

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The use of research to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information – is this anything new, something that commenced during the last few decades?

If this question relates to the application of scientific research methodologies, the correct answer would probably be yes! Notwithstanding this, information available clearly indicates that even centuries ago, governments in both democratic and despotic countries, have not only shown concern for public opinion, but also applied their own (unscientific) initiatives to determine the public's opinion. This concern with public opinion by government was probably more in the interest of the government itself – to ensure that it stays in power by keeping in touch with public needs and responses towards its policies and initiatives.

During the twentieth century there was growing concern and articulation by governments that effective governance necessitates *two-way communication* between government and the people; that government needs to *listen* to the people to obtain information regarding their needs; that government needs to be *people-centred* and put the people first.

The use of scientific research methodologies was increasingly introduced by government – including the South African government – during the last few decades. This includes research to enhance the effectiveness of service delivery

by government in general, as well as research to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information.

1.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS RESEARCH

The researcher is of the opinion that the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information can be enhanced through the application of appropriate scientific research processes and methodologies. In South Africa the government has used research in this regard since the mid-seventies.

The main aim with this research is to contribute towards improving the research used in South Africa – by government in general and by the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) specifically – in order to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information.

The secondary research objectives are:

- To investigate research in communication and information dissemination from a theoretic point of view
- To record the use of research in government communication and information dissemination by the South African government from 1936 to date, including the process of transformation of government communication after 1994
- To investigate and record the use of research by governments in other countries to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information
- To make recommendations that may contribute towards improving the research used in South Africa to enhance the effectiveness of

government communication and the dissemination of government information.

1.3 DEMARCATION

The researcher's focus is on research by the GCIS and its predecessors – the South African Communication Service (SACS), the Bureau for Information and others mentioned in paragraph 3.2 – to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information. Although GCIS provides assistance and advice to other government departments with relevant research on request, various departments conduct research without involving GCIS. This research does not include any relevant research which was conducted by other government departments without the involvement of GCIS.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The methodology applied to address the main aim and the secondary objectives of this research was primarily that of a qualitative, non-empirical study conducted by means of a literature review. Information resources in both hard copy and electronic format were used to identify and obtain the relevant information.

Articles in professional magazines and books within the subject fields of *inter alia* information science, communication science, political science, marketing and research were used to obtain information to investigate research in communication and information dissemination from a theoretic point of view. Relevant information with regard to this secondary research objective was also obtained from websites of companies in the research industry.

Based on the main aim of this research, most of the sources consulted regarding the other three secondary research objectives mentioned in paragraph 1.2, were official documents from South Africa and other countries. This documentation included Annual Reports, government websites, speeches and briefings by role-players, policy and strategic framework documents, and other official documentation relevant to the research and available from specifically the South African government communication and information environment.

Since 1986, the researcher has been directly involved in research aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of information by virtue of being an employee of the GCIS and its predecessors, SACS and the Bureau for Information.

From this position relevant material, though not always recorded, was also 'available' to the researcher.

1.5 PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED WITH THE RESEARCH

Despite the availability of relevant and useful information as described in the previous paragraph, the researcher did experience some problems during the research. These problems include the following:

- Literature on the theory and processes of research is mostly focused on marketing and advertising research. Although the processes and principles are not substantially different, the researcher would have preferred to have had access to additional sources on communication research and on research on enhancing the effectiveness of information dissemination not relating to products and/or business interests.

- Information on relevant research initiatives and processes in other countries was not as readily available and as complete as one would have preferred and expected it to be. Information available from other countries provided only top-line information on the structures, processes and objectives of government communications – with no or limited reference to the use of research. Although information obtained by the Task Group on Government Communications (Comtask) was useful to develop some understanding of government communication in other countries, changes that may have taken place since the Comtask research in 1996 may be missing.
- Another problem experienced was that of language. Although information relevant to the use of research in certain countries may be available, the availability of that information in languages other than English resulted in the researcher not being able to use it. Useful information may be available from countries like Germany, France and Denmark, but even the official websites of these countries did not contain the applicable information in English.

1.6 NECESSITY OF RESEARCH FOR INFORMATION SCIENCE

Information is the subject of scientific study in the discipline of Information Science. This study of information includes information dissemination as an integral part of the information cycle. The main aim and secondary research objectives of this research as explained in paragraph 1.2 include focus on enhancing the effectiveness of the dissemination of government information.

