worx 2016).

Accordingly, it has been established that new media platforms have diffused profusely within the South African communities, as there were 85.53 million mobile connections in South Africa – far more than the population of the country – meaning that quite a number of the citizens owned more than one cell/mobile phone (World Wide Worx 2016). Just over 82 % of the citizens owned or had access to a cell-phone. In addition, about half of the total population or 26.84 million people were active internet users and approximately 40 million were

registered users of social media platforms in 2016 (World Wide Worx 2016). It should also be noted that 85% or 10 million out of the 14 million *facebook* users in South Africa, were accessing the platform from their cell/mobile phones (World Wide Worx 2016). The new media is thus an essential catalyst towards the provision of instant, within-easy-reach and mutually understood messages given that the South African government is constitutionally mandated to "provid[e] the public with timely [the keyword being timely], accessible and accurate information" (South Africa 1996:s 195.108: 107) [emphasis in the original]. Such a model would be useful to this study because it will provide details on how new media platforms will successfully conclude the process of communication by promoting it from a one-way passive to a two-way interactive process. Government, like a board of directors in a private company, represents the interests of the citizens, who equate to shareholders in a private company.

It is thus crucial that shareholders should be consulted at all times. Essentially, the citizens of South Africa are the bosses of public representatives in government; hence the function of government communication is a constitutional mandate in democracies around the world. The big question is whether government communicators are to blame for their supposed inability to communicate the work of government to the citizens, or are the channels being used to transmit the information to blame? From this discussion, the outdated, one-way, old media platforms still being utilised by government are undoubtedly to blame. One could thus argue that effective communication with the citizens will ultimately quell community service non-delivery protests, which were attributed to the lack of information dissemination by government communicators.

Arguably, new media platforms could be described as c*ommunigators*. Likewise, this translates into what should be known as *communigation* which can be defined as the two-way process of disseminating information/message via a new media platform capable of ascertaining the occurrence of effective communication. Simply put, the *communigation* process is the prerequisite of

effective communication. This introductory discussion on the term conceptual model has thus assisted in providing insight into what this chapter intended to address.

6.4 Adopting new media channels to strengthen government communication

Communication has been proven to be an integral and strategic function of organisations across the world, as it is an umbilical cord linking organisations with their stakeholders and keeping them informed about developments within such organisations (Fichman & Rosenbaum 2014). It could thus be argued that the success of an organisation is dependent on well-informed stakeholders because they are privy to the direction it is taking; hence they are likely to assist the organisation to attain its goals and objectives (Hopkins 2006; Putnam & Nicotera 2010; Cooren *et al* 2011; Smith & Mounter 2008; Gall 2009; Verghese 2012). Consequently, communication is able to influence decision-making; improve human relations and improve the socio-economic well-being of people through the provision of developmental information (Littlejohn & Foss 2008, 2011). The implication is that no organisation can succeed if its communication machinery is not effective.

This study was founded on Everett Rogers' 1962 *Diffusion of Innovations* theory which sought to explain how a new phenomenon quickly spreads, becomes acceptable and adopted as the way of life by individuals (Rogers 1983, 1995; Salwen & Stacks 1996; Yates 2001; Mbatha 2011; Carr [sa]). In a nutshell, the theory asserts that once an innovation is diffused and accepted by community members, it eventually becomes the acceptable way of life of those utilising it. The extent of the diffusion and adoption of an innovation is thus destined to bring about social change, and consequently alter the culture of the people by persuading them to adopt something new due to its life-changing benefits (Rogers 1983, 1995). The theory asserts that it is easier for people to subscribe

to, or adopt, a new idea or innovation because they have realised that it has benefitted others. There is evidence that new media such as social media platforms have diffused extensively and continue to be dominating communication channels within communities in South Africa and across the world (Young 2007; CommGAP 2009; Lee 2011; Wang & Lim 2011; Sanders & Canel 2013; Baswony 2014; Mickoleit 2014; Du Preez 2015). The results of this study indicated that the majority of the citizens of South Africa's Province of Mpumalanga preferred a hybrid of both old and new media channels of communication, as they were already receiving and exchanging information through these channels. From the multiple responses received, radio ranked the highest of the old media channels at 96.5% whereas social media ranked the highest of new media channels at 69.6%.

Other old media channels were television (91.1%), newspaper (83.4%), community meetings (71.5%) and printed information material (50.0%) whereas new media channels were the Internet/websites (66.9%) and SMS (51.1%). Regarding social media platforms, the majority of the respondents indicated that *facebook* (82.1%) and Twitter (55.9%) were convenient because they were interactive and provided instantaneous feedback. This concurs with assertions by various scholars who argue that the new media continues to be the preferred primary source of information by many people across the world given its advantages (Coopers & Lybrand 1996, 1997; Livingstone 2002; Holmes 2011; Stratmann 2012; Ramodibe 2014).

Evidently, communication via new media platforms guarantees the two-way communication process; that is, the recipients of the message have an opportunity to engage with the sender to ascertain understanding of the intended message – a prerequisite for effective communication (McKay *et al* 1995; BenDedek & Laoshi 2006; Fielding 2006; Cunningham 2010; Chase & Shamo 2013). The word 'engage' is crucial towards realising effective communication, and this is the word which is synonymous with new media (Cunningham 2010).

Thus, constant communication and engaging the citizens is a constitutional responsibility of all democratic governments across the world, South Africa included (South Africa 1996:s 195.108; Viteritti 1997; Horwitz 2004; Young 2007; Pasquier 2012; South Africa. GCIS 2015; United Kingdom. GCS 2015). Similarly, governments as organised social groups, herein classified as organisations, are also expected, as enshrined in the laws of their respective countries, to constantly communicate with or interact with the people they govern (Viteritti 1997; Horwitz 2004; Young 2007; Piotrowski & Van Ryzin 2007; CommGAP 2011; Pasquier 2012; South Africa. GCIS 2015). Communicating with the citizens – government communication – is thus mandatory, and keeps democratic governments across the world in check, given that they represent the interests of the citizens, as it is in the case of board members who represent the interests of shareholders in a company (OECD 1996).

Government communication machinery is therefore essential to make politicians accountable to the citizens who have put them in government to represent their interests (Canel & Sanders 2012). Accountability thus fosters transparency – a non-negotiable obligation of any democratic government – and is a sign of good governance (Heise 1985; Viteritti 1997; Piotrowski & Van Ryzin 2007; CommGAP 2011; City Government Transparency [sa]). Accordingly, the South African government has a constitutional mandate of "providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information" (South Africa 1996:s 195.108: 107) [emphasis in the original]. In this regard, the above quotation on the constitutional mandatory communication function of the South African government emphasises that information shared with the citizens must be 'timely', and this is one of the characteristics and immediate benefits provided by new media such as social media platforms (Rose 2011; Ramos 2013; Moody-Ramirez & Dates 2014).

To fulfil this constitutional mandate in a democratic setting, the South African government has transformed the erstwhile South African Communication Service into the GCIS – formed in 1998 – "to ensure that there is delivery of information

to the people of South Africa and that a two-way system is set up to facilitate dialogue between government and the broadest possible public" (Horwitz 2004: 320). The above quotation emphasis the setting up of "a two-way system [of government communication] … to facilitate dialogue", which is synonymous with new media platforms, as discussed above. A definition of the term dialogue provided by Jazdzewska (2014) indicates that the term originates from the Greek word, *dialogos,* which means conversation, and refers to verbal or written exchange of words between two or more people. Through the term dialogue, the intention was to facilitate conversation – verbal or written or both – creating a two-way interaction platform between government and the citizens. It can be argued that by emphasising the terms 'timely' and 'dialogue' – synonymous with new media such as social media platforms – the South African government intended its communication machinery to be a two-way interactive and instant feedback eliciting system, as provided for by new media platforms.

As a result, new media platforms such as social media, have taken over from the traditional mass media – they are the new mass media because they provide for 'many-to-many' interactive two-way instant feedback-eliciting communication platforms (Crosbie 2002). Accordingly, effective communication can only take place when the intended message is mutually understood by both the sender and the receiver, in this case, the sender being the government and the receiver being the citizens (McKay *et al* 1995; BenDedek & Laoshi 2006; Fielding 2006; Chase & Shamo 2013). Simply put, effective communication takes place when there is no confusion or ambiguity about the meaning of the message received from the government by the citizens. Clearly, new media platforms have proved to elicit effective communication due to their ability to facilitate interaction between the sender and receiver, thus inducing instant feedback necessary to ascertain the mutual understanding of the intended meaning (McKay *et al* 1995; Eisenberg & Goodall 1997; Pandey & Garnett 2006; Shockley-Zalabak 2006; Garnett *et al* 2008). The utlilisation of new media, such as social media platforms, thus guarantees the conclusion of the two-way communication process, necessary for

effective communication, as opposed to the old media platforms such as the print and electronic mass media which are characterised by passive one-way communication (Duhé 2007). Consequently, the citizens end up being active participants in the communication process rather than being just consumers of information. The results of this study have ascertained the level of diffusion of new media platforms in South Africa, which is attributed to the level of technological advancement in the country, given that the majority of the residents of the Province of Mpumalanga owned or had access to a mobile phone (82.1%) and the Internet (63.7%). Accordingly, 96% of South Africans were already utilising various new media platforms for communication and information sharing daily (Ramodibe 2014). This has resulted in the youth interacting on social media more than on any other communication channel (Ramodibe 2014).

About 63% of this study's respondents have indicated that new media platforms, such as *facebook* and Twitter, were the 'in thing' because they provided them with up-to-the minute information and instantaneous feedback. This confirms that South Africa has become the dominating Internet hub in Africa, given that the majority of users are found in the country (South African Yearbook 2010). The results of this study established that the citizens of South Africa, and in the case of the study, the people of the Province of Mpumalanga, were innovators because of their initially supposed uncalculated risk of adopting new technologies, as substantiated in the *Diffusion of Innovations* theory (Ryan & Gross 1943, 1950; Rogers 1983, 1995; Kaminski 2011; Carr [sa]). They could be referred to as "experimentalists and 'techies' interested in technology itself" because they expect to benefit from it, as asserted by Carr [sa] [emphasis of the original].

The determination of the citizens to adopt new communication technology has thus earned them the title of trend-setters (Ryan & Gross 1943, 1950; Rogers 1983, 1995; Kaminski 2011; Carr [sa]). Likewise, the innovators are interested in the benefits they will accrue from adopting a new innovation – they are not afraid of taking risks. This is in line with Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovations* theory – as it

is now evident that the adoption of new media platforms within South African communities has brought about social change – and has subsequently altered the culture of the people by persuading them to adopt a new phenomenon due to its life-changing benefits. Being aware that it is possible to have instant feedback, as elicited by new media platforms, has resulted in the citizens demanding a quicker response time – something which the old media, regarded as a one-way channel of communication – could not provide. The advent of new media has thus broken communication barriers, given its immediacy and interactive nature, and has thus altered the nature of communication and the relationship between government and the citizens (Campbell 2014). One can therefore argue that the adoption and utilisation of new media platforms will optimise the communication machinery of the South African government, as this will "transform the way in which interactions take place, services are delivered, knowledge is utilized, policy is developed and implemented, the way citizens participate in governance and public administration reform" (UNDESA 2006: 3) [emphasis in the original].

New media platforms thus effectively conclude the communication process between the sender and the receiver through the interactive two-way process as opposed to the "passive one-way communication which was characteristic of print and broadcast mass media" (Duhé 2007: 99) [emphasis in the original]. This is a fundamental process in constitutional democracies, given that this entrenches the legitimacy of governments by making them truly transparent and accountable to the people (South Africa. GCIS 1996; CommGAP 2011; Sanders & Canel 2013). Likewise, this will ultimately realise the assertion by the government's task group on government communication – convened in 1996 by the then Deputy President of South Africa, Mr Thabo Mbeki – that effective communication can only be realised if government "engage[s] better with civil society [by] creating a dialogue between government and the public" (South Africa. GCIS 1996: 5) [emphasis in the original]. The said task group was mandated to, (a) define existing information delivery mechanisms; and (b) review existing government communication policies at national, provincial and local level in comparison to developing

countries, amongst others (South Africa. GCIS 1996; Horwitz 2004; Ramodibe 2014). New media platforms have proved to facilitate better engagement with the people, as they create a platform for dialogue between the government and the citizens. Despite the proven advantages of utilising new media channels, the South African government continued to prefer the old or traditional media channels to disseminate information to the citizens (Adegbilero-Iwari & Ikenwe 2014; Ramodibe 2014). Some of the disadvantages of the old media platforms are their slowness, passivity or unresponsiveness and non-reciprocal nature as they are limited to one-way communication (Cunningham 2010; Campbell 2014). Similarly, one-way communication or "one-way-to-many message flow" as Cunnigham (2010: 111) puts it, hampers effective communication, which is the case with the current communication and information system of the South African government. This prevents the government from "providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information" (South Africa 1996:s 195.108: 107) [emphasis in the original]. Adopting new media platforms will therefore make it possible for the citizens to receive immediate messages from government and at the same time, be able to respond or seek immediate clarity. This will accordingly strengthen communication with the citizens.

6.5 The *Communigation* model: From communication to *communigation*

This study proposes a framework for government communication in South Africa – dubbed the *Communigation* model – which is aimed at ensuring seamless communication between the government and the citizens. It proposes a hybrid of both old and new communication channels which are categorised into primary and secondary channels (see Figure 6.1 below). The primary channels consist of mediated and unmediated channels whereas the secondary channels comprise mediated communication channels only. The word primary – derived from the Latin word *primarius* – explains the principal significance of something over others (Collins English Dictionary 1999; Cambridge Dictionaries Online 2015). Considering it has been established that the primary channels elicit

instantaneous feedback, they could accordingly be referred to as the *communigation* channels. As much as primary education is the foundation for the success of the secondary and tertiary education, so are the primary channels in the *communigation* process. The *Communigation* model illustrates how a message is disseminated by government (the sender), utilising primary channels, and transmitted to the citizens (the receiver), who then decode the message and immediately respond to it, in case clarity is sought or additional information is required. This also gives the sender (government) an opportunity to respond immediately; thus confirming that the message was mutually understood, and as such confirming that effective communication took place. The Model, therefore, proposes that new media platforms should be adopted by the South African government to strengthen its communication machinery for seamless effective communication with the citizens.

