

**Government communication and dissemination of
government information – the use of research to
enhance effectiveness**

by

Maria Sophia Strydom

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Study Leader: Dr. M.M.M. Snyman

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	x
EKSERP	xii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	xiv
CHAPTER 1	
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Aim and objectives of this research	2
1.3 Demarcation	3
1.4 Methodology	3
1.5 Problems experienced with the research	4
1.6 Necessity of research for Information Science	5
1.7 Terminology	6
1.7.1 Clarification of terms	6
1.7.2 Abbreviations	7
1.8 Division of chapters	10
CHAPTER 2	
RESEARCH IN COMMUNICATION - A BRIEF THEORETIC OVERVIEW	12
2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 Communication research defined	13
2.3 Types of research	18
2.3.1 Introduction	18

2.3.2	Different types of research	18
2.3.2.1	Quantitative and qualitative research	18
(a)	Quantitative research	19
(b)	Qualitative research	22
2.3.2.2	Basic and applied research	26
(a)	Basic research	26
(b)	Applied research	27
2.3.2.3	Different objectives of social research	29
(a)	Exploratory research	29
(b)	Descriptive research	30
(c)	Correlational research	30
(d)	Explanatory research	31
2.3.3	Summary	31
2.4	The research process	31
2.4.1	Introduction	31
2.4.2	Steps in the research process	32
2.4.2.1	Identifying and formulating the problem	32
2.4.2.2	Deciding on what kind of data is required	33
2.4.2.3	Exploring secondary data sources	34
2.4.2.4	Revising and fine-tuning the research question	35
2.4.2.5	Designing the research study	36
2.4.2.6	Determining the sample	38
2.4.2.7	Allocating funds and resources	39
2.4.2.8	Writing and presenting the research proposal	40
2.4.2.9	Conducting a pilot test	41
2.4.2.10	Collecting primary data	41
2.4.2.11	Analysing and interpreting the data	42
2.4.2.12	Reporting the results	43
2.5	Challenges of communication research	45
2.5.1	The challenge of breadth and focus	45
2.5.2	The multiple methods challenge	49

2.5.3	The scholarly rigour challenge	50
2.5.4	The personal challenge	51
2.5.5	The ethical challenge	52
2.5.6	The structure of the field challenge	54
2.5.7	Other challenges	54
2.6	The use of communication research by governments	55
2.7	Summary	57

CHAPTER 3

THE USE OF RESEARCH IN GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICA - UP TO THE LAUNCH OF THE GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEM **58**

3.1	Introduction	58
3.2	The period up to the establishment of the Bureau for Information	59
3.2.1	The period from 1936 to 26 November 1961	59
3.2.1.1	The State Information Bureau, Department of the Prime Minister – 1936 to 1939	59
3.2.1.2	The State Information Bureau, Department of the Interior – 1939 to 1946	60
3.2.1.3	The State Information Office, Department of the Interior and the Native Information Service – 1947 to 1954	61
3.2.1.4	The State Information Office, Department of External Affairs and the Native Information Service – 1955 to 1957	63
3.2.1.5	The South African Information Service, Native Information Service and Coloured Information Service – 1957 to 26 November 1961	64

3.2.1.6	Summary: the period from 1936 to 26 November 1961 – the role of research	65
3.2.2	The period from 27 November 1961 to 16 September 1985	66
3.2.2.1	Department of Information – 27 November 1961 to 30 June 1978	66
	(a) The period 27 November 1961 to 30 March 1969	66
	(b) The period 1 April 1969 to May 1972	69
	(c) The period June 1972 to 28 February 1975	70
	(d) The period 1 March 1975 to 30 June 1978	73
3.2.2.2	The period 1 July 1978 to 16 September 1985	77
3.2.2.3	Summary: the period from 27 November 1961 to 16 September 1985 – the role of research	82
3.3	The Bureau for Information – 17 September 1985 to 30 April 1991	84
3.3.1	The establishment and structure of the Bureau for Information	84
3.3.2	Directorate Research Coordination	86
3.3.2.1	Research – May to December 1986	86
3.3.2.2	Research – 1987	88
3.3.2.3	Research – 1988	90
3.3.2.4	Research – 1989	92
3.3.2.5	Research – 1990	96
3.3.3	Summary: Bureau for Information – the role of research	98
3.4	The South African Communication Service – 1 May 1991 to 17 May 1998	99
3.4.1	The establishment and structure of the South African Communication Service	99
3.4.2	Research by the South African Communication Service	102
3.4.2.1	Research – 1991	102
3.4.2.2	Research – 1992	104
3.4.2.3	Research – 1993	106