1.7 TERMINOLOGY

1.7.1 Clarification of terms

Relating to the contents of this dissertation, the key concepts used in this research – in alphabetical order – include the following:

- *Communication*
The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1990:230) defines communication as “the science and practice of transmitting information.” Definitions by Slater (2001) and Adler *et al.* (1992:12) lead the researcher to the following compilation of a definition for this term: The process or act of transmitting a message from a sender to a receiver, through a channel or medium. Messages can be distorted by external, physical and/or psychological noise.
- *Dissemination*
According to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1990:338), dissemination means spreading especially ideas widely.
- *Effectiveness*
According to the researcher the term effectiveness refers to an initiative or product having the desired outcome.
- *Government*
When using the term government in this dissertation, the researcher refers to the official government of a country – the government elected by the people in a democracy. The term government as used in this dissertation does not refer to the political party governing a country.

- *Information*
According to Boon (1990:320), “data that is analysed and structured with the intention of answering a question or conveying a message can be typified as information.”
- *Research*
This term is briefly explained in paragraph 2.2.

1.7.2 Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this dissertation:

AIDS	-	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AM	-	Amplitude modulation
AMA	-	American Marketing Association
ANC	-	African National Congress
BBC	-	British Broadcasting Corporation
BGIS	-	Barbados Government Information Service
CAS	-	Central Advertising System
CCC	-	Cabinet Committee on Government Communications
CD-ROM	-	Compact Disk-Read Only Memory
CEO	-	Chief Executive Officer
CIO	-	Canada Information Office
Codesa	-	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
COI	-	Central Office of Information
Comtask	-	Task Group on Government Communications
CSA	-	Communication Service Agency
CSS	-	Central Statistical Service
DCEO	-	Deputy Chief Executive Officer

DVD	-	Digital Versatile Disk
ESOMAR	-	European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research
FM	-	Frequency modulation
GCF	-	Government Communicators' Forum
GCIS	-	Government Communication and Information System
GCP	-	Government Communication Programme
GCU	-	Government Communications Unit
GIC	-	Government Information Centre
GICS	-	Government Information and Communication Service
GNU	-	Government of National Unity
HIV	-	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HSRC	-	Human Sciences Research Council
ICTs	-	Information and Communication Technologies
IDASA	-	Institute for Democratic Alternatives for South Africa
IEC	-	Independent Electoral Commission
IIS	-	Indian Information Service
IMC	-	International Marketing Council
IMC	-	Inter-Ministerial Committee
INSA	-	Information Service of South Africa
ISRDS	-	Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy
IT	-	Information Technology
ITV	-	Independent Television
JIS	-	Jamaica Information Service
MCGC	-	Ministerial Committee on Government Communications
MIB	-	Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
MLO	-	Ministerial Liaison Officer
MORI	-	Market and Opinion Research International
MPCC	-	Multi-Purpose Community Centre

MRC	-	Medical Research Council
MTEF	-	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
NBC	-	Namibia Broadcasting Corporation
NCC	-	Namibia Communications Commission
NCES	-	National Center for Educational Statistics
NCPS	-	National Communication Policy and Strategy
NDS	-	News Distribution Service
NSE	-	National State of Emergency
NIB	-	National Training Board
OGIA	-	Office of Government Information and Advertising
PR	-	Public relations
PWV	-	Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging
RDP	-	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RRTD	-	Research, Reference and Training Division
RSA	-	Republic of South Africa
RUF	-	Research Users' Forum
RVD	-	Rijksvoorlichtingsdienst
SABC	-	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SACS	-	South African Communication Service
SADF	-	South African Defence Force
SAMDI	-	South African Management Development Institute
SAMRA	-	Southern African Marketing Research Association
SANDF	-	South African National Defence Force
SAP	-	South African Police
SAPA	-	South African Press Association
SCU	-	Strategic Communication Unit
SIG	-	Service D'Information du Gouvernement
SIO	-	State Information Office

TGI	-	Target Group Index
TISA	-	Trade and Investment South Africa
TQM	-	Total Quality Management
TV	-	Television
UK	-	United Kingdom
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
US	-	United States
USIA	-	United States Information Agency
VAT	-	Value-added tax
VIP	-	Very-important persons
WAPOR	-	World Association of Public and Opinion Research
Y ₂ K	-	Year 2000 compliance
ZIS	-	Zambia Information Service
ZNBC	-	Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation

1.8 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

Attending to the first one of the three secondary research objectives identified in paragraph 1.2, the researcher provides a brief theoretic overview of research in communication in chapter 2.

In chapters 3 and 4, the researcher records the use of research in government communication and the dissemination of government information in South Africa. Chapter 3 deals with the relevant information from 1936 up to May 1998. The process of transforming government communications in South Africa after the introduction of a democratic dispensation in 1994, as well as the use of research by GCIS since 18 May 1998 is recorded in chapter 4.

In chapter 5 the researcher records information regarding government communication and information dissemination in other countries, with specific reference to the use of research to enhance effectiveness.

In chapter 6 the researcher reaches conclusions relating to the secondary objectives of the study and suggests a number of recommendations directed towards the main aim of this research as identified in paragraph 1.2.