The proposed primary channels are: new media channels, namely, Short Message Service (SMS), social media platforms – *facebook*, Twitter, WhatsApp, Messenger – and websites, as well as community meetings or face-to-face communication – old media channel. The proposed secondary channels – the old media mediated communication channels currently being utilised by the South African government – are: radio, television, printed information material and newspapers. This was designed based on the results of this study which signalled their popularity and preference amongst the citizens who participated in this study. Essentially, the model proposes that government should amend its communication policy regarding the use of authorised channels or platforms to be used to communicate with the citizens. These channels are discussed below:

6.5.1 Short Message Service (SMS)

The rise and subsequent diffusion of cell/mobile phones usage in South Africa has availed a communigation opportunity which should be exploited by the South African government to enhance its communication and information machinery.

With 85, 53 million mobile connections in South Africa – far exceeding the country's population – information via the Short Message Service (SMS) could instantly reach almost all the citizens. Popularly known as an SMS, the Short Message Service is the instant text-based mobile telephone information exchange service (Ahonen 2011). As an interactive channel of communication, an SMS is capable of delivering instant responses. It is advantageous as owners are guaranteed to receive their messages – whether or not the cell/mobile phone is out of the coverage area, the phone is turned off or they do not have airtime – as messages are never lost. More importantly, if the recipients of SMSes do not delete these messages, they remain in their phones' inboxes for future reference.

The use and adoption of SMSes will significantly reduce the time it takes for a citizen to receive an official government response through a posted letter which could take up to a week or more to be delivered, if not lost in transit. This assertion is supported by the results of this study which indicated that the majority of the citizens (201; 62.8%) agreed that the short message service (SMS) was the 'in thing' as it provides them with up-to-the minute information and instant feedback. Other motivating reasons which render SMSes effective are that: (a) people read 90% of their text messages within three (3) minutes of receipt; (b) about 98% of text messages received are on average read and responded to, within 90 seconds of receipt (Hall 2016).

6.5.2 *facebook*

Originally known as *Thefacebook.com*, *facebook* – trademarked and spelt in all lowercase letters – was conceptualised by Mark Zuckerberg, together with his roommates, when he was a student at Harvard University (Carlson 2010; Jindal 2011). Bozzuto (2012) and Bersin (2012) define *facebook* as an information sharing and communication platform which allows people to keep in touch with one another. Therefore, despite *facebook* being effective for exchanging ideas and opinions, it mostly connects a person with people they know such as friends,

family members and colleagues (Bozzuto 2012; Bersin 2012; Whitmore 2015). It was launched on 04 February 2004 as a social networking service initially for Harvard students only, but was later extended to cover 21 universities in the United Kingdom and many others around the world. Eligibility to *facebook* membership was opened on 26th September 2006 to all people across the world – aged 13 years and older – and with a valid e-mail address (Jindal 2011). Zuckerberg explained his intention with the invention, as motivated by the desire to assist people to understand their surroundings better, and to create a communigation environment which enables people to interact and instantly share whatever information they wanted. Essentially, *facebook*'s inventor had merely created the platform to ease communication between university friends. However, its popularity just spiralled unexpectedly. By the end of 2016, *facebook* had registered in excess of 7, 3 billion active users worldwide, with South Africa accounting for 14 million users (World Wide Worx 2016).

Over 1, 1 billion people were recorded to be active daily users of the social media platform worldwide – 13, 3 million in South Africa by 2016 (World Wide Worx 2016). Membership of *facebook* remains free, as it derives its revenue from selling advertising space (Carlson 2010). Interestingly, the term *facebook* has now made it into dictionaries as a noun and a verb, and could be defined as a trademark of the world's popular social media networking website which allows borderless instantaneous interaction between acquaintances (Collins English Dictionary 2014). Its popularity therefore signals its efficiency with regards to the successful transmission and decoding of the message as intended, given its interactive nature and ability to elicit instantaneous feedback necessary for communigation – or effective communication – as it is popularly known.

6.5.3 Twitter

Twitter was created in 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Biz Stone and Evan Williams, as a social networking platform allowing registered users to post

messages – dubbed tweets – and for others to react to those messages (Sagolla 2009). This was after Dorsey, who was then an undergraduate at New York University, suggested to his companions to use short text messages to regularly update each other on their current involvement in their separate spaces. Originally named 'twttr', it was inspired by Flickr, and had about 50 users when it was invented (Sagolla 2009). From the trademark name, Twitter, clearly it was inspired by the chirping or tweeting sound made by birds as they communicate with each other. Accordingly, a chirp of a bird is very short, straight to the point and elicits instant feedback from other birds hence a tweet was initially limited to 140 characters (now doubled to 280 characters) (Bath 2015; Mkhize & Neophytou 2015). To participate on Twitter, prospective members must create what is known as a Twitter handle – basically a username – which is preceded by the sign @, for example, @MohauRam (Sagolla 2009).

Such a handle is unique to each user as it links the communigating users to every message they tweet, thus allowing their followers – Twitter reference of those reading messages sent through a specific Twitter handle – an opportunity to react accordingly or even re-tweet the message. Tweeters often use a hashtag – a word or phrase preceded by the # (hash) symbol – to create a discussion platform on a particular topic, and this usually creates a hype of reactions from the followers of the tweeter or any other Twitter member who is interested by the topic. By the end of 2016, Twitter was one of the fastest growing social media platforms worldwide, with an estimated 1.3 billion registered users and 317 million monthly active users (World Wide Worx 2016). On average, 100 million people use Twitter daily, with each tweet being followed by about 208 people, effectively taking the daily usage of the service to 208 billion users.

By the end of 2016, about 7, 4 million people in South Africa were already utilising the Twitter platform (World Wide Worx 2016). An example of the positive impact of Twitter was evidenced when it was successfully utilised to mobilise thousands of university students across South African universities to revolt against the

proposed tuition fee hikes for the 2016 academic year (Bath 2015; Mkhize & Neophytou 2015; Shaikh 2015; Van Niekerk & Blignaut 2015: 4). The campaign, known as *#WitsFeesMustFall,* was started by the students at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg on 08 October 2015, and quickly spread to other universities across South Africa, as students entrenched it further at their respective institutions (Van Niekerk & Blignaut 2015). This even transcended beyond the borders of South Africa, as more than 140 000 tweets of solidarity were shared worldwide overnight in countries such as Australia, Great Britain and the United States of America (Bath 2015; Mkhize & Neophytou 2015). Consequently, over 200 000 *#FeesMustFall* tweets shared amongst the students in just 14 days (Van Niekerk & Blignaut 2015).

Furthermore, the popularity of the United State of America's @WhiteHouse and the U.K.'s @Number10Gov Twitter handles, and the subsequent retweets, confirm that the citizens of those countries have overwhelmingly adopted the new media channel as their preferred channel for receiving government information and messages (Mickoleit 2014). When the tweets are further re-tweeted by the followers, this disseminates the message even further to a wider audience. Twitter basically connects people with strangers because it allows them to join conversations on interesting topics with people who share similar interest with them, irrespective of whether they know them or not (Bozzuto 2012; Bersin 2012; Whitmore 2015).

6.5.4 WhatsApp Messenger

WhatsApp Messenger was founded by Jan Koum and Brian Acton in 2009, inspired by Koum's desire to send his friends notifications during a movie night, and it unintentionally became a hit as it later progressed to become an instant messaging application (Bhatt & Arshad 2016). Like other new media channels such as social media, WhatsApp is instantaneous. However, there are differing views regarding its classification – whether it can be classified as one of the social

media platforms? The argument being put forward by some scholars is that it cannot be classified as such because it connects an individual with their phone contacts separately, rather than collectively, as is in the case with social media platforms like *facebook* (Narayan & Narayanan 2016). In this regard, *facebook* is classified as a cross-platform instant messaging application which, just like other social media platforms, enables its users to share messages and respond to one another instantaneously (Bhatt & Arshad 2016). However contrary to this view, it can be argued that WhatsApp is indeed one of the social media platforms given that it offers an opportunity to create groups which enable all members of a particular group to share information and interact with one another simultaneously and in real time (Bhatt & Arshad 2016; Narayan & Narayanan 2016). By the end of 2016, over 1 billion people worldwide were using WhatsApp for instant communication on their cell/mobile phones, with South Africa accounting for over 10 million users (Bhatt & Arshad 2016; World Wide Worx 2016).

Based on this discussion, it is evident that like other new media channels, WhatsApp Messenger enables a two-way interactive communigation process which elicits instant feedback – essential to validate the occurrence of effective communication. This therefore provides government with an opportunity to invite the citizens to request to be added to specific WhatsApp messaging groups which could be created to interact with them.

6.5.5 Websites

A website is a digital inter-connected unitary source of information about an organisation or individual, hosted on the World Wide Web or Internet, as it is commonly known, and identifiable by one common domain name (Collins English Dictionary 2014). Websites are therefore significant in the new media era because they are a source of information at any given time. For governments, if properly and frequently updated, websites could provide an around the clock e-government service by providing information on services available to the citizens.

E-government – short for electronic government – refers to the provision of government information and services to the citizens, better known as development communication, via digital information dissemination sources like the Internet (Mahmood 2013). As already explained, development communication refers to the provision of information to the citizens which they could use to improve their lives. Accordingly, the aim of e-government is to improve government efficiency through the utilisation of new media channels such as the Internet to disseminate information necessary to improve the lives of the citizens. E-government therefore promotes transparency and accountability, which are fundamental in a democracy, by allowing a two-way communication process, thus allowing the participation of the citizens in the running of their country (OECD 1996; Mahmood 2013).

In this regard, the South African government has developed a government web-portal which unfortunately still provides one-way information – government to citizens – given that the potential of the web-portal has not been fully exploited (Mahmood 2013). To realise two-way communication through the web-portal, the South African government should adopt e-government communication which will enable the citizens to actively participate in the affairs of government meant to improve their lives. Government websites could be used to render an e-government information exchange service that allows the citizens to dialogue with it online.

6.5.6 Community meetings/face-to-face communication

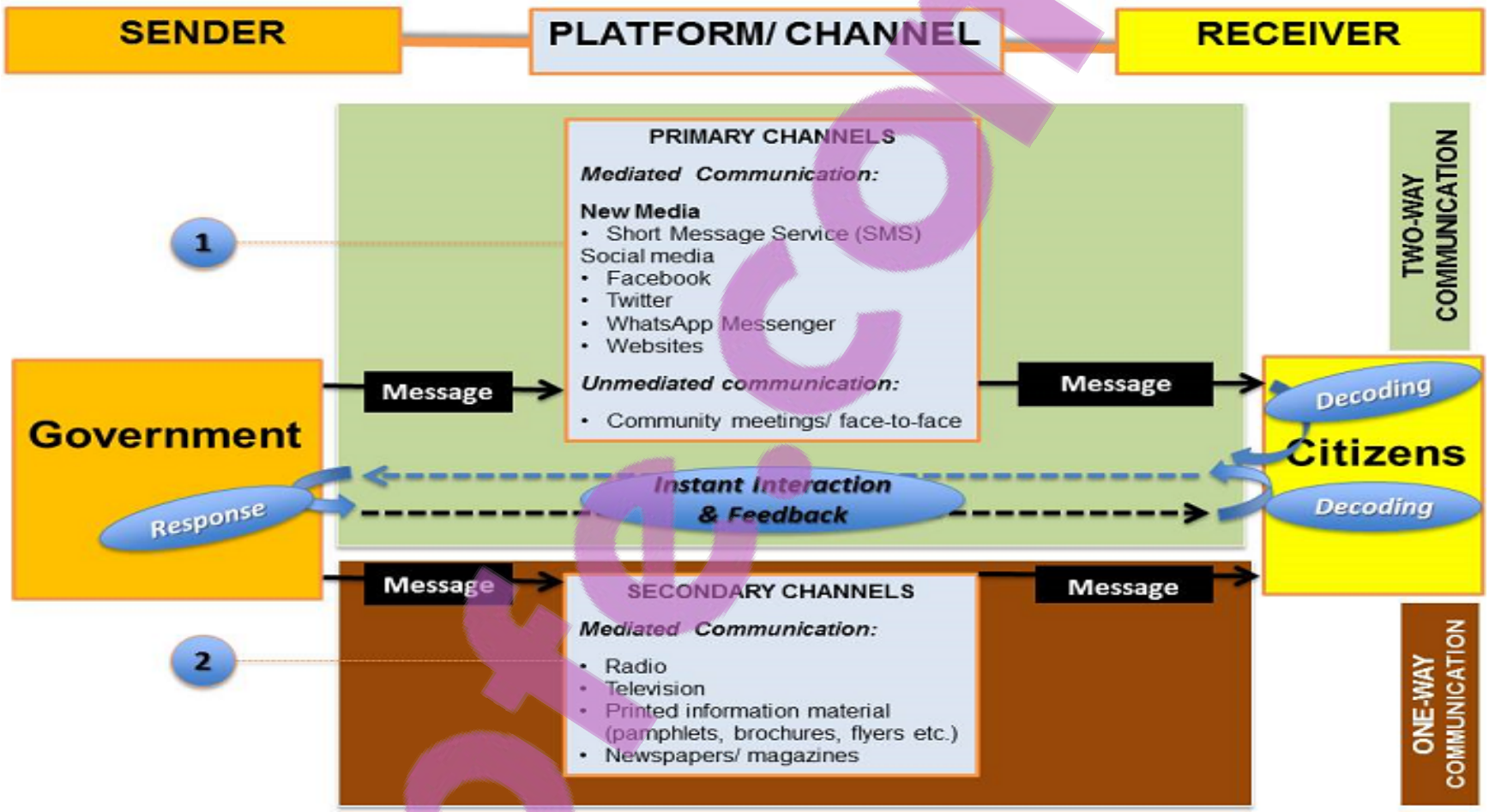
A simple definition of face-to-face communication is that it is a verbal or non-verbal eye-to-eye information exchange interaction between two or more parties (Collins English Dictionary 1999; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015). According to Goffman (1959: 15), face-to-face communication or interaction refers to "the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another's actions when in one another's immediate physical presence". Other scholars have defined it as the

real time exchange of information or message without the assistance of any mediating channel (Kendon, Harris & Key 1975; Rogers 1983, 1995, 2003; Sahin 2006). From these definitions, it is clear that face-to-face communication happens interpersonally and in real time. This inborn human interaction was first analysed in 1908 by sociologist Georg Simmel, who was interested in understanding how meaning how transmitted through direct exchange of words (Kendon *et al* 1975). The outstanding advantage of face-to-face interaction or communication is that the transmission of the intended message is unlikely to be distorted or misdirected as communication is in person (Brownfeld 1977; Toye 2006). In the case of government communication strategy, this renders face-to-face communication immune to hierarchical challenges, as it enables government representatives to respond to enquiries or queries of the citizens immediately and in person (Brownfeld 1977; Toye 2006). Face-to-face communication thus entrenches democracy by making governments transparent and accountable to the shareholders – the citizens (Javuru 2010; CommGAP 2011; Cornish *et al* 2011). Evidently, the interpersonal character of face-to-face communication promotes trust and intimacy between the interacting parties.

Notwithstanding the associated high costs, face-to-face communication essentially brings government closer to the citizens (Javuru 2010; CommGAP 2011; Cornish *et al* 2011). It is an intimacy-inducing channel of communication which symbolise a caring government. Using the example of a private company, face-to-face communication can be likened to the annual general meeting, where shareholders are updated regarding their shareholding or investments. Although face-to-face communication was traditionally associated with people coming together in person, there are arguments that it is no longer limited to personal contact, given that people can now also converse via video conferencing (IAC Publishing 2019). Clearly, this mediated channel of communication is also capable of producing instant feedback, and is unlikely to bring about distortion. It could thus be argued that face-to-face communication is both an unmediated and mediated channel of communication, as it can now virtually connect people face-

to-face via technology. To this end, face-to-face communication is one of the channels still being utilised by the South African government to interact with the citizens, hence the proposal to retain it and promote it to be one of the primary channels of communication (South Africa. GCIS 2011). Figure 6.1 below presents the proposed communication framework, referred to as the *Communigation* model:

Figure 6.1: The Communigation Model



6.6 Critiquing the *Communigation* Model

Notwithstanding the enunciated strengths and benefits of the proposed *Communigation* Model, it is acknowledged that no model is perfect (Canham, Cole & Lauenroth 2003; Tomarken & Waller 2005). Consequently, the proposed model has limitations as well. It disregards the theory of media convergence by clearly making a distinction between the old and new media communication channels, despite some of them having converged owing to technological advancement (Chao-Chen 2013). In fact, the Communigation model does not subscribe to widespread postulations by media convergence theorists that the old and new media are fast becoming one, and as such, old media channels could face extinction and eventually be replaced by new media channels. This is supported by the assertion by Jensen (2010: 5) that new media channels will never displace or merge with unmediated communication channels – like face-to-face communigation – because such "old media rarely die".

The Communigation model is premised on the assertion that face-to-face communication – an unmediated old medium of communication – which is hereditary to human beings, can never converge, swallowed and replaced by any form of new media channels. Learner and Storper (2001) and Rhoads (2010) also support this assertion, that no amount of technology can supersede the communication power and efficacy of face-to-face interaction. Democratic governments are essentially contracted by the citizens to deliver services to them; hence democratic theorists argue that there is a need to provide feedback to citizens, by way of face-to-face engagements (Rhoads 2010). As indicated earlier, a government and the citizens could be equated to a board of directors and shareholders in a business, respectively, and any attempt by the former to replace face-to-face communigation with mediated communication channels, could be considered by the latter as being arrogant and eventually unforgivable. The Communigation model is, therefore, clearly rooted on both the democratic

theory and the face-to-face communication theory, which collectively assert that, face-to-face communigation between governments and the people reinforces democracy and creates a bond between the contracted parties (Gastil 2000; Rhoads 2010). This is supported by the findings of this study, that the majority of citizens (76.6%) believed that community meetings/face-to-face communication make them feel closer to their government.

6.7 Summary

This chapter has conceptualised and proposed the *Communigation* Model, which proposes the adoption of new media channels to strengthen the communication and information system of the South African government. The Model was influenced by Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovations* theory which confirmed the high level of the diffusion of new media, such as social media platforms, within the communities of the Province of Mpumalanga. It is rooted on both the democratic theory and the face-to-face communication theory, and proposes two (2) categories of official communication channels; namely, primary and secondary channels. The former consists of mediated or assistive communication channels as the researcher refers to them, and unmediated channels, and the latter consists of mediated channels only.

The model suggests a hybrid of channels from both the new and old media channels, and elevates the new media to be the primary source of information – taking over from the traditionally utilised channels, the old media. Consequently, it proposes that the communication policy of the South African should be amended to include the use of new media platforms as official communication channels.

The next chapter (Chapter seven) discusses the results of the study as presented in chapter 5.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the *Communigation* Model which is proposed to strengthen the communication and information system of the South African government. This chapter therefore discusses and provides an insight into the results, as presented in Chapter five (5), taking into consideration the purpose and objectives of this study.

7.2 Scope of discussion

The discussion is confined to the results of the study presented in Chapter five (5), which were meant to answer the four (4) research questions, as stated in chapter one.

7.2.1 Demographic profile of respondents

The results of this study have established that information need was gender-based, as the majority of the citizen-respondents were females (213; 67.0%) compared to males (107; 33.0%). This suggests that women require government services and information more than males, supporting the view by Olorunda (2004), Thanuskodi (2015) and Ramodibe (2014) that women need information for their socio-economic growth and the well-being of their families and communities in general. Evidently, there is a correlation between gender and information needs as women sought government information more than men (Olorunda 2004; Thanuskodi 2015). This hunger for development communication – dissemination of information to the people to enable them to use it to improve their lives – confirms Olorunda's assertion that women are indeed "the bedrock of any society" (2004: 2) [emphasis in the original]. As established, women were

found in their majority at the six (6) TSCs where the study was conducted, especially at the offices of the South African Social Security Agency, where they were seeking information on social grants and other benefits to take care of their families. There is also evidence that access to information by rural inhabitants was limited and restricted due to the inadequacy of ICT infrastructure in rural areas (Hafkin & Odame 2002; Ngenge 2003; Olorunda 2004; Mbatha 2011). This was also confirmed by the fact that the majority of the citizens (208; 65%) came from rural areas. Harande (2009) further asserts that almost 80% of the people in developing countries like South Africa, reside in rural areas, and were always hungry for information due to the unequal distribution of information between the urban and rural communities. Mbatha (2011) asserts that access to ICTs by women in Africa was as low as 5%; hence the majority of women respondents of this study were found at the TSCs.

Evidently, there is correlation between poverty and the dearth of information, as people can go hungry because they are uninformed about services offered by government, which could effectively address their well-being through interventions such as social grants and food parcels available for destitute families (Hossain & Islam 2012). This concurs with the results of Hossain and Islam's Bangladeshian study which established that access to information enabled women to farm for the sustenance of their families (2012). Inherently, access to information saved the families concerned from poverty and starvation. If women's access to information could be increased through further roll-out of enabling ICT infrastructure in rural areas – which will also enable government communigation via new media platforms – the lives of more rural inhabitants could significantly improve.

This is supported by the notion that 'when you empower a man, you empower an individual; but when you empower a woman, you empower the nation' (Holliday 2014; Kep 2017; Weissman 2017). Likewise, KofiAnnan (2014) asserts that "there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women", as they are naturally altruistic beings. One could therefore assert that

by empowering women – in essence empowering the nation – the South African government would essentially fulfil its constitutional mandate of empowering the citizens through information, herein referred to as development communication. Already, the majority of South Africa's *facebook* users (85% or 10 million out of the 14 million) were accessing this social media platform from their cell-phones daily (World Wide Worx 2016). As a result, the growth of social media users continues to spiral in South Africa, with registered users of these platforms recorded at approximately 40 million by 2016 (World Wide Worx 2016). The use of new media has thus become intrinsic to people's daily life, with the youth being in the majority (Coopers & Lybrand 1996, 1997; Livingstone 2002). This study has established that new media have diffused adequately within South African communities, to the extent that social media platforms are now preferred by the citizens as their channel of communication and interaction.

The magnitude of the ownership or access to cell/mobile phones by the majority of respondents (82, 1%) also motivates for the adoption of new media platforms by the South African government, in order to close the information dissemination gap. Arguably, the reason why women were found in their majority at the TSCs could be attributed to misdirected communication caused by government's continued utilisation of obsolete or now mostly irrelevant old media platforms. Misdirected communication simply explains the message or information was transmitted through unsuitable transmission channels; hence it would not reach the intended recipients. The study established that the respondents of all age groups were found at the TSCs, implying that all citizens were equally interested in receiving government information.

Furthermore, given that the combined age groups of 21-40 years found at the TSCs were in the majority (268; 85%), it could be inferred that the youth were hungry for government information. Coincidentally, these are the people who easily adapt to new technology, such as social media platforms, for their information needs (Coopers & Lybrand 1996, 1997; Livingstone 2002). The hunger for information by the youth, in a sea of massive information held by the

South African government, could simply be a sign that information is not reaching the citizens, possibly due to it being misdirected or not being disseminated at all. However, given the existence of the funded government communication machinery in South Africa – albeit not adequately – it could be argued that such communication is actually misdirected and thus ineffective. Regarding the employment status of the citizens, it was established that the employed (67%) required information more than the unemployed (33%). Normally, one would expect the unemployed citizens to be the ones in their majority in queues, seeking government information and services for their developmental needs. In essence, it could be argued that there is no correlation between unemployment and information needs.

With regard to educational qualifications, the study established that the majority of the citizens (95%) had educational qualifications ranging from grade 12 up to post-graduate diplomas. Only 5% of them had no schooling and none had bachelor degrees and beyond. What could be deduced from the finding was that the educated citizens were hungry for government information more than the uneducated. With regard to government communicators, the respondents were heads of communication from the provincial government and both the local and district municipalities of the Province of Mpumalanga. The majority of the government communicators (15; 55%) were employed in the local/municipal sphere compared to those employed at the provincial level (11; 41%).

The results were not surprising though, because communication at the municipal sphere, which is prone to sporadic community service delivery protests, was still not recognised as a strategic management function (South Africa: GCIS 1996; Ramodibe 2014). Earlier studies have also confirmed that the communication function is still not recognised as strategic in some government circles (Winner 1993; South Africa; GCIS 1996; Mefalopulos & Grenna 2004; Ramodibe 2014). The fact that only 26% of government communicators were occupying the top or strategic level positions, according to the results of this study, further supports the assertion that communication is still regarded as a non-strategic government

function. The majority of these communicators (18; 67%) were occupying the middle or tactical level positions and 7% lower or operational level positions. This disadvantaged municipal communicators from being privy to decisions; hence they are unable to communicate such decisions to the citizens. It can thus be inferred that communicators at the municipal sphere of government were worse-off than their provincial level counterparts because by not being part of decision-making structures, prohibits them from even influencing government communication policy regarding the use of new media channels. This is a worrying factor given that 21 years later – after the task group on government communications had recommended improvements on the status of government communicators by professionalising the function – communication was still not regarded as a strategic function at some municipalities (South Africa: GCIS 1996).

Without access to strategic information – decisions and progress on policy implementation – no communication will take place. Consequently, the lack of communication creates information vacuum which is easily filled by any untested information because according to Greek philosopher, Aristotle, nature abhors a vacuum (Anslyn & Dougherty 2006; Finlay 2011). The danger of untested information is that situations could be portrayed as being far worse than they actually are. This could potentially result in hijacked communication – explained as unauthorised dissemination of information derived from unverified own-conclusions – resulting from the communication void. To avoid this, the South African government should implement recommendation 57 – "the rank of the head of communications [should] be of a sufficiently senior status to reflect the key nature of the communications function" – of the task group on government communication by elevating communication to be a strategic management function at the municipal sphere.

This study has also established that 44% of the communicators had work experience of between 5 and 10 years in government communication, followed by those with between 1 and 5 years (10; 37%) and between 10 and 20 years (5;

19%). It was necessary to establish the work experience of the communicators because various scholars have argued that there was correlation between work experience and job performance (McDaniel, Schmidt & Hunter 1988; Quinones, Ford & Teachout 2001). In this regard, the length of experience in the job is central to good performance, given that it enables individuals to perform optimally due to their in-depth knowledge and understanding of their working environment. It was encouraging that no government communicator had work experience of less than one year, as indicated by the results of this study. It was, however, not surprising that none of the communicators had work experience of 20 years or more, given that South Africa's current government communication and information system was only introduced in 1996 (South Africa: GCIS 1996).

7.2.2 Access to tele-communication devices/infrastructure by the citizens

The high ownership of tele-communication devices and access to tele-communication infrastructure by the citizens, as established by this study, confirms that the South African government has invested massively in ICT infrastructure in order to address the historical information divide, especially in rural areas (Montealegre 1999; Mutula & Mostert 2008; Mbatha 2011). Such roll-out in ICT infrastructure has resulted in 85, 53 million mobile connections in South Africa – implying that a number of citizens own more than one cell-phone (World Wide Worx 2016). In addition, Internet connectivity and accessibility was close to 50%, as 26, 84 million South Africans were active users, making the country the dominating and Internet connectivity hub for surrounding Southern African countries (World Wide Worx 2016).

Although the results of this study have also confirmed the high level of diffusion of the mobile phone in South Africa – the majority of the citizens owned or had access to a cell/mobile phone (82.1%), the Internet (63.7%) and e-mail (63.7) – that has not automatically resolved the challenge of information disparity between the rural and urban areas. This has been confirmed by the fact that the majority

of the citizens (65%) who participated in the study, were from the rural areas, and had to physically go to the Thusong Service Centres (TSCs) to seek government information and services. Notwithstanding the rationale of establishing the TSCs – to bridge the information gap between urban and rural communities – ownership and access to communication enabling devices and infrastructure would become meaningless if nothing flows inside them; that is, they are not utilised for information sharing purposes albeit being readily accessible. It is therefore necessary for the deployed infrastructure in rural areas to be exploited meaningfully for the benefit of the citizens. This is to avoid fruitless and wasteful expenditure on the one hand, and to reduce over-reliance by citizens on physical structures on the other hand, as evidenced by the majority of those who sought government information from the TSCs.

7.2.3 Provision of tools of trade to catalyse performance and achieve the set objectives

Ramodibe (2014) argues that communication activities are usually the last to be considered for funding, including the provision of the requisite tools of trade. The assertion is that communication activities were still considered non-essential within government circles in South Africa; hence they continue to receive less or inadequate financial and non-financial resources. The results of this study indicated that all government communicators were provided with communication tools of trade such as mobile phones, computers/laptops/tablets and had access to the Internet to enable them to perform their duties. However, it was surprising that only 96% of them had access to e-mail facilities which is also an essential communication tool. Others (7%) mentioned that they were provided with devices like a camera.

7.2.4 Channels utilised by government to communicate with the citizens

This study has confirmed that the South African government still preferred to utilise old media platforms, as the majority of citizens (96.6%) indicated that they

had received government information through radio, television (90.6%), newspapers (67.2%) and printed information material (21.9%). All government communicators have also confirmed that they were utilising radio (100.0%), television (48%), newspapers (81%) and printed information material (100.0%) channels to communicate government messages and share information with the citizens. The continual usage of unmediated communication channel, in the form of face-to-face interaction or communication, and new media channels have also proven to be catalysts towards effective communication or *communigation*. Evidently, face-to-face communication is still relevant as it strengthens the relationship between the shareholders (citizens) and the board of directors (government). The use of social media platforms in communicating with the citizens remained unauthorised; hence they are not official government communication channels in South Africa.

This was supported by the fact that at the time of this study, access to social media (new media platforms) on the information technology network of the South African government was only permitted outside government business hours (GCIS 2011; South Africa. SITA 2008). However, despite the blockage, the majority of government communicators had utilised these platforms to interact with the citizens, as the majority of the citizens indicated that they had received government information through social media (191; 59.6%), Internet/websites (166; 51.9%) and SMS-es (50; 15.6%). This was also confirmed by the majority of communicators who indicated that they had utilised social media (22; 81%), the Internet/websites (23; 85%) and SMSes (17; 63%) to communicate government messages.

Overall, it could be argued that even though the radio platform indicated the highest rating, in terms of the citizens who had confirmed receiving information from government via it, this was not confirmation that it is the citizens' preferred channel of communication. Similarly, the same could be said about television, newspapers and printed information material. Arguably, the citizens felt helpless or were unaware of their constitutional right – as shareholders – to influence

government communication policy to receive information through their preferred channels of communication. It should once again be emphasised that the citizens are the shareholders who have appointed a board of directors – being the government – to represent their (citizens) interests. The citizens must therefore have a say regarding the choice of the channels of communication they consider appropriate for their information needs. One-way communication channels, in the form of old media, facilitate monologue rather than dialogue, and this is contrary to the founding mandate of South Africa's government and information machinery – the GCIS – that of ensuring that "a two-way system is set up to facilitate dialogue between government and the broadest possible public" (Horwitz 2004: 320) [emphasis in the original]. Eventually, when there is no dialogue with the citizens, the government runs the risk of its integrity being affected, as the citizens might think there is something their elected public representatives – the executive – are hiding. Ultimately, the citizens might for example, conclude that their government has failed to fulfil its constitutional mandate of improving their lives; hence the unwillingness to engage or dialogue with them.

7.2.5 Decision on the utilisation of communication channels/platforms

Government bureaucracy is often blamed for delays in the implementation of programmes; hence it is viewed by the citizens as "somewhat inflexible and unresponsive to their needs and a barrier towards the improvement of their well-being" (Ramodibe 2014: 33). In this regard, it was necessary to establish who had the final word regarding the type of communication channel to be utilised in disseminating information to the citizens. This study has established that the decision on which channels of communication to utilise to communicate with the citizens rested with the majority of government communicators. However, some institutional administrative heads, supervisors/immediate managers and political heads still had such decision-making power. This is because government communication system is not immune from bureaucracy, as government possesses the ultimate power to decide on the channels to be utilised to communicate with the citizens, or rather the shareholders. Arguably, government

communicators are the experts in their field of operation, and should thus be left to decide which channels are appropriate to realise effective communication with the citizens.

7.2.6 Suitability of the channels utilised by government to communicate with the citizens

Although the majority of the citizens (94.6%) indicated that most of the old media channels utilised by government to communicate with them were suitable, this however, was not confirmation that effective communication or *communigation* with the citizens ever took place. This is because some of the citizens (5%) indicated that most of these channels – with the exception of face-to-face communication – were not reciprocal and did not provide them with instant feedback. In this regard, printed information material was the least preferred channel of communication by half of the citizens. Thirty-seven (37) percent of government communicators also concurred with this view, arguing that printed information material was outdated and no longer relevant as a communication channel, given that the new media seems to have taken over. Arguably, by being the least preferred of all the channels, could possibly be a sign that printed information material has become obsolete. Printed information material offer one-way communication.

The continued utilisation and over reliance on one-way communication channels by the South African government have thus relegated the citizens to mere consumers of information, rather than what Cunningham (2010: 111) has termed 'prosumers'. As a board of directors, government cannot therefore take unilateral decisions regarding the type of communication channels to be used to communicate with the shareholders (citizens). The South African government must thus learn from countries like Sweden, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Australia, Spain and Singapore, which have eventually amended their communication policies and strategies by adopting new media channels, such as social media, as their primary channels of information

dissemination and interaction with the citizens. The United States for example, regards social media as their "engage and connect" communication strategy to interact with citizens (Mickoleit 2014: 12). This is in line with the *Diffusion of Innovations* theory which asserts that innovation is easily adopted if it proves to be beneficial to the users. What was also interesting was that when the citizens were asked to motivate why they consider the current communication channels being utilised by the South African government as being suitable for their information needs, they responded differently by mentioning unmediated media as their preferred channel. The majority (76.6%) mentioned community meetings/face-to-face communication as making them feel closer to the government. Although it is an old media platform, face-to-face communication is a two-way interactive platform which is still deemed relevant and effective.

It continued to be regarded as the most effective of all communication channels, as distortion of messages is unlikely to happen during the transmission from the sender to the receiver. Such a channel of communication is inherently capable of improving the reputation of government, which subsequently brands itself as consulting and caring. This will further entrench transparency and accountability which are the principles of good governance (CommGAP 2011; Burke *et al* 2013). However, despite it being the most effective, face-to-face communication is arguably too expensive and time consuming to implement; hence it may not be feasible for government to utilise it every time it needs to communicate with the citizens. As indicated in the proposed communication model in the previous chapter (Chapter six), it would, however, be advisable for the South African government to continue utilising this effective unmediated channel of *communigation*, together with the others as suggested.

Evidently, this old media type of communication – justifiably renamed face-to-face *communigation* – has the high potential to calm down the high emotions of the citizens as it provides for immediate explanations, in cases of slow or non-delivery of government services. The advantage thereof is that this would effectively reduce community protests which continue to be blamed on the

supposed lack of communication by government communicators (Ramodibe 2014). This is confirmation that the new media platforms have diffused intensely within the area of study, thus concurring with the *Diffusion of Innovations* theory to the effect that people are inclined to follow a new trend immediately after discovering it (Rogers 1995). It could thus be concluded that the suitability or appropriateness of the channels utilised by democratic governments across the world to communicate with their citizens can only be confirmed if *communigation* takes place. Evidently, it would be an anomaly for a board of directors – government – to propose, conclude and implement an initiative or strategy without seeking the concurrence or approval of the shareholders – the citizens. This argument is supported by South Africa's constitution, to the effect that "the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making" (South Africa 1996:s 195.108: 99). The citizens should thus be the kingmakers in determining the communication channels to be used to communicate with them.

7.2.7 Communication channels/platforms preferred by the citizens

The reason why old media channels like radio and television continue to be preferred by the majority of citizens is not surprising. This could be attributed to being in a comfort zone – a believe that something one is accustomed to, might be the only thing available to satisfy one's needs (White 2008). This concurs with the assertion by Penn (2014) that newspapers have traditionally been a fundamental and reliable source of information for many communities. Bentley (2001: 2) argues that newspapers continue to be an integral part of people's daily lives given that they also offer "a variety of non-news functions for families" such as entertainment and do-it-yourself tips. This could possibly be the reason why the respondents (citizens) of this study continue to prefer newspapers as well, as their source of knowledge for other information needs for survival purposes. Notwithstanding the assertion by Bentley (2001), it could still be argued that newspapers do not offer the reader an opportunity to receive instantaneous feedback, considering their one-way information dissemination characteristic, and thus would not strengthen government communication with the citizens.

There is evidence that newspaper readership continues to dwindle worldwide – a sign that people no longer consider them as relevant for their information needs (Shaker 2014). Like newspapers, preference of printed information material – pamphlets, leaflets and brochures – is seriously dwindling given that people now require them in a digital format (Summerstone 2009). This supports the results by various studies that old media channels have in fact reached their sell-buy date, as primary sources of information, and should rather be relegated to secondary status (Mickoleit 2014; World Wide Worx 2016). It is thus justifiable to assert that the reason why some of the citizens indicated that government does not respond to their queries, is due to the utilisation of one-way, old media communication channels. When information is shared with the people, it serves the purpose of development communication (Olorunda 2004; Thanuskodi 2015; Ramodibe 2014).

Contrary to this, a minority of the respondents of this study (4%) did not believe in development communication, and were not interested in receiving information from government. They argued that it was unlikely that information from government could improve their lives. What could be deduced from the citizen's argument is that some of them do not rely on government for their well-being, and this could imply that they may be well-off and could thus take care of their socio-economic needs. The other possibility could be that information does not reach these citizens, owing to the usage of obsolete one-way communication channels – resulting in them being discouraged or feeling disenfranchised. As is the case in a company, as argued earlier, uninformed stakeholders will not share their organisation's vision and this may result in its failure (Hopkins 2006; Putnam & Nicotera 2010; Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen & Clark 2011; Smith and Mounter 2008; Gall 2009; Verghese 2012).

Snail or traditional mail is a perfect example to illustrate the significance of utilising appropriate communication channels to realise *communigation*. If mail is posted to the previously known address of the intended recipient, who unknowingly to the sender, no longer utilises the known postal address, it is likely

– if it is not lost in-transit – to reach the post box, but unfortunately not the intended receiver. Being delivered to the known postal address does not necessarily mean the mail was successfully delivered, as it would have been delivered to the wrong recipient, who is likely to throw it in the rubbish bin, especially when the mail keeps on resurfacing on their post box even after depositing it in the 'missorted' or unknown mail deposit box. From this example, it is evident that the intended message would end up not being read, resulting in what could be termed undelivered communication. Essentially, undelivered communication refers to the process of disseminating and delivering information to the unintended recipient via a mediated channel, ultimately resulting in the message not being delivered to the intended recipient. This process of sharing information has been classified as communication and not *communigation* because in itself, as the term – undelivered communication suggests – the delivery of the message was doomed to fail from the onset; hence it is unlikely to produce effective communication.

Consequently, the non-delivery of the message or undelivered communication would result in lost communication which will effectively hamper effective communication or rather *communigation*. Undelivered communication creates an impression that no attempt was ever made to communicate. In a case of democratic governments, like South Africa, the citizens may conclude that their queries or complaints were never considered, resulting in them branding the government as uncaring, non-transparent and unaccountable to them as shareholders. Again, using the example of government as board members of a company and the citizens as shareholders, board members are supposed to regularly report back to the shareholders about their performance in implementing shareholders' interests. Undelivered communication is thus possibly a recipe for community unrests, and this may be attributed to sporadic service delivery protests witnessed across South Africa in recent years (Ramodibe 2014).

7.2.8 New media channels preferred by the citizens

As argued throughout this paper, one of the outstanding advantages of new media platforms is their ability to facilitate the process of successful decoding of messages by creating instant dialogue between the sender and the receiver of information. The use of new media platforms has thus become intrinsic to the people's daily lives hence they have now become fundamental in realising *communigation* or effective communication (Coopers & Lybrand 1996, 1997; Livingstone 2002). At the end of 2016, around 40 million people were recorded as registered users of social media platforms in South Africa, with 85% of registered *facebook* users accessing the platform from their mobile phones (World Wide Worx 2016). This concurs with the results of this study which indicated that the majority of the citizens preferred new media channels such as *facebook* (82.1%), SMSes (76.2%) and Twitter (55.9%), as their primary channels of *communigating* with their government.

What could be inferred is that *facebook* was popular amongst South African citizens because of its efficiency, with regard to the successful transmission and decoding of messages due to its interactive and instantaneous nature. These platforms foster dialogue which allows the citizens to participate in policy formulation and even to suggest ways to improve service delivery – that is, joint decision-making with their government. The argument, therefore, is that utilising such interactive platforms enables government to listen to the views of the citizens – the shareholders – and to respond accordingly, by incorporating the views of the citizens into government policies. By incorporating the citizens' views into policies would suggest that the board of directors (government) represents the interests of shareholders (the citizens) and not theirs, and this would harness transparency and accountability. Accordingly, new media channels have the potential to catalyse government communication, effectively enabling it to "provid[e] the public with timely, accessible and accurate information" (South Africa 1996:s 195.108: 107) [emphasis in the original].

7.2.9 Type of information the citizens prefer to receive via their preferred channels of communication

Governments, the world-over, are the largest ever producers of information which is essential to empower the citizens to improve their lives (Burke *et al* 2013). This is what is termed development communication – the dissemination or sharing of information with the people which they could use to empower themselves and improve their socio-economic well-being (Olorunda 2004; Thanuskodi 2015; Ramodibe 2014). This information ranges from education, social services, economy, finance, agriculture, to mention but a few. In this regard, democratic governments have a constitutional mandate to share such information with their citizens (South Africa 1996:s 195.108; CommGAP 2011; Sanders & Canel 2013; Burke *et al* 2013). However, the saying that too much of anything is not good, even for one's health, has proved to be true. For example, if a person over-indulges in alcohol consumption, they may end up being too intoxicated to even become conscious of their behaviour.

Even drinking large amounts of water at the same time – the simplest and essential liquid for human life – could be detrimental to one's health and even life, according to Callahan (2011). The consumption of large amounts of water is defined as water intoxication because those intoxicated by water share similar symptoms with those intoxicated by alcohol, such as disorientation and nausea. Similarly, given the enormity of the information at the disposal of governments, it was essential to establish the type of information the citizens were interested in receiving via their preferred social media platforms, to avoid information saturation or overload. When a person experiences information overload or info-clot, they are unable to cope which will lead to information not being processed; decisions not being taken; and the consequence thereof could be missed communication. Missed communication basically explains that no communication ever took place – that is, there was communication failure (Ware 2005). This will eventually defeat the purpose of advocating for the adoption of new media, in the form of the social media platforms, preferred by the citizens, in this regard. The

results of this study indicated that the majority of the citizens (78.0%) preferred to receive only government services-related information via *facebook*, SMS and Twitter (in that order of preference). Only 20% of the citizens preferred to receive a combination of information (government services; feedback on their enquiry/query/complaint; and progress on their application for services such as social grants) via social media. The combined minority (2%) of the citizens indicated that their preferred channels (social media) should be used only to provide feedback on their enquiry/query or complaint (1.2%); and to provide progress on their applications for services (0.8%). What could be deduced from the results of this study is that the citizens preferred that certain information, and not all, should be shared with them via their preferred social media platforms. The required information in this regard, relates to development information such as government services.

It could thus be argued that the citizens were therefore aware of the danger of infobesity or infoxication – that too much of anything is not healthy and thus unhelpful. They could be aware that when they experience info-clot, they will not be able to process information; decoding will not take place – no interaction will take place between the sender (government) and the receiver (the citizens themselves) – a prerequisite for *communigation* (effective communication). Based on this background, the researcher argues that not all government information can be disseminated via the new media channels of communication preferred by the citizens, such as *facebook*, SMS and Twitter.

7.2.10 Instant interactive communication with government

The emergence and constant usage of interactive platforms such as *facebook*, Twitter, chat platforms and many others, have improved interaction and consequently communication amongst people around the world (Griffiths 2004; Young 2007; United Nations 2008; CommGAP 2009; Lee 2011; Wang & Lim 2011; Sanders & Canel 2013; Baswony 2014; Mickoleit 2014; Du Preez 2015). As a result, the interactive and dialogue-enabling characteristics of social media

platforms – new media channels – could effectively close the communication gap between government and the citizens, ultimately leading to effective communication or *communigation* (Wukich & Mergel 2014). Figure 5.15 indicates that the majority of the citizens (78.1%) were interested in chatting (instant interactive communication) with government representatives regarding their concerns or enquiries. Their reasoning was that platforms such as SMS, *facebook* and Twitter are fashionable – they are the 'in thing' – as they provide them with up-to-the minute information and facilitate instantaneous feedback. Likewise, the majority of communicators (63%) have concurred with this assertion, stressing that the adoption of interactive communication channels will improve and strengthen government communication with citizens. This supports the results of a study by Wang and Lim (2011) that the citizens were interested in communicating with their governments through interactive channels owing to their instant feedback-producing feature. They describe interactive communication as citizen-to-government (C2G) communication.

In addition, Roy (2014: 51) argues that interactive communication platforms have created opportunities for "collaborative government … e-participation, empower[ment of the] citizens … and even reviv[ing] or demand[ing] democracy". This quotation above is significant in this case, as it asserts that new media channels entrench co-governance – collaboration between the board of directors (government) and the shareholders (citizens); facilitate development *communigation*; and further inculcate transparency and accountability which are the cornerstones of democracy. As a result, this would empower governments across the world to fulfil their constitutional mandate of development *communigation.*

On the downside, the high cost of data in South Africa could potentially hinder effective communication (Henderson 2016; Skade 2016). Consequently, the most likely to be affected would be poorer citizens, most of who reside in the rural areas of South Africa. The cost of data in South Africa is among the highest in Africa and the world – even worse with slow connection speed – as "infosumers"

are charged up to 134% more for data on average [emphasis in the original]. The costs rank the second highest among the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries, with Brazil in the number one spot. This supports the results of this study, as 30.9% of the respondents have indicated that they have limited money to purchase SMS and data bundles. Fortunately, the South African government is in agreement with the citizens in this case; hence the country's then president, Mr Jacob Zuma, has committed to ensure that the cost of data is reduced drastically to foster access to information by the citizens, particularly the youth (South Africa. South African Government 2017). It could thus be argued that the high cost of data in South Africa, could effectively hinder the government from fulfilling its constitutional mandate of being transparent and accountable to the citizens.

On the other hand, about 20% of the respondents/citizens indicated that they were not interested in chatting with government representatives, owing to their previous experiences, to the effect that government seldom responds to citizens' queries and concerns. Their decision is not surprising as old media channels, currently being utilised by the government are characterised by one-way communication. Nevertheless, Wang and Lim (2011) assert that not all democratic governments utilise interactive communication platforms because they avoid experiencing pressure from the public. They, however, have warned that this could lead to citizens' apathy and could potentially threaten the legitimacy of the political party in government.

As already explained, this is because democratic governments are supposed to be characterised by transparency and accountability which are the signs of good governance – propelled by a two-way communication process – which effectively leads to *communigation* (CommGAP 2011; Sanders & Canel 2013; Roy 2014). Closing the information gap would thus avoid information asymmetry which essentially explains the possession of information by one party (government) which is required by another (citizens) but not shared (Wilson 2008). The information asymmetry theory basically postulates that the imbalance of

information between the sender and the receiver – as a result of the sender not sharing the information – could hamper effective communication. Essentially, information asymmetry has the potential to cause unhappiness because the needy party, in the information continuum, would become aggrieved for not having access to the information which is at the disposal of the other party. It is even worse in the case of the citizens who are in fact, the sole shareholders in a 'company' known as government, as they would feel betrayed by their own appointed representatives or board of directors (the government). Any shareholder expects to be regularly updated on the performance of their investment – a vote cast by the citizens – and withholding such information from them could spell disaster for their representatives.

What could eventually happen is that the shareholder could choose to remove the board, for example, through a democratic election process in the case of government, and substitute it with another which would also not be immune to such an occurrence, in case they too falter. Finlay (2011) argues that it is essential to convey even bad news, as shareholders would at least be kept informed and would be prone to accept the action as still showing accountability, although undesirable. This will likely quell the anger of citizens or rather shareholders, who may take serious offence by revolting against the board of directors (government) for keeping them in the dark (uninformed). Consequently, the sporadic service delivery protests witnessed in communities across South Africa could be attributed to the communication vacuum unintentionally created by government (Ramodibe 2014).

Unfortunately, such incidents threaten the democratic order because democracy is all about the participation of the people in the running of their elected government; hence members of the Executive (cabinet) are referred to as public representatives (South Africa 1996:s 195.108). Likewise, as the term suggests, public representatives have been mandated by the citizens to represent their (public) interests and not the opposite – the opposite referring to the interests of the public representatives. Overall, one agrees with the assertion by Young

(2007) that interactive communication will entice the majority of South Africa's population – the youth – to follow government messaging as these would be transmitted through the channels they identify with – the channels that suit their current style or 'swag' – as they affectionately refer to them. The end result is that the communication gap between the board of directors (government) and the shareholders (citizens) would be drastically reduced. This will entrench democracy – indirect rule by the people (citizens) – as they have vested their power in their elected government to govern on their behalf. It could thus be argued that the advent of interactive channels has, essentially, removed government bureaucracy and has thus re-united the people with their self-alienated government.

7.2.11 Social media platforms' accessibility on government information technology network

As argued in 7.2.3 above, government communicators require tools of trade to enable them to perform their duties. These tools include access to government ICT infrastructure. However, access to the social media platforms on the ICT network of the South African government during working hours is strictly prohibited and blocked, as these platforms continued to be regarded as casual or informal (GCIS 2011; South Africa. SITA 2008). Despite this prohibition, it was surprising that the majority of government communicators (66.6%) indicated that they were permitted to access these platforms from the government information technology network, for the purpose of communicating with the citizens. The logical explanation could be that the communicators were accessing such platforms only after working hours.

Thirty-three (33) percent of government communicators had confirmed that accessing social media platforms on the government network was indeed blocked during working hours. In this case, this hampered timeous dissemination of information to the citizens, which is mandatory, in terms of South Africa's constitution. This further hampers the operations of newsrooms as

communication is an around-the-clock phenomenon – it does not have time boundaries. Journalists the world-over, for example, require information around the clock to meet their print and broadcast deadlines for their news stories (Bowman & Bing 1993). It was further interesting that most of the communicators (81.4%) mentioned SMS as the platform they mostly utilised when compared to *facebook* (55.5%), Twitter (18.5%), Instagram (14.8%) and YouTube (7.4%). The high usage of the Short Message Service (SMS) could thus explain why most of the communicators indicated that they were permitted to access social media platforms from the government information technology network. South Africa's Department of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) are good examples of such organisations, which continue to effectively utilise the Short Message Service to communicate with the citizens, to update them on their service requests.

However, despite the interactive and instant feedback capability of an SMS, it was surprising that some government communicators (7.4%) regarded this channel of communication as being inappropriate. Their view could be based on their experience to the effect that, SMSes were previously utilised in government as a one-way communication channel – from government to the citizens only. The communicators also indicated that the Internet/websites were not appropriate for communicating with the citizens. What could be inferred from these cases is that, despite some of the communication channels being capable of eliciting two-way communication, there has been a tendency of conveniently utilising them as one-way channels. This concurs with the assertion by Young (2007) that governments that preferred to utilise one-way communication channels avoid being confronted by their citizens, in cases of their failures. Unfortunately, avoiding confrontation equates to avoiding accountability which is against the principles of good governance.

7.2.12 Adoption of social media platforms as official government communication channels

Most governments have taken a "*laissez faire*" approach in utilising social media platforms to communicate with their citizens (Mickoleit 2014: 12). They have taken a back seat – because they are not in a rush, and this is better explained through the French phrase, *laissez faire*, which simply means to let things unfold by themselves in order to understand their influence, for the purpose of making an informed decision. This explains that governments were still experimenting the veracity of social media platforms – new media channels – before they could consider adopting them as official government communication channels. On the upside, some countries have already concluded their experimentations; hence social media platforms are an integral part of government communication strategies in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Colombia, Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States, amongst others (Mickoleit 2014: 12). To this end, the researcher refers to new media platforms as '*dialog-enablers*' – a term derived from the words 'dialogue' and 'enablers' – as they instantly connect and create a dialogue between the boards of directors (governments) and the shareholders (the citizens).

It was, therefore, not surprising that all government communicators concurred that social media platforms should be adopted as official government communication channels. The majority of them (56%) further argue that the government of South Africa should amend its communication policy to include social media as official government channels to communicate with the citizens. Their rationale was that the high diffusion of these platforms within South African communities was a confirmation that they were the citizens' preferred source of information, given their instantaneous information-sharing and feedback-inducing capability. Accordingly, the communicators assert that this will improve and strengthen government communication with the citizens, as social media platforms foster two-way communication which is significant for *communigation*. There is, however, still a belief that platforms such as social media, were meant

for informal communication (3.7%). The number of the proponents in this regard, was nonetheless insignificant. Evidently, unlike the old media, it could be argued that communication via new media channels, like social media, was not dependent on mass media, such as radio and newspapers, for the transmission of messages to take place. This independence effectively eliminates any possibility of interference, thereby rendering the transmitted messages objective. Objectivity occurs because there is no possibility of wrongful interpretation of the message through the disseminated information – usually propelled by gate-keeping – given that messages are transmitted in their original form, without the interference of news editors, for example (Cunningham 2010). Such interference is regarded to be subjective because it depends on how the editor views or analyses the message – whether the message is newsworthy or not. The editor also reserves the right to even shorten the message which could result in the information being misrepresented, ultimately leading to miscommunication.

7.3 Summary

This chapter has discussed and interpreted the results of this study, as presented in Chapter five. The results established that rural women between the age groups of 21-40 years required government information more than men, essentially indicating that the hunger for information was gender-based and mostly affecting the youth. Ownership of devices, like mobile phones, and access to tele-communications infrastructure, such as the Internet, by the citizens was as high as 82,1%, thus laying a foundation for communication via new media channels. Old media platforms, such as radio, television, newspapers, printed information material, as well as community meetings (face-to-face communication), were still preferred by the South African government as official communication channels with the citizens. Although the majority of the citizens indicated that these channels were suitable for their information needs, they however argued that most of them – with the exception of face-to-face communication – were not reciprocal and did not provide them with instant feedback. They preferred new media channels such as *facebook*, SMSes and Twitter to be their primary

channels of *communigation* or interaction with their government, arguing that they are the 'in thing' – as they provide them with up-to-the minute information and instantaneous feedback. Evidently, the citizens preferred a hybrid of old and new media channels with the latter being primary channels, though.

The next chapter – Chapter eight – presents a summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a discussion of the results of this study as presented in Chapter five. This chapter thus summarises pertinent outcomes and looks at the implications of the results of this study; make conclusions and recommendations on how to improve and strengthen government communication with the citizens of South Africa. To this end, this study was intended to establish the extent of the diffusion of new media within South African communities, with particular focus on the Province of Mpumalanga. In this regard, the following five (5) objectives were formulated; namely:

(a) To establish the extent of the new media usage by residents to motivate for its adoption as the primary source of information;

(b) To establish the type of new media platforms being utilised and preferred by the citizens/residents;

(c) To establish the type of information residents prefer to receive via their preferred new media platforms;

(d) To establish the rationale of the South African government's preference of the old media as its primary channel of information dissemination as opposed to the new media; and

(e) To conceptualise and propose a communication model that can be used to strengthen government communication in South Africa.