3.4.2.4	Research – 1994	108
3.4.2.5	Research – 1995	109
3.4.2.6	Research – 1996	112
3.4.2.7	Research – 1997	113
3.4.3	Summary: South African Communication Service – the role of research	114
3.5	The use of research in government communication and dissemination of government information, 1936 to 17 May 1998 – a summary	115

CHAPTER 4

TRANSFORMATION OF GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION IN SOUTH AFRICA AFTER 1994 AND THE USE OF RESEARCH BY THE GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEM SINCE 18 MAY 1998		118
4.1	Introduction	118
4.2	Transformation of government communication in South Africa after 1994	118
4.2.1	Introduction	118
4.2.2	Conference of Government Communicators, August 1995	119
4.2.3	Task Group on Government Communications	121
4.2.4	Implementation of Comtask recommendations	127
4.3	The Government Communication and Information System – 18 May 1998 to date	129
4.3.1	Introduction	129
4.3.2	Chief Directorate Policy and Research	132
4.3.2.1	Research – 1998	132
4.3.2.2	Research – 1999	134

4.3.2.3	GCIS Corporate Strategy – January 2000 to March 2001: implications for research	137
4.3.2.4	Research – 2000	141
4.3.2.5	GCIS Corporate Strategy – April 2001 to March 2002: implications for research	145
4.3.2.6	Research – 2001	150
4.3.3	Summary: GCIS – the role of research	155
4.4	Summary	156

CHAPTER 5

	GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION IN OTHER COUNTRIES WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE USE OF RESEARCH	158
5.1	Introduction	158
5.2	International trends in government communication and dissemination of government information – an overview	158
5.3	Government communication and dissemination of government information with specific reference to research – the position in three countries using research to a relatively large extent	161
5.3.1	Australia	161
5.3.1.1	The history, role and functions of the Government Communications Unit	162
5.3.1.2	Guidelines to government departments and agencies	163
5.3.1.3	Use of research in the campaign development process	165
5.3.1.4	Summary: Government Communications Unit – the role of research	170
5.3.2	Canada	171

5.3.2.1	Mandate and roles of the Canada Information Office	171
5.3.2.2	Structure and responsibilities	172
5.3.2.3	Some of the research conducted by the CIO	176
5.3.2.4	Summary: Canada Information Office – the role of research	179
5.3.3	United Kingdom	180
5.3.3.1	The Central Office of Information	180
	(a) History and statutory background	180
	(b) Purpose, role, aim and objectives	181
	(c) Core services and structure	183
5.3.3.2	The Government Information and Communication Service	188
5.3.3.3	Government communications research in the United Kingdom	191
5.3.3.4	Summary: COI and GICS – the role of research	197
5.4	Government communication and dissemination of government information with specific reference to research – a short discussion regarding the position in some other countries	198
5.4.1	Europe	198
5.4.1.1	Denmark	198
5.4.1.2	France	199
5.4.1.3	Belgium	201
5.4.1.4	Germany	202
5.4.1.5	The Netherlands	203
5.4.2	Africa	204
5.4.2.1	Namibia	204
5.4.2.2	Botswana	205
5.4.2.3	Zambia	206
5.4.3	Other countries	207
5.4.3.1	Barbados	207
5.4.3.2	Jamaica	208
5.4.3.3	Hong Kong	209

5.4.3.4	India	210
5.4.3.5	United States	212
5.4.3.6	Brazil	213
5.5	Conclusion: What can South Africa learn from other countries in terms of the use of research to enhance effectiveness of government communication and dissemination of government information?	214

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 217

6.1	Introduction	217
6.2	Conclusion	217
6.2.1	The application of sound theoretical principles	217
6.2.2	The use of research in government communication and information dissemination in South Africa	218
6.2.3	The use of research in government communication and information dissemination in other countries	220
6.3	Recommendations	220
6.4	Further research recommended	224

LIST OF FIGURES

2.1	A typology of research design types	38
3.1	The inter-relationship between the psychological and other instruments	78
3.2	Bureau for Information – structure, 1986	85
3.3	SACS – structure, 1991	101
4.1	GCIS – structure, 1998	131

5.1	CIO – structure, 2001	173
5.2	COI – structure, 2001	184

LIST OF TABLES

2.1	Types of quantitative studies	20
2.2	Differences between research design and research methodology – a summary	36
2.3	Communication specialities	46