8.2 Summary of the results

The results are summarised as per the following headings, in line with the objectives of this study:

8.2.1. Demographic profile of respondents

The majority of citizen respondents were women who resided in the rural areas of the Province of Mpumalanga. The respondents were youthful as the majority of them were between the age groups of 21-40 years. Most of them were employed, and this implied that the employed citizens required information to improve their socio-economic well-being more than the unemployed. The majority of the citizen respondents were educated as their qualifications ranged from grade 12 up to post-graduate diplomas. Only five (5) percent of them had no schooling and none had bachelor degrees and beyond. With regard to government communicators, the respondents were heads of communication from the provincial government and both the local and district municipalities of the Province of Mpumalanga. The majority of them were employed in the local/municipal sphere of government. The majority of these communicators were occupying the middle or tactical level positions. Forty-four (44) percent of them had government communication work experience of between 5 and 10 years, 37 percent of between 1 and 5 years, and 19 percent of between 10 and 20 years. None of the government communicators had work experience of less one (1) year or more than 20 years.

8.2.2. Access to tele-communication devices/infrastructure by the citizens

The high ownership of tele-communication devices, such as mobile phones, and access to infrastructure like the Internet and e-mail services by the citizens, was a confirmation that the South African government had invested massively in ICT infrastructure which was intended to address the historical information divide,

especially in rural areas. Consequently, mobile connections in South Africa was over 85, 53 million, and this implies that some citizens own more than one cell-phone (World Wide Worx 2016). Internet connectivity and accessibility was also recorded to be nearly at 50%, with 26, 84 million South Africans being active users of the service (World Wide Worx 2016). Despite the high level of connectivity, information disparity between the rural and urban areas of the Province of Mpumalanga still existed. This was because the majority of the citizens who participated in the study were residing in the rural parts of the Province, and had to physically go to the Thusong Service Centres to seek government information.

8.2.3. Provision of tools of trade for government communicators to perform duties

Likewise, all government communicators were equipped with tools of trade like cell-phones, computers/laptops/tablets, and even had access to the Internet and e-mail services. Only 7% of them were provided with cameras. However, 4% of government communicators did not have access to the e-mail service, despite it being an essential tool of trade for communicators.

8.2.4. Channels utilised by government to communicate with the citizens

The South African government utilises a hybrid of old and new media channels to communicate with the citizens. The most utilised old media channel was the radio platform, followed by television, community meetings/face-to-face communication, newspapers and printed information material (brochures, pamphlets, government newsletters) whereas the utilised new media channels were social media, the Internet/websites and SMSes. The top three (3) channels utilised by government were old media platforms. Although both the old and new channels of communication were being utilised by the South African government, it was established that government communicators were utilising these channels unofficially as they were not formally adopted as official government

communication channels. In essence, the radio platform continued to be the most preferred source of communication by the South African government. This platform, however, has a twofold characteristic, as it can be used as a one-way channel – just to disseminate information – or as a two-way channel by facilitating live interactions with the citizens. Essentially, the radio platform could easily transform from being one-way to two-way communication channel essential for effective communication.

8.2.5. Decision on the utilisation of communication channels/platforms

The decision on which channels of communication to utilise to communicate with the citizens rested with the majority of government communicators. However, some institutional administrative heads, supervisors/immediate managers and political heads still had such decision-making power. Arguably, given their expertise, government communicators should be left to decide which channels are appropriate to realise effective communication with the citizens.

8.2.6. Communication channels/platforms preferred by the citizens

The majority of the citizens preferred both the old and new media channels. These channels were the radio platform, television, newspapers, community meetings/face-to-face communication, social media, Internet/websites, SMS and printed information material. Arguably, the citizens continued to prefer old media channels like radio platform because it speaks their language – it communicates in the citizens' indigenous languages – and this made the process of decoding messages easier. Conversely, the citizens also preferred new media channels like social media because they are interactive and elicit instant feedback.

8.2.7. The appropriateness of the channels utilised by government to communicate with the citizens

Despite the radio platform being perceived as the most suitable channel of communication by government, the majority of the citizens mentioned community meetings or face-to-face communication as being suitable to them. They argued that it is the most intimate form of communication, as it made them feel closer and important to their government. This two-way old media channel of communication continues to be unmediated, interactive and elicits instant feedback. However, this channel of communication is arguably too expensive and time-consuming to implement; hence it should be coupled with other communication channels. As shareholders, the citizens must be afforded an opportunity to suggest the channels suitable for their information needs. Accordingly, the citizens have indicated that social media platforms, the Internet and SMSes were also appropriate as their sources of information and interaction.

8.2.8. New media platforms preferred by citizens

Despite still preferring communication via old media channels, the majority of the citizens also preferred to interact with government via new media channels such as social media and the Short Message Service (SMS). The preferred social media platforms included *facebook* and Twitter. The majority of the citizens, who were mainly the youth, strongly agreed that these channels were convenient for their regular information needs and interactive communication.

8.2.9. Type of information the citizens prefer to receive via their preferred channels of communication

This study has established that it was not feasible for all government information to be received via the citizens' preferred new media channels, due to the enormity and even the complexity of some of the information at the disposal of government. The majority of the citizens (78.0%) preferred to receive only government

services-related information via new media channels, such as *facebook*, SMS and Twitter – in that order of preference. Twenty (20) percent preferred to receive a combination of information, that is, government services, feedback on their enquiry/query/complaint and progress on their application for services such as social grants.

8.2.10. Instant interactive communication with government

The majority of the citizens (78.1%) were interested in chatting – instant interactive communication – with government representatives regarding their concerns or enquiries, at any given time. Likewise, the majority of government communicators (63%) argued that the adoption of interactive communication channels will improve and strengthen government communication with the citizens. This concurs with the assertion by Roy (2014: 51) that interactive communication platforms create "collaborative government … e-participation, empower citizens … and even revive … democracy". Personal experiences of some 20% of the citizens, however, made them uninterested – they argued that government seldom responds to their queries and concerns.

8.2.11. Social media platforms' accessibility on government information technology network

Even though the majority of government communicators were authorised to access social media platforms on the South African government information technology network – to communicate with the citizens – only 66.6% of them had such permission. Such permission was however only applicable outside working hours. This was despite the information technology network being the backbone or life-blood of communication in any institution. It is one of the critical tools of trade for government communicators to enable them to perform their duties.

8.2.12. Adoption of social media platforms as official government communication channels

The extent of the diffusion of social media interaction is very high in South Africa – with approximately 40 million or 77% registered and daily users in the country – out of a population of 51, 770, 560. The results of this study have established that the majority of the citizens were interested in receiving particular information at the disposal of government, and even interacting with it, via new media channels such as social media. Accordingly, the majority of government communicators argued that social media platforms should be adopted by the South African government as official communication channels. However, about 4% of respondents argued that social media platforms were informal or casual communication channels.

8.3 Conclusion

Overall, this study has established that people residing in the rural areas of the Province of Mpumalanga do not receive adequate government information, possibly due to the utilisation of mainly one-way communication channels. Detailed conclusions in this regard are provided below:

8.3.1 Demographic profile of respondents

As it has been established that women required government information more than men, it could be concluded that there was information disparity between the two genders. This concurs with the assertion that “women, irrespective of location, need information on family health, food and nutrition, family planning and child education” (Thanuskodi 2015: 135). Evidently, women are “the bedrock of any society”; hence they require information for the socio-economic growth and well-being of their families and communities in general (Olorunda 2004: 2). Given that these women were from the rural areas, it could be concluded that there was unequal distribution of information between the urban and rural communities. This

concurs with the assertion that access to information by rural inhabitants was limited; hence they were found in their majority at the TSCs (Hafkin & Odame 2002; Ngenge 2003; Olorunda 2004; Harande 2009; Mbatha 2011). The majority of these women were between the age groups of 21-40 years, and it could be concluded that government messages were not reaching the youth due to the utilisation of old media channels. The assertion concurs with the results of this study which established that about 63% of the youth preferred new media channels, such as *facebook* and Twitter, because they assert that it was the 'in thing' which provided them with up-to-the minute information and instantaneous feedback. Statistics have shown that by the end of 2016, almost 40 million people in South Africa were registered users, and 96% of them – majority being the youth – were daily users of social media platforms (Ramodibe 2014; World Wide Worx 2016).

Most of the respondents were employed and educated, thus it could be concluded that they had financial means to travel to the TSCs to seek, and were aware of the existence of life-changing government information. This implies the unemployed and uneducated were worse off – they needed the information as well but their financial position and educational status was not allowing them. Conclusively, the citizens were hungry for development communication – dissemination of information to the people to enable them to use it to improve their lives – and this clearly indicated that there was inadequate communication with the citizens. This could be attributed to the obsolete old media channels utilised by the South African government.

8.3.2 Access to tele-communication devices/infrastructure by the citizens

Given that the majority of the citizens from both rural and urban were owning tele-communication devices, and had access to tele-communication infrastructure, there was no doubt therefore, that the requisite infrastructure to strengthen government communication was available. Mobile connections in South Africa

were recorded at over 85, 53 million in 2016 – implying that some citizens owned more than one cell-phone – and nearly 50% of the population were connected, whereas 26, 84 million of them were active users of the Internet (World Wide Worx 2016). This confirms that the South African government had invested massively in ICT infrastructure which was intended to address the historical information divide, especially in rural areas (Montealegre 1999; Thione 2003; Mutula & Mostert 2008; Mbatha 2011). If the available infrastructure is not utilised, the information divide or gap between the rural and urban areas would continue to exist, and the rural inhabitants would continue to experience information deficiency, in case they are unable to take a trip to their local TSC. Furthermore, as technology evolves rapidly, the derelict infrastructure would end up being obsolete, and resulting in wasteful and fruitless expenditure.

When this happens, it would not sit well with the shareholders – the citizens – who expect public finances – their own money – to be used prudently and fruitfully, as mandated by the Public Finance Management Act 29 of 1999. By not providing the citizens with "timely" information due to the reluctance to officially communicate via instantaneous and interactive new media channels – enabled by the available massive ICT and tele-communication infrastructure – would make the shareholders suspicious and angry.

8.3.3 Provision of tools of trade for government communicators to perform duties

The tools of trade were provided to government communicators, even though not all of them. Evidently, services like the Internet and e-mail are critical tools of trade for government communicators and should be duly made available to all of them. Information is also one such tool of trade, which a communicator is predominantly employed to share with stakeholders, such as the citizens. This will enable the democratic government of South Africa to fulfil its constitutional mandate of "providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information" (South Africa 1996:s 195.108: 107). The provision of regular – timely – and

accurate information is a sign of good governance; it deepens democracy and would thus render the South African government transparent and accountable to the shareholders – the citizens. Without information, government communicators would be incapacitated to perform their duties.

8.3.4 Channels utilised by government to communicate with the citizens

Although the South African government appeared to be moving towards utilising a hybrid of old and new media channels to communicate with the citizens, there was evidence that it still preferred the old media – one-way channels of communication – as its primary source of communication. The continued predominant reliance on old media channels incapacitates instantaneous interaction with the citizens, which is fundamental in attaining effective communication. Evidently, notwithstanding the utilisation of face-to-face medium of communication, – unmediated communication channel – other old media channels like radio, television and printed information material continue to elicit one-way communication. Even though the citizens had confirmed having previously received government information via the mentioned old media channels, it cannot be concluded that they were able to successfully decode the transmitted message.

Essentially, the successful transmission of the information does not translate to the information being mutually understood by both the sender and the receiver. The radio platform, however, has the potential to elicit two-way communication, if it is utilised as an interactive platform by adopting the talk-back or phone-in format, for example. Government-citizen dialogue is highly likely to lead to social stability, and further entrench democracy. The citizens may feel being closer to their government – the board of directors they have appointed to protect their interests – due to its transparency and accountability; and be convinced that their representatives actually care about their socio-economic well-being. Equally, this will reclaim the integrity of the government, as the citizens will regain their trust in it. They are highly likely to believe possible future explanations, in cases of slow

delivery of services. Accordingly, once integrity, honesty and believability are restored, there would be no need for persuasion.

8.3.5 Decision on the utilisation of communication channels/platforms

Government communicators – as communication practitioners – are capable of making decisions on which communication channels are appropriate to yield effective communication with the citizens. The presumption is that they are hired because of their expertise in the area of work, given that part of their daily responsibilities is to provide advice on communication-related matters. This study had established that the majority of government communicators had the authority to decide on the channels to be utilised to communicate with the citizens. The utilisation of new media channels such as social media platforms – albeit utilised without approval – by government communicators, has proved to yield effective communication and were preferred by the citizens. Clearly, the choice of channels to be utilised to communicate with the citizens should be fully entrusted on all government communicators, given their expertise in the field and as custodians of the communication function.

8.3.6 Communication channels/platforms preferred by the citizens

Although the majority of the citizens in this study had initially indicated they preferred old media channels of communication utilised by government, effective communication could, however, not be ascertained. This is because if these channels were really effective, the majority of the citizens would not have elected to augment them with new media ones. The preference of a hybrid of both old and new media channels by the citizens was thus a confirmation that there was lack of effective communication between the South African government, as the board of directors, and the citizens, as sole shareholders. It could thus be concluded that the reason why the citizens had elected to augment the old with new media channels was due to their instantaneity and interactivity. They undoubtedly facilitate two-way communication, and have the potential to close

the information gap between the people and their government. Thus, new media channels can effectively transform the communication and information system of the South African government from being characterised as the 'government-to-citizens' (one-way communication) to 'government-and-citizens' (two-way communication). Two-way communication clearly connects the citizens with their elected government; creates a bond between the two parties; and this eventually harness transparency and accountability – the tenets of good governance. Clearly, the one-way communication character of some old media communication channels has handicapped the South African government from responding instantaneously to the concerns of the citizens. As sole shareholders, the citizens did not want to be just mere consumers of information (decisions), but wanted to play a meaningful role in the process of making decisions affecting their socio-economic well-being.

However, not all old media channels have become obsolete. Despite being too expensive and time-consuming to utilise at all times, community meetings or face-to-face communication continues to be evergreen or timeless. Conclusively, this two-way channel of communication could be described as hybrid media – it is neither old nor new – consequently classified as evergreen media. Evidently, South Africans preferred both old and new media channels, albeit with the new media now being preferred as the primary source of information.

8.3.7 The appropriateness of the channels utilised by government to communicate with the citizens

Certainly, appropriate communication channels are fundamental in realising effective communication. However, for something to be deemed suitable, it must be capable of producing the desired outcome. In this regard, there is adequate evidence to suggest that South Africans had an appetite for new media channels, such as social media platforms. As sole shareholders in government, the citizens of South Africa should decide which channels of communication they deem suitable or appropriate to satisfy their information needs. As the board of

directors, government does not represent its own interests but those of the citizens; hence it should accede to and utilise the communication channels deemed suitable by their 'masters' – the citizens – who are the actual owners of the company, 'government incorporate'. Furthermore, despite being the owners, the citizens are also the customers of government, and this makes the notion that 'the customer is always right' applicable to this scenario. As customers, the citizens purchase information from government through their shareholding, and must thus feel that their views are being taken into consideration all the time. The survival of any business entity solely depends on the patronage of satisfied customers. In this regard, the citizens have indicated that they preferred a hybrid of both old and new media channels, and this arguably signals some sort of deficiency which they have established in the channels currently utilised by their government. It could thus be concluded that old media channels – with the exception of face-to-face communication – currently being utilised as official communication channels by the South African government, were not on their own appropriate to elicit effective communication.

8.3.8 New media channels preferred by the citizens

There is adequate evidence that game changers, like new media channels, are usually adopted by those experimenting them; hence *facebook*, Twitter and the Short Message Service (SMS) has diffused within South African communities. Given that the majority of the citizens in this study had indicated they also preferred communication via new media channels like *facebook*, Twitter and the SMS, it could be concluded that these channels were communication game changers. Without any doubt, this has confirmed the assertions by Coopers and Lybrand (1996, 1997) and Livingstone (2002) that these platforms have now become intrinsic to the daily lives of South Africans, and were now interwoven to their culture. Most South Africans were now addicted to interactive communication channels, as they have become active daily users of *facebook*, Twitter and other chat platforms. Like other people across the world, the first thing the majority of South Africans check when they open their eyes – to satisfy their

overnight information hunger – were social media platforms. These new media channels have thus convincingly revolutionised the communication process and satisfied the citizens' information needs. Given their high diffusion within South African communities, new media channels have now become the preferred primary sources of information for the citizens. As sole shareholders and customers (who are always right), the citizens should accordingly be given what they preferred, as the information is destined to them. Opting to only utilise old media channels may result in misdirected communication which could likely result in communication failure.

8.3.9 Type of information the citizens prefer to receive via their preferred channels of communication

It is clearly not feasible for all information at the disposal of government, to be shared with the citizens via new media channels. This is due to the enormity of the information, some of which is too complicated to be communicated through such channels. Like alcohol, too much information can infoxicate – information intoxication – a person and results in information saturation or overload which could potentially lead to a health condition known as information stress disorder or information fatigue syndrome (Chamorro-Premuzic 2014; Speier *et al* 1999; Flizikowski *et al* 2014). Information fatigue syndrome has the ability to incapacitate the recipients from successfully decoding the message as intended. Social media platforms can therefore be utilised for development communication by providing limited information on government services; feedback on the citizens' enquiries/queries or complaints; and progress on applications for services such as social grants. This is in line with the preference of the majority of the citizens who participated in this study. Thus, notwithstanding their obsolescence, old media channels could still be utilised to disseminate complicated information, albeit losing their primary status to new media channels.

8.3.10 Instant interactive communication with government

There is adequate evidence that instant interactive communication or chatting – as it is commonly known – can undoubtedly yield two-way communigation. In this regard, new media channels are capable of assisting the South African government to "provid[e] the public with timely, accessible and accurate information" (South Africa 1996:s 195.108: 107). The instantaneity and interactivity of these channels guarantee the provision of timely and accessible information, as mandated by the South African constitution. This study indicated that the majority of the citizens had expressed an interest in chatting with government representatives (at any given time) to receive instant and up-to-the-minute feedback regarding their concerns or enquiries on government services. Conclusively, interactive new media communication channels are inherently capable of fostering collaborative governance between the shareholders (citizens) and the board of directors (government). This would assist the GCIS in fulfilling its founding mandate of ensuring that "a two-way system is set up to facilitate dialogue between government and the … public" (Horwitz 2004: 320).

Communicating through instantaneous interactive channels would strengthen democracy, as the South African government would be viewed as being transparent and accountable to the shareholders (citizens). Being transparent and accountable is likely to make the citizens amenable to accept explanations provided, in cases of slow delivery of government services. Furthermore, the utilisation of interactive communication platforms could remove government bureaucracy when communicating with the citizens. This would effectively close the communication gap between the government and the citizens, which if not addressed, may lead to information asymmetry – the possession of information by one party (government) which is not shared with the needy party (citizens) – and this could be attributed to service delivery protests experienced across South Africa (Wilson 2008).

8.3.11 Social media platforms' accessibility on government information technology network

Accessing social media platforms on the South African government's information technology network during working hours, for official government communication business, remains a challenge for communicators as this is strictly prohibited. This could be because these platforms were still considered to be casual or informal communication channels. Time restriction thus hinders regular information flow as the government is unable to fulfil the "timely" and "accessible" non-negotiables stipulated on its constitutional mandate of providing the citizens with information. This constitutional mandate emphasises that information should be made available around-the-clock to the citizens and without failure. As the board of directors accountable to the citizens, government should thus be readily available at all times, to interact and account to the shareholders. Arguably, time restriction or confinement is a quarantine of some sort, given that anything under quarantine is suspicious and not to be trusted. It could be concluded that social media platforms were being quarantined because of the perception that they may 'contaminate' government's current communication and information system which is presumed to be effective. For government communication to be always timely and accessible, time restriction to access social media platforms on the government network should be completely removed.

8.3.12 Adoption of social media platforms as official government communication channels

Countries like the U.K and the U.S are ranked amongst the top 30 countries in the world, in terms of shareholder engagement and participation in government policy formulation (CommGAP 2009; Sanders & Canel 2013). This is because they have adopted interactive and instantaneous social media platforms in communicating with citizens, making their communication strategy the "engage and connect" system (Mickoleit 2014: 12). Clearly, these countries subscribe to the notion that the government communication system should be premised on

instant interactive engagement with the citizens. By not adopting such a strategy has resulted in South Africa's communication strategy being ranked low in the top 100, alongside countries like Poland, Chile, India, Mexico and China. In this regard, there is enough evidence to motivate for the adoption of social media platforms as official government communication channels. This emanates from their advantages which have been confirmed by the majority of the citizens and government communicators. Accordingly, based on the associated benefits, the South African government, including the provincial government of Mpumalanga, should thus consider adopting social media platforms as official government communication channels.

8.4 Recommendations

The results of this study have generated a lot of insight which has been used to make a range of recommendations, as stated below, on how government communication in South Africa could be improved by way of entrenching constant and instant interaction between the government and the citizens:

8.4.1 Adoption of the *Communigation* Model

This study proposes the new communication model, dubbed – the *Communigation* Model – which recommends a hybrid of channels from both the old and new media, albeit promoting the proposed new media channels to be the primary channels. The proposed model will effectively migrate the communication and information system of the South African government from rendering monologic communication – government-to-citizens communication to dialogic communication – government-and-citizens *communigation*. Dialogic communication is interactive and fosters mutual understanding between the two involved parties. Accordingly, government-and-citizens *communigation* entrenches democracy as the citizens would perceive their representatives – the government – as being transparent, accountable and co-governing with them. It

is thus recommended that the *Communigation* Model (depicted in Figure 6.1 in chapter six) be adopted by the South African government.

8.4.2 Amendment of the communication policy of the South African government

The communication policy of the South African government should be amended to incorporate new media channels, like social media and Short Message Service (SMS), to be part of the official communication channels. This will effectively remove access-time restrictions, for government communicators to access all new media channels on the government ICT network at all times. As a result, social media platforms will eventually become an integral part of the official communication channels of the South African government. These interactive or dialogic communication channels will accordingly migrate from being perceived as casual or informal, to being formal or official platforms.

8.4.3 Removing time-access restriction for government communicators to access social media platforms on the government ICT network at all times

Information does not sleep or take a break – it is an around-the-clock phenomenon and does not even have time boundaries; it rules the world – it empowers people the world-over to better their lives; and further creates a wealth of knowledge. For information to be shared, it requires ICT network which is a fundamental tool of trade for government communicators. Like an engine is to a vehicle, ICT is likewise the heartbeat of tele-communication – without which no communication will take place. Accordingly, the citizens require information to interact with their government at all times, especially because most government offices do not operate around the clock. The time restriction imposed on government communicators by the South African government to access social media platforms on its ICT network only after working hours should thus be removed. Removing time restriction will undoubtedly increase access to

information by the citizens of South Africa, thereby realising the government's constitutional mandate of "providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information".

8.4.4 Elevation of communication to be a strategic management function at all government spheres

As a norm worldwide, communication should be recognised as a strategic management function at all spheres of government in South Africa, as this will accordingly resolve the challenge of the relatively low status of heads of government communication, especially at the municipal level. This was one of the 83 critical recommendations, made 21 years ago in the ComTask Report by the task group on government communication which was mandated to investigate the efficiency of the then government communication service. It had recommended – recommendation 57 – that "the rank of [all] the heads of communications [at all spheres of government] sh[ould] be of a sufficiently senior status to reflect the key nature of the communications function" (Communications 2000 1996: 79). The elevation of heads of communication at all spheres of government will capacitate them to be privy to decisions made at strategic management level, concerning the lives of the citizens – effectively enabling them to communicate such decisions.

8.4.5 Appropriate and adequate resourcing of the communication function in government

Government communication activities should be provided appropriate and adequate non-financial and financial resources "to reflect the key [or strategic] nature of the communications function", as was recommended (recommendation 54 to 57) by the task group on government communications (Communications 2000 1996: 79). This emphasises that only people with relevant skills in communication should be appointed to communication posts; that all the requisite tools of trade should be provided to government communicators; and that the

communication function should be treated like other strategic functions in government, when it comes to funding. The tendency of 'dumping' – for lack of a better word – redundant and unwanted officials from non-communication to the communication function of government should cease. There should further be a recognition that government communication was never intended to promote individuals – for political personal-gain – but to engage with the shareholders (the citizens) regarding progress on policy implementation by their elected government, which is essentially representing the interests of the citizens. Obviously, when the government of the day delivers to the satisfaction of the shareholders – the citizens – it will be for the sole benefit of the political party in government, and not for individual politicians.

8.4.6 Integrate the communication function into performance agreements of administrative principals

The public administration in South Africa is constitutionally mandated to "provid[e] the public with timely, accessible and accurate information" (South Africa 1996:s 195.108: 107) [emphasis in the original]. For this to happen, communication should be recognised as a strategic management function in all spheres of government in South Africa. Evidently, this recognition should be instilled through the integration of the communication function, to be one of the key result areas in the performance agreements of all administrative principals in government. This would result in the provision of adequate and appropriate tools of trade, including financial and human resources, to fund government communication activities. Strict punitive measures should accordingly be sanctioned, without fail, against all the administrative principals who fail to carry-out this strategic function – communication – in terms of the performance agreements entered into.

8.4.7 Intervene in reducing the high cost of mobile data in South Africa

Although the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) had, in 2013, developed a programme to address the concerns regarding the cost

to communicate – after a benchmarking study concluded that the cost of communication in South Africa was comparatively high – the government was yet to regulate the cost of mobile data. ICASA is mandated to regulate South Africa's telecommunications industry by ensuring that all citizens receive associated high-quality services at reasonable and affordable prices, amongst others. It would thus not assist for the South African government to merely adopt social media platforms, as official channels of communicating with the citizens, if the reportedly high cost of mobile data in the country was not addressed. The government should therefore utilise its communications regulatory muscle – through ICASA – to intervene in regulating and decreasing the cost of data to acceptable international levels. South Africans were charged up to 134% more for data on average, making the cost in the country, the second highest among the BRICS countries, and the highest in Africa.

8.5 Recommendations for further research

Even though this study has conceptualised the Communigation model to strengthen the communication and information system of the South African government, there are some related communication areas recommended for further research, as discussed briefly below:

8.5.1 Correlation between poor communication and community service delivery protests in South Africa

There is an assertion that well-informed stakeholders are likely to share and adopt the vision of their organisation as their own (Hopkins 2006; Putnam & Nicotera 2010; Cooren *et al* 2011; Smith & Mounter 2008; Gall 2009; Verghese 2012). It could be insightful to establish whether the sporadic service delivery protests experienced across South Africa could be linked to poor communication. The results of such a study could assist the South African government to establish the extent of the significance of regularly updating the citizens.

8.5.2 The impact of constant communication on the citizens: Is it likely to sustain their patience?

A study on the impact of constant communication on the citizens would provide insight on whether the citizens were likely to accept explanations and reasons for the slow delivery of services by government – whether it will invoke tolerance and the spirit of a second chance from the citizens. The resulting findings would confirm whether or not, informed citizens would have tolerance, as they would be privy to circumstances causing service delivery delays. This would assist to confirm or reject assertions that well-informed stakeholders were likely to share and adopt the vision of their organisations as their own.

8.5.3 Digital versus printed information material: are the citizens still interested in reading paper-based government publications?

The government of South Africa continues to spend millions of rands in printing paper-based information material such as newsletters, brochures and pamphlets, for distribution to the citizens. However, this traditional or old media channel of communication has never been examined to check its efficiency – whether the citizens actually do read such material or not. This is because such material is usually discarded at alarming numbers within seconds of receipt, as previously evidenced by the researcher – who at the time of this study, was a government communicator for 17 years – during government information exhibitions. The material in question is usually strewn all over the ground, resulting in littering and wasteful expenditure. The funds used in this regard, could be effectively utilised to rather subsidise high data costs.

8.5.4 Government communication and the unorthodox social media language

The advent of social media platforms, such as *facebook* and Twitter, has given birth to a new language which does not follow grammatical norms. This

unorthodox language evolves daily, and it has become difficult to cope with its pace of diffusion. Individuals come up with new shortened words daily, which are adopted within seconds of them being utilised. Accordingly, the intended meaning of each new word is unique to the sender; hence it may not be mutually understood with the first communication attempt. It would thus be interesting to establish whether the unorthodox social media language will be effective in government communication cycles, given the formal nature of government communication.

8.6 Limitations of the study

Although this study was founded on the *Diffusion of Innovations* theory, it did not fully utilise the theory's existing scales. It is recommended that future research on government communication should thus fully utilise and test such scales.

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ANNEXURE A:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CITIZENS/RESIDENTS OF THE PROVINCE OF MPUMALANGA

Dear Respondent

My name is **Mohau A. Ramodibe**, a PHD candidate registered with the University of South Africa in the Department of Communication Science. I am carrying out a study on the success of the South African Government's Communication and Information System in disseminating information to citizens.

The purpose of the study is to build a case and conceptualise a communication model that can be used to strengthen government communication with citizens in the Republic of South Africa. The focus areas of the study will be the Province of Mpumalanga.

It is presumed that the outcome of the study will be beneficial to the three spheres of the government of South Africa, as it will propose improvements to the current government communication machinery which will in turn strengthen communication with the citizens. The study is further conducted to increase literature, knowledge and encourage discourse in the field of communication, as part of the requirement to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Literature and Philosophy in Communication.

Your participation is therefore highly appreciated.

Most questions require you to tick your preferred answers from the ones provided whereas a few will require motivations, explanations or details. No names should be provided. You are assured of your rights, including right of consent, protection from disclosure of information and respect for your privacy. Anonymity and confidentiality are promised and maintained.

Thank you.

Mohau Ramodibe

P.O Box 1328 | Nelspruit | 1200

Mobile: 082 771 9950 | Tel. 013 766 4148 | Fax. 013 766 9422

E-mail: mohauram@mpg.gov.za | mohau.ram@gmail.com

SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Please indicate your gender:

Male……..…….....
(1) ☐

Female…….…….....
(2)

2. Please indicate your age group:

Under 20 years old…….....
(1) ☐

Between 21 and 30 years old…….....
(2) ☐

Between 31 and 40 years old…….....
(3) ☐

Between 41 and 50 years old…….....
(4)

Between 51 and 60 years old…….....
(5)

Above 60 years old…….....
(6)

3. Which of the three (3) below best describes the area you reside in?

Urban area…….....
(1) ☐

Semi-urban (e.g township)…….....….....
(2) ☐

Rural area..... .....
. (3)

4. Are you employed?

☐

☐

Yes…….....

(1)

No…….....

(2)

5. Please indicate your highest level of education/qualification:

No schooling…….....☐

(1) ☐

Matric/Grade 12…….....

(2) ☐

Certificate/Short Courses...……..... ...

(3)

Diploma/National Diploma...……..... ...

(4) ☐

Post-Graduate Diploma.....……..... ☐

(5) ☐

Bachelor's Degree ……..... ☐

(6)

Master's Degree.....……..... .....

(7)

Doctoral Degree ……..……..... .....

(8)

SECTION B: ACCESS AND USAGE OF NEW MEDIA PLATFORMS

6. Which type of telecommunication devices or infrastructure do you own or have access to?

Cellphone…….....
(1) ☐

Internet…….....
(2) ☐

E-mail…….....
(3) ☐

Other, please specify..... ...
(4)

7. Which of the following channels do you normally receive government messages or information from?

(NB: You may tick more than one answer, if applicable to you)

Radio	
Television	
Newspaper	
Printed information material (e.g. brochures, pamphlets, government newsletters)	
Internet/Websites	
Social media (e.g. *facebook*, Twitter)	
Community meetings/Face-to-face	
SMS	
Other, please specify:	

8. Are the channels you have selected in question 7 above suitable to you?

Not sure	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

9. Please select one or more of the reasons which supports your answer above:

I do not own nor have access to any channels of communication	
They are in most cases not easy to understand	
They are communicated mainly in English which I do not understand well	
Current communication channels are not providing me with instant feedback	
New media platforms such as SMS, *facebook* and Twitter are the 'in thing' and provides me with up-to-the minute information and capable of providing instant feedback	
Community meetings/face-to-face communication makes me feel closer to our government	

SECTION C: PREFERRED NEW MEDIA PLATFORMS FOR COMMUNICATION

10. Which of the following channels do you prefer to receive government messages or information from?

(NB: You may tick more than one answer, if applicable to you)

(a) Radio	
(b) Television	
(c) Newspaper	
(d) Printed information material (e.g. brochures, pamphlets, government newsletters)	
(e) Internet/Websites	
(f) Social media (e.g. *facebook,* Twitter)	
(g) Community meetings/Face-to-face	
(h) SMS	
(i) Other, please specify:	

11. Please select one or more of the reasons which supports your answer above:

I am not interested	
I think it will not improve my life or well-being	
I would not waste my time and energy because government seldom responds back	
I do not own nor have access to any channels of communication	
I currently receive government information and messages via new media platforms such as SMS, *facebook* and Twitter	

12. Do you consider the following new media platforms convenient, interactive and affording you an opportunity for immediate feedback?

	Not sure	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
SMS					
facebook					
Twitter					

SECTION D: PREFERRED TYPE OF INFORMATION

13. Please indicate the type of information you would prefer to receive via your preferred channel as indicated in question 10 above (in order of importance)?

(a)	All government services	
(b)	Feedback to your enquiry/query/complaint	
(c)	Progress on your application for services (such as for social grants)	

(d) All of the above	
(e) None of the above	
(f) Other: Please specify:	

14. Would you be interested in chatting to a government representative about your concern or enquiry as and when you are in need?

Not sure	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

15. Please select one or more of the reasons which supports your answer above:

I am not interested	
I would not waste my time and energy because government seldom responds back	
I have limited money for SMSes or data bundles	
Chatting is interactive because it provides instant feedback	

#END#

ANNEXURE B:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATORS

Dear Respondent

My name is **Mohau A. Ramodibe**, a PHD candidate registered with the University of South Africa in the Department of Communication Science. I am carrying out a study on the success of the South African Government's Communication and Information System in disseminating information to citizens.

The purpose of the study is to build a case and conceptualise a communication model that can be used to strengthen government communication with citizens in the Republic of South Africa. The focus areas of the study will be the Province of Mpumalanga.

It is presumed that the outcome of the study will be beneficial to the three spheres of the government of South Africa, as it will propose improvements to the current government communication machinery which will in turn strengthen communication with the citizens. The study is further conducted to increase literature, knowledge and encourage discourse in the field of communication, as part of the requirement to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Literature and Philosophy in Communication.

Your participation is therefore highly appreciated.

Most questions require you to tick your preferred answers from the ones provided whereas a few will require motivations, explanations or details. No names should be provided. You are assured of your rights, including right of consent, protection from disclosure of information and respect for your privacy. Anonymity and confidentiality are promised and maintained.

Thank you.

Mohau Ramodibe

P.O Box 1328 | Nelspruit | 1200

Mobile: 082 771 9950 | Tel. 013 766 4148 | Fax. 013 766 9422

E-mail: mohauram@mpg.gov.za | mohau.ram@gmail.com

SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Please indicate the sphere of government you are employed in.

Provincial…………………………………..……..
(1)

Local/municipal………………………………………………….................
(2)

Other: Please specify...
(3)

2. Please indicate your level of management/responsibility:

Top/strategic management ……………………………………………..............…..
(1)

Middle/tactical Management ……………………………..................................…
(2)

Lower/operational Management …………………...…
(3)

None of the above ………………...
... (4)

3. Please indicate the number of years you have been occupying the level of management/responsibility indicated above.

More than 20 years…………………………………………………......................
(1)

Between 11 and 20 years…………………………...
(2)

Between 6 and 10 years……………………………………………….................
(3)

Between 1 and 5 years…………………………......................................
(4)

Less than 1 year……..... ☐
(5)

SECTION B: ACCESS AND USAGE OF NEW MEDIA PLATFORMS

4. Which of the following communication tools of trade have been provided to you or have access to?

(NB: You may tick more than one answer, if applicable to you)

Cellphone……..... ☐
(1) ☐

Computer/Laptop/Tablet..... ☐
(2)

Internet……..... ☐
(3)

E-mail……..... ☐
(4)

Other, please specify……..... (5)

5. Who decides what channels/platforms of communication to use?

Yourself…………………………………………………………………………........................... (1)

Your supervisor/immediate manager.. (2)

Institutional Administrative head……………………………………………………. (3)

Political head……………………………………………………………………............... (4)

Other, please specify………………………... (5)

6. Which of the following channels do you normally utilise to disseminate government messages or information to the citizens/residents?

(NB: You may tick more than one answer, if applicable to you)

Radio	
Television	
Newspaper	
Printed information material (e.g. brochures, pamphlets, government newsletters)	
Internet/Websites	
Social media (e.g. *facebook,* Twitter)	
Community meetings/Face-to-face	
SMS	
Other, please specify:	

7. Do you think the channels you are utilising, as indicated in the above question, are appropriate given the advancement in communication technology?

	Not sure	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Radio					
Television					
Newspaper					

Printed information material (e.g. brochures, pamphlets, government newsletters)					
Internet/Websites					
Social media (e.g. *facebook,* Twitter)					
Community meetings/Face-to-face					
SMS					

8. Please select one or more of the reasons which supports your answer above:

Old media such as printed information material provides one-way communication hence they are outdated and barely read by citizens	
Government should amend its communication policy to include the use of social media for official communication with citizens	
New media such as social media platforms enable instant communication and feedback with the citizens	
I believe this will improve and strengthen government communication with citizens	

SECTION C: OLD VERSUS NEW MEDIA

9. Government permits you to access social media platforms on its IT network to communicate with citizens/residents.

Not sure	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

10. Please motivate for answer above by indicating which platforms are you permitted to utilize.

(You may select more than one if relevant)

SMS	
facebook	
Twitter	
Instagram	
YouTube	

SECTION D: IMPROVED GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION MODEL

11. Do you think government should adopt social media platforms as official communication channels?

Not sure	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

12. Please select one or more of the reason/s which support/s your answer above:

This will not make any difference	
Social media platforms are for informal chatting or communication	
They enable instant communication and feedback with the citizens	
They have diffused profusely within communities across South Africa	
This will improve and strengthen government communication with citizens	

#END#

ANNEXURE C:

[redacted] MOHAU RAMODIBE [redacted]

P.O Box 1328 | Nelspruit | 1200
Tel. 013 766 4148 | Fax. 013 766 9422 | Mobile: 082 771 9950
e-mail: mohauram@mpg.gov.za | mohau.ram@gmail.com

18 August 2016

Mr. Michael Currin
Programme Manager: Thusong Service Centres
Government Communication and Information System
PRETORIA

Per E-mail: Michael@gcis.gov.za/ Geraldine@gcis.gov.za

Dear Mr. Currin

REQUEST TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH AT THUSONG SERVICE CENTRES (ADMINISTRATION OF QUESTIONNAIRES TO CITIZENS) IN THE PROVINCE OF MPUMALANGA IN RESPECT OF A QUALIFICATION IN COMMUNICATION SCIENCE:

The above subject matter refers.

I am a PHD candidate registered with the University of South Africa in the Department of Communication Science. I am currently conducting a study to conceptualise a new model for government communication in South Africa, focusing on the Province of Mpumalanga.

The purpose of the study is to establish the rationale of the South African government's preference of the old over the new media in fulfilling its communication mandate, despite the indispensable benefits being afforded by the latter to strengthen communication. It further intends to conceptualise a communication model that can be used to strengthen government communication in South Africa. The outcome of this study will benefit the three (3) spheres of government as it will suggest ways to improve communication with the citizens.

The study is part of the requirements to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Literature and Philosophy in Communication.

In this regard, I seek your permission to administer questionnaires to citizens who are visiting the *Thusong Service Centres* in Mpumalanga on a daily basis.

Thanking you in advance for your consideration and speedy response.

MOHAU RAMODIBE

ANNEXURE D:

government
communications

Department:
Government Communication and Information System
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X745, Pretoria 0001, Tshedimosetso House, cnr Frances Baard &Schoeman) and Festival streets, Hatfield, Pretoria 0083. Tel: (+27 12) 473-0000 Fax: (+27 12) 473 0593 Website: www.gcis.gov.za

Enquiries: Geraldine Thopps (012) 473 0096 / geraldine@gcis.gov.za / 081 281 2200)

Mr Mohau Ramodibe
PHD candidate registered with the University of South Africa
P.O Box 1328
Nelspruit
1200

By email: mohauram@mpg.gov.za

Dear Mr Ramodibe

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH AT THUSONG SERVICE CENTRES

Your letter dated 18 August 2016 addressed to Michael Currin, the current GCIS Acting Deputy Director-General for Intergovernmental Coordination and Stakeholder Management (ICSM) has reference.

I would like to acknowledge receipt of your letter and wish to inform you that as the National Thusong Programme Manager, I welcome the request for you to conduct research through questionnaires to citizens who are visiting the Thusong Service Centres in Mpumalanga.

Furthermore, I am recommending the GCIS Provincial Director in Mpumalanga Province, Mr Jerry Nkosi to consider assisting you with linking you up, through his team, with all relevant Thusong Service Centre Managers in the province.

The afore-mentioned colleague can be contacted on: jerry@gcis.gov.za / (013) 753 2397 in aid of finalizing details of a recommended one-on-one meeting with him.

In the interim, I sincerely appreciate you coming forward with this matter would wish you well in your field of study.

Kind regards

GERALDINE THOPPS
DIRECTOR: PROVINCIAL COORDINATION
DATE: 6/9/2016

CC Michael Currin, Moepeng Tshwane, Jerry Nkosi