ANNEXURE:		226
A COMPOSITE CODE OF ETHICS FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH		

LIST OF SOURCES CONSULTED		235
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ABSTRACT

There are indications of concern by governments for public opinion even centuries ago. The use of scientific research though, was only introduced by governments to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information during the last few decades of the twentieth century. The main aim with this research is to contribute towards improving the research used in South Africa by the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) in order to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information. As research can contribute towards enhancing the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information, it is considered as being of critical importance to contribute towards improving the quality of relevant research in South Africa. No research has been conducted before in South Africa regarding the use of research to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information. The methodology used to address the aim and objectives of this research was that of a qualitative, non-empirical study conducted by means of a literature review.

The research provides a brief theoretic overview of research in communication. It records the use of communication research by government in South Africa since 1936 as well as the process of transforming government communication after 1994. Furthermore, it records government communication and information dissemination in other countries, with specific reference to the use of research.

Various conclusions derive from this research. Among these is a clear indication of the necessity of conducting communication research in a scientific way, by applying sound theoretical principles. It also indicates that there is a good platform and strategic framework from which government communication research in South Africa can be improved further, and that South Africa can learn from relevant research conducted by governments in other countries. The researcher presents a wide range

of recommendations for consideration, as well as potential areas for further research regarding this broader theme.

Key words:

Communication research; government communication; government information; information dissemination; Government Communication and Information System; South African Communication Service; Bureau for Information; Department of Information.

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Daar is aanduidings dat regerings selfs eeue gelede begaan was oor openbare mening. Dit is egter eers gedurende die afgelope paar dekades dat regerings wetenskaplike navorsing benut ten einde die effektiwiteit van regerings-kommunikasie en die disseminasie van regeringsinligting te verhoog. Die hoofdoel met hierdie navorsing is om by te dra tot die verbetering van navorsing wat in Suid-Afrika tans gedoen word – deur die regering in die algemeen en deur die Regeringskommunikasie- en Inligtingstelsel (RKIS) spesifiek – ten einde die effektiwiteit van regeringskommunikasie en die disseminering van regerings-inligting te verhoog. Aangesien navorsing bydra tot verhoging in die effektiwiteit van regeringskommunikasie en die disseminering van regeringsinligting, word gereken dat dit van kritieke belang is om die kwaliteit van relevante navorsing in Suid-Afrika te verhoog. Geen navorsing is tot op datum in Suid-Afrika onderneem rakende die benutting van navorsing om die effektiwiteit van regeringskommunikasie en die disseminasie van regeringsinligting te bevorder nie. Die metodologie wat benut is om die hoofdoel en die sekondêre navorsingsdoelstellings van hierdie navorsing aan te spreek, was dié van ‘n kwalitatiewe, nie-empiriese studie wat onderneem is deur middel van ‘n literatuuroorsig.

Die navorsing voorsien ‘n kort teoretiese oorsig van navorsing in kommunikasie. Dit gee die benutting van kommunikasienavorsing deur die regering in Suid-Afrika weer sedert 1936, asook die proses om regeringskommunikasie in Suid-Afrika na 1994 te transformeer. Verder voorsien dit ook ‘n oorsig van regeringskommunikasie en disseminering van inligting in ander lande, met spesifieke verwysing na die benutting van navorsing.

Verskeie gevolgtrekkings spruit voort uit die navorsing. Dit sluit in ‘n duidelike indikasie van die noodsaaklikheid om kommunikasienavorsing op ‘n wetenskaplike wyse te onderneem deur die toepassing van ter sake teoretiese beginsels. Die navorsing dui ook daarop dat daar ‘n goeie vertrekpunt en strategiese raamwerk is

vanwaar kommunikasienavorsing deur die regering verbeter kan word en dat Suid-Afrika kan leer uit relevante navorsing wat gedoen word deur regerings in ander lande. Die navorsing bied ook 'n verskeidenheid aanbevelings aan vir oorweging, en gee 'n aanduiding van verdere navorsing wat op die studiegebied gedoen kan word.

Sleutelwoorde:

Buro vir Inligting; Departement van Inligting; inligtingsdisseminasie; kommunikasienavorsing; regeringsinligting; regeringskommunikasie; Regeringskommunikasie en Inligtingstelsel; Suid-Afrikaanse Kommunikasiediens.

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Opinions expressed, conclusions reached and recommendations made in this dissertation are my own and should by no means be perceived as reflecting the opinions, conclusions or recommendations of GCIS.